MEETING SUMMARY

Geographic Response Strategy Development - Connecticut River, CT

Initial Work Group/ Site Selection Meeting

Monday, January 23, 2023: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Held via Zoom Video Conference

Purpose

This meeting served both to introduce this project, and to review the preliminary Site Selection Matrix, examine candidate sites, develop additional information about resources at risk, spill threat, and site accessibility at each site, and identify site areas for future site survey activity and GRS development along the Connecticut River. We also discussed other planned project activities including conduct of site surveys, tactics development, and final GRS development.

Participants

Cheryl Assis, Capitol Region Council of Governments	**Phil Mikan**, U.S. Coast Guard Sector Long Island Sound
Cory Atkinson, State Historic Preservation Office	**John Olin**, East Haddam Conservation Commission
John Cabibbo, Enfield Public Works	**Stephen Pendl**, Rocky Hill Emergency Management
Thom Delventhal, East Haddam Conservation Commission	**Amanda Ryan**, U.S. Coast Guard Sector Long Island Sound
Bruce Driska, Town of Cromwell	**Richard Scalora**, CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
Georgienna Driver, Enfield Conservation Commission	**Suzanne Simone**, Glastonbury Inland Wetlands & Conservation Commission
Rhea Drozdenko, Connecticut River Conservancy	**John Spencer**, Suffield Emergency Management
Diane Duva, CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection	**Chloe Thompson**, Windsor Environmental Planner & Wetland Agent
Carolyn Kane, Chester Harbor Management Commission	**Karen Way**, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Maria Lucarelli, Essex Emergency Management	**Ila White**, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Andrew Major, U.S. Department of Interior – U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services	**Gary Wilson**, East Haddam Conservation Commission
Michael Manfre, Water Pollution Control Authority	**Mike Popovich**, **Sam Butler**, **Olivia Norton**, **Haley Griffin**, Nuka Research
***Kenneth Sprankle**, USFWS/CT River Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office	

** - Mr. Sprankle was unable to attend the meeting but provided post-meeting feedback which is included in this summary. Additional post-meeting comments and corrections were received by some attending members and their feedback is also included in this summary.*

Introduction and Opening Comments

Mike Popovich (Nuka Research) opened the meeting by thanking the participants for attending the site selection meeting and reiterating that this meeting is a crucial part of the process as the group will decide where the GRS will be developed on the river.

Project/Site Selection Process Overview

Mike then provided a general project overview, reviewed project objectives and timeline; provided an overview of GRS design and content; and finally, reviewed the draft Site Selection Matrix for the Connecticut River. He also discussed the different variables that were relevant to the sites, including sensitive habitats and resources, historical sites, conservation areas, and spill risk. Finally, Mike discussed the opportunities for future GRS testing and validation. He requested that if any independent or collaborative testing is undertaken in the future by state/non-governmental agencies and/or local municipalities, that EPA Region 1 be notified both to allow for participation, and to ensure that any necessary changes to GRS can be documented and completed.

Then, Karen Way, the project coordinator for EPA Region 1, gave a brief presentation on the history of contingency planning since the passage of the Clean Water Act and OPA 90 and how these GRS integrate into the larger Inland Area Contingency Plan (ACP) and in the case of this project, with the Sector Long Island Sound (Coastal) ACP. She stated that the GRS strategies created on the Connecticut River will be included in both the Inland and Coastal ACPs and available for viewing and download at the RRT website (https://nrt.org/site/doc_list.aspx?site_id=38).

Following Karen's presentation, Diane Duva with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) gave an overview of the agency, the individuals in the Emergency Response Unit, and the capabilities and duties regarding emergency response and locations. She included spill preparedness measures, goals to maximize public and environmental safety during emergency response, and marine assets located in this portion of the Sound and on the CT River.

Amanda Ryan then introduced herself, Phil Mikan and LCDR Dave Vihonsky as the individuals from USCG Sector Long Island Sound involved in this project and explained their roles in spill response incidents on the CT River.

Mike then touched on the definition of GRS and the differences in what a GRS is versus what it is not, including that GRS are not a mandate for protection or response, a performance standard, nor the only sites that will or should be protected during an incident. GRS are smaller, site-specific documents which differentiate from the larger and more comprehensive ACPs of which they are a part.

Mike also took the opportunity to share with the group that these projects do not include the procurement of oil spill response equipment, only the development of GRS. He added that once the GRS are developed, those interested in procuring oil spill response equipment can use the existence of developed GRS in their area to potentially justify the procurement of equipment through various funding avenues.

Mike then provided a quick overview of the new GRS template, structure, and content.

