Applying the findings of the Hudson River Sustainable Shorelines Project

Lisa Graichen*1,2, Emilie Hauser2, Ona Ferguson3, Benjamin Ganon2

1 Department of Natural Resources, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH
2 NYSDEC Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve, Staatsburg, NY
3 Consensus Building Institute, Cambridge, MA

* LDD22@wildcats.unh.edu

References (these and more are available at www.HRNERR.org)

Partners: Cary Institute for Ecosystem Studies, NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program, Project Leader: NYSDEC Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve

HRSSP aims to develop science-based recommendations for shore zone management that preserve or enhance natural benefits while meeting engineering needs. The project’s collaborative approach involves diverse stakeholders to identify priority information needs, respond to project findings, and shape products and tools.

Some of the project’s products include:
- Physical forces modeling data
- Guidance for better protecting shore zones
- Case studies of shoreline demonstration sites
- Literature reviews and cost analyses of shoreline treatment options
- A forensic analysis of shoreline performance during storms

Project Leader: NYSDEC Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve
Partners: Cary Institute for Ecosystem Studies, NYSDEC Hudson River Estuary Program, Stevens Institute for Technology, Hudson River Valley Conservancy, Consensus Building Institute; Funded by the NERRS Science Collaborative

What is the Hudson River Sustainable Shorelines Project (HRSSP)?

Workshop: Applying the Findings of HRSSP

In July 2014, the Hudson River NERR put on a day-long workshop for professionals involved in decisions that affect Hudson River shorelines.

Goal: To introduce end users to the HRSSP findings and tools and raise their capacity to design and permit ecologically enhanced shore protection

Who: 54 participants, including landscape architects, ecologists, engineers, and permit officials, and 11 members of the HRSSP team

What: Presentations by members of the HRSSP team and others, time for questions and answers, “lightning round” sessions about the HRSSