

Genesee-Finger Lakes Regional Blueway Analysis and Plan

Advisory Committee Meeting 4 Summary – 09/02/09

Date: September 2, 2009

Duration: 1:00 – 2:30

Location: Genesee Waterways Center ~ Rochester, NY

In Attendance:

Jerry Koehler, FLOW Paddlers Club
Wayne Hale, Jr., Orleans County Tourism
Laura Arney, Sierra Club
Todd Lippa, NYS Canals

Staff:

Brian Slack

Meeting Summary:

Welcome and Introductions

Agenda

Brian began with a presentation which included the agenda. The following items were scheduled to be discussed:

- Present the “Draft Methodology for the Assessment and Ranking of Blueway Opportunity Corridors”
- Discussion/ask questions on the methodology throughout
- Agree on need for revisions, changes, additions, etc.
- Discuss next steps

Brian’s presentation followed the preliminary “Draft Methodology for the Assessment and Ranking of Blueway Opportunity Corridors” document, which was emailed to Advisory Committee members in advance. He explained that regardless of what the Advisory Committee agrees on today, he may have to make further adjustments in the field due to unforeseen issues pertaining to data or field conditions. He further explained that this is a preliminary draft; his intent was to have a complete methodology for inventorying AND ranking the blueway corridors at this point in time. The draft that has been circulated only goes into detail on the inventorying portion of the project. He noted that he found it very difficult to prepare any ranking methodology in advance of knowing what type of data he would be able to generate during field visits. A follow-up Advisory Committee meeting would therefore be scheduled in order to discuss and finalize the full inventorying and ranking approach for the blueway project.

Brian continued to present his approach to inventorying attributes within identified blueway opportunity corridors. He briefly reviewed the process that was used to identify preliminary blueway opportunity corridors, which the Advisory Committee members were very familiar with. The presentation featured several maps which identified all of the corridors that he would be focusing on through the project.

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Brian displayed a map that showed each corridor with a .5 kilometer buffer area on either side of the riparian corridor, which constitutes the project study area. Lakes featured a 1 kilometer buffer area on the upland side of the shoreline. In both cases, Brian explained that these buffer areas may need to be enlarged in order to better account for adjacent attributes. This can be easily adjusted at a later point in time; various extents can be shown to the Advisory Committee at the next meeting in order to illustrate the value of using one distance versus another.

While displaying the blueway opportunity corridor map with access points, Brian made two important observations: (1) the blueway corridors shown will likely shrink significantly, as some reaches of streams will be found to be non-navigable; and (2) the access points shown on the map will likely grow in number, as many have been provided by the Advisory Committee and stakeholders but have not been entered into the database at this point in time.

Brian then reviewed his approach to field reconnaissance and verification in detail as it was described in the draft Methodology document. He explained that he anticipates the field work to take between 5-7 days and may require some evening and weekend work in order to complete it in a timely manner, which is fine. Some areas have already been largely accounted for, including the Genesee River, which will lessen the amount of time needed to spend in the field.

Brian then explained his current thoughts on ranking blueway corridors. He noted that the project calls for ‘ranking corridors on their suitability for blueway use and designation.’ Based on this description, the process for ranking is rather open-ended and leaves a large amount of discretion to the Advisory Committee. His initial approach was to conduct the assessment of each corridor, accounting for each identified attribute within each corridor. Using a weighted system, each corridor could be assigned a score based on the number and quality of attributes found within it. He explained that such an approach would be problematic in that it would favor waterways that are already well established, when a major goal of the project is to promote waterways that may require greater attention and work. These thoughts and observations were tabled for discussion later in the meeting.

After completely reviewing the remainder of the Methodology document, Brian asked for discussion, which is summarized as follows:

- Jerry noted that white water guides typically rate courses using a detailed description of the surrounding environment – urban, rural, wilderness, etc. – maybe this approach could be used in the ranking system
- Wayne noted that it might be useful to consider state designations that have been assigned to some rivers and waterways based on their biological diversity.
- General discussion ensued regarding the possibility of simply providing descriptive information on each waterway in lieu of providing a “high” or “low” priority ranking score. This was noted to be a beneficial approach in that it avoids describing “winners” and “losers.” Todd Lippa stressed that we’ve already identified where the blueways are in the region and that they all deserve recognition, regardless of the number or quality of attributes that are found within buffer areas. Everyone agreed that it would be

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unfortunate if some of these waterways were ascribed low ranks due to any methodology that we develop.

- Laura and others had several comments pertaining to the assessment process and data issues.

Brian noted that he will take all of these issues into account as he develops the draft ranking methodology that we will use. He also mentioned that it may be beneficial to contact the Dept. of State to get their input regarding what they expect to see in the ranking system.

Brian concluded the meeting with a brief overview of next steps. He anticipates concluding field work in September and assembling the data in early October. He will then begin to create a methodology for ranking which he will present to the Advisory Committee before Thanksgiving. It may be possible to “test” certain types of approaches at that meeting in order to see what results.

The first draft of the Blueway Analysis report will be assembled in December and January and presented to the Advisory Committee by the end of January or early February 2010.

~bcs