Review of Site Selection Criteria and Site Selection Discussion

Mike opened the site selection discussion indicating that as part of this project, Nuka Research compiled available sensitivity data via various online GIS sites and identified prospective development site areas based on this data and by considering potential river access points. This information was used to develop an initial site selection matrix and these prospective areas will be the ones reviewed today. Mike noted that each prospective mapping area (and prospective site name) can change depending on input from the workgroup, multiple prospective sites can be combined into one GRS, and that a single GRS site can have multiple maps.

He also reminded the group that site selection can be reflected based on particular sensitivities in and around a site or based upon a sites accessibility and suitability for equipment staging and deployment of various booming strategies.

The following list includes all preliminary site areas that were discussed in detail during the meeting and additional feedback and corrections received by meeting attendees immediately following the meeting. Site names in **bold text** will be the primary focus for potential GRS development though other areas may be surveyed based on any further work group discussion and feedback that occurs between the meeting date and conduct of the site surveys. Based on the results of the site surveys and further discussion with work group and site survey team members, identification and selection of up to 15 distinctive GRS development areas will be made.

Connecticut River Sites: *NOTE: All current site/GRS names are tentative and subject to change up to the conclusion of the final workgroup meeting.*

- **Donald W. Barnes Boat Launch** – John Cabibbo indicated that there is limited access, two access roads under the railroad have low clearance (one from Main St. and one that goes over Freshwater Brook) and mentioned the consideration of using the existing bridge foundations across the CT River as anchor spots for a boom system; Georgienna Driver indicated that there are industrial zones along the river (close to Long Meadow border, past Donald Boat Ramp by Hazard Ave, near King Street, and one larger industrial zone further south along the river).
- **Windsor Locks Canal** – Mike indicated a parking area located North of Windsor Lock; John Spencer commented that the area is within the Town of Suffield and that there is no boat access, but the area is sensitive due to a nearby entrance to a canal that serves as an industrial water intake; Cory Atkinson stated Suffield has no river access, and the SHPO office is concerned with potential impacts of emergency activities to underground archaeological resources – the canal itself is a national registered historical place; Mike requested feedback on restrictions for equipment placements to avoid impacts to historical or archaeological resources if booming strategies are developed in this area.
- **Kings Island Boat Launch** – Site is near a sewage treatment facility and there is potential for development of booming strategies in this area; John Spencer stated that migratory bald eagles live adjacent to the site on the Suffield side.
- **Windsor Meadow State Park** - Chloe Thompson stated this was an adequate access point and there is opportunity to collaborate with local agencies. Lower Farmington River [north of Windsor Meadows] – Kenneth Sprankle stated given the gradient and minor tidal at very low levels, if the river is "high" the mainstream waters will backwater well up into this very important tributary. Note: inclusion of the area around the confluence of the Farmington and CT rivers will be considered for GRS development and potentially included in a Windsor/Windsor Meadows GRS.
- **Hartford Area** – 3 GRS sites (**Riverside Park**, **Great River Park**, and **Charter Oak**) can potentially be combined into one GRS with multiple maps. Mike stated a potential for large outfall/land-based spill (exclusion or containment booming).
- **Wethersfield Cove/Cove Park Boat Ramp** – Phil Mikan stated marine petroleum industry is still active; Stephen Pendl mentioned that ground transportation of the petroleum is still active at Buckeye Terminal. Stephen Pendl indicated that Wethersfield Cove has a large area for boat launching at the Cove Park boat ramp, Rocky Point also has a two-boat launches.
- **A117 Keeney Cove/Crow Point** – Sensitive area identified by Glastonbury. Mike Manfre stated that a boat house located at Cove Point has plenty of accessibility.
- **A118 Pecaussette Meadows** - Lower Mattabesset River/Marsh [upriver from Pecausette Meadows site on west side] – Kenneth Sprankle indicated that although this site is a tributary, given its location/gradient/tide exposure it commonly interacts with mainstream conditions/water.
- **Haddam Meadows Boat Launch**
- A119 Salmon Cove - John Olin indicated a boat launch at Salmon River and one above Chapman Pond; Kenneth Sprankle also stated that this Cove commonly interacts with mainstream water and conditions.

