Genesee River Conference – Kick-Off Meeting – Minutes

1:00, February 22nd, 2007 ~ DEC Region 8 Headquarters ~ Avon, NY

In Attendance:

Dave Zorn, Brian Slack – G/FLRPC
Joshua Bossard – NY Rural Waters Assoc.
Heather Ferrero – Livingston Co. Planning
Jenny Landry – NYS DEC
Joe Makarewicz – SUNY Brockport
Dave Reckahn – Wyoming Co. SWCD/Regional FL/LOWPA representative
Andy Sansone – MC DES
Jim Sperry – WEC
George Squires – Genesee Co. SWCD
Dennis Money – Genesee Waterways Center
Matt Sanderson – DEC Fisheries
Eric Grace – Genesee Valley Conservancy

Agenda Items:

Greetings and Introductions 1:00

- ***Who have we missed?***

After greetings and introductions were completed, BS moved discussion of "who have we missed" to the end of the agenda

Overview and Purpose 1:15

- ***How this got started***
- ***What we hope to accomplish***
- ***Possible Funding sources***

"Possible funding sources" moved to *Brainstorm Conference Content*

Explanation of conference goals was explained by BS, with discussion following.

At this point in time, the goals are broad; narrowing the scope and purpose will be up to the committee. General goals include:

- Overall assessment of where the river is (in terms of environmental and ecological health), where it is heading, and where it needs to be;
- Presentation of latest monitoring data;
- Review of agency progress to date (i.e. US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Rochester Embayment Remedial Action Plan, Lake Ontario Management Plan (LaMP), Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM), etc.)
- Increasing overall collaboration between agencies/fostering new partnerships;
- Coordinating efforts within the Basin in a manner that improves overall effectiveness and increases funding and notoriety (with specific emphasis here on agencies such as the USACE, USEPA, GLC and IJC)

Open Discussion 1:45

DZ: This initial conference can present a context for open discussion; may very likely be the first of several regular "summits" on the subject
AS: Mentioned that the state of the Genesee River is essentially a litmus for regional water quality efforts
JM: Efforts have been ongoing for some time, although time passes by quickly. The conference has the potential to become a routine convergence of professionals to discuss (a) where we are currently in meeting our goals, (b) assess progress and (c) establish guidelines for future action in the necessary target areas
JS: Presented WEC Water Quality Survey findings on water quality perceptions

Brainstorm Conference Content 2:15

- ***Target Audience***
- ***Primary subject focus***

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- ***Potential Sessions***
- ***Presenters***
- ***Format (plenary session, separate lecture tracks, etc.)***
- ***Location***

BS: Open registration is my initial thought, although group discussion helped to refine the target audience.
HF, JB, DZ: Opening up registration to the general public is appropriate; however, it complicates the stated goals. Targeting "laypersons" would require added publicity and would necessitate an entirely different set of presentations and topics than has been discussed. A strong media campaign would be necessary to attract non-agency pesons. Targeting agency professionals and others actively involved in associated issues is therefore probably the most prudent course for the conference.
DM: A variety of topics would be preferable, including an historical overview of the Basin, its primary uses over time (i.e. industrial/agricultural), and how it is being used today (i.e. recreation). Benchmark of the health of the river, with future meetings to check back to reassess progress seems like a good plan.
JM: Elected officials should be targeted to attend and, if interested, speak. Furthermore, the large geographic area that the Basin covers should be seen as an asset, rather than a risk or liability to overcome. "Hooking" the state of the river to other issues, including the Lake Ontario, will be an important challenge for the group.

Specific Track Discussion: What would YOU like to see presented at the conference?

- State us of the Basin – True water quality perspective
- It will be beneficial to identifying some new and innovative topics in order to draw attendance – ecosystem-based management, etc.
- USACE – what are they doing, what are their plans – after all, they do have the greatest singular influence over a large portion of the Basin through control of the Mt. Morris Dam
- Recreational component – blueways and greenways, tourism, etc.
- Threatened species – sturgeon and river otter programs; other species – a status report on the programs and how the species are doing
- Industry – how is the river currently being used by the big industries in the Basin? Who is using it today and for what, etc.
- DEC – Jeff Myers and the Priority Waterbodies List
- Track on the status of watershed management plans within the Basin
- Preservation of lands – incentive based conservation efforts
- Conservation plans
- Agriculture
- State SWC Committee and/or general AEM presentation, with focus on GRB efforts
- Conesus Lake Demonstration Project
- Resources and grants – how they are being used; how they can better be used in the Basin
- Tap the ACE in an effort to get an in-depth presentation on management efforts at the dam and future plans
- **Overall – what can be accomplished at this scale (Upper and Lower Genesee River Basins) that can't be accomplished by planning at the smaller watershed scale??? What is the advantage/what are the opportunities of planning at this scale?**

Other issues:

- Letchworth is an obvious focal point, in terms of its history and influence within the GRB and potential for presenters and possible site visits
- Newton Hall at SUNY Geneseo and the Genesee River Inn and Conference Center in Mt. Morris were mentioned as possible sites; Letchworth does not have a facility to accommodate the anticipated size of the conference
- Parks and Trails NY is having its conference on September 28 and 29 in Rochester

Closing.....2:45

- ***Action Items & Assignments***
- ***Date(s) and times for future meetings***

- ***Who have we missed? (please forgive likely spelling errors):***
- Letchworth Park – Rich Parker, Manager
- Potter Co., PA
- Sid Bosche – SUNY Geneseo
- Steve Metievier, Dian Kozlowski – ACE Regulatory
- Fredy Lucky, USEPA
- Jeff Myers – DEC
- Gary Overmyer – GLC
- Dave Wright – Genesee Regional Trails Coalition

Adjourn.....3:00

Next Meeting: Thursday March 29th, 1:00, NYSDEC Region 8 Offices