- **Eagle Landing State Park** – Thom Delventhal stated that there is a large parking lot under the East Haddam Swing bridge (on Haddam side) in Eagles Landing State Park and is good for staging/access area (no boat launch but could be potential area); John Olin – there is a boat launch directly opposite in East Haddam called East Haddam Public Launch, south of the Goodspeed Opera House parking lot – he also stated that a sewage treatment plant is also in the area just south of boat launch & Goodspeed private airport; Carolyn Kane stated Parkers Point as the most advantageous location in terms of access to land;
- **Parkers Point, A121 Whalebone Creek/Chester/Hadlyme Ferry** – Carolyn Kane stated that that Parkers Point would serve as a good staging area and general concern for sensitivities throughout Chester. Mike briefly mentioned the A110 Whalebone Creek/Hadlyme Ferry site as perhaps a good staging area with the Hadlyme boat launch located adjacent to the ferry dock (though this boat launch is limited to Car Top/Carry-In). Based on general interest in this area, these sites, as well as **Chester Boat Basin**, will be surveyed and considered for GRS development with an eye towards potentially combining these sites into a single GRS encompassing Chester, East Haddam, and Lyme, CT.
- Deep River Town Landing
- A122 Selden Creek
- A123 Joshua Creek
- **A124 Hamburg Cove/Eight Mile River** – Additional site info under "Final Comments and Suggestions" below
- A125 Nott Island
- **Essex/A110 South & Middle Coves** – On January 24th, Maria Lucarelli with the Town of Essex contacted Nuka Research to essentially determine if there was additional information that Essex could/should provide to inform GRS development. During the conversation, Maria outlined some of the concerns that Essex has in terms of potential impacts from spills. Of particular note were concerns over potential impacts to the Connecticut River Museum which is located along the river in Essex and also impacts specifically to Thatchbed Island and generally to North, Middle, and South Coves. Based on this conversation, and because we didn't come up with an "absolute" list of 15 sites for development, we will include the Essex/A110 South/Middle cove area for GRS development and include this area in our site survey schedule.
- **Baldwin Bridge State Boat Launch** - Additional site info under "Final Comments and Suggestions" below

Note: For each GRS developed, a site name and numbering convention is used. As indicated above, site names can be determined by workgroup members as late as the final GRS review meeting at the end of the project. Since the inception of these inland river GRS development project series, GRS have also been given a unique letter/number identifier consisting of a two-letter river designator and a two-digit sequential number for each GRS. More information regarding GRS numbering will be provided later in this project as the site areas are finalized.

GRS Development Process & Project Timeline

Following the site selection discussion, Mike Popovich reviewed the remainder of the project timeline including the site survey process, follow-on tactics development, GRS draft development, and final GRS review and approval by the work group. He concluded by stressing the importance of continued local stakeholder participation and how critical local knowledge and input is to the entire GRS development process.

Final Comments and Suggestions

- Thom Delventhal and John Olin stated that there is a private marina on the East shore just north of the I-95 bridge (Old Lyme Marina). John further commented that there is river access for kayaks and small craft further upriver along Rt. 156 at Pilgrims Landing Rd.

- Gary Wilson stated that Baldwin Bridge State Boat Launch on the west side of the river (under I-95) includes not only a double boat ramp but also a large public parking and access area under and adjacent to I-95.
- Diane Duva indicated that the location of CT DEEP Marine Headquarters in Old Lyme, CT is on the east side of the river between the I-95 and railroad bridges.
- John Olin spoke about Hamburg Cove and the mouth of Eight Mile River; in the Town of Hamburg there is a boat launch and **Hamburg Cove** has a private marina and accessible boat launch (Elys Ferry Crossing) on the Eight Mile River (Eight Mile River is a national and scenic river); Carolyn Kane stated that a lot of seasonal moorings are put into the Cove every year.
- Rhea Drozdenko mentioned Hamburg Cove Yacht Club. Her contact there is Earl Mummert (ejmumm2@gmail.com).
- Bruce Driska indicated that Cromwell Outboard Association has a private boat launch (on Town property) located at River Road just north of Wilcox Island and the Arrigoni Bridge. Additionally, there's ample level paved areas for incident supplies.
- Kenneth Sprankle indicated that many of the sites are important fish spawning and nursey habitats for many species, but most notably several migratory species of concern (Alewife and Blueback Herring). Cove habitats and tributaries are particularly important to these two species of high concern to the state and federal fisheries agencies.

Action Items

Nuka Research will:

- Post meeting summary on project website and accept feedback within a set comment period.
- Post documents and presentations used in this meeting on the project website.
- Solicit feedback from workgroup members on additional sites/areas to consider for GRS development.
- Determine site survey timeframe based on Workgroup feedback (in mid-March 2023) and schedule site surveys accordingly.
- Invite workgroup members to Site Surveys as appropriate (April/May 2023).
- Form Tactics sub-group to review proposed tactics from Site Surveys.

Project Website: ***https://www.inlandgrpne.com/connecticut-river-ct***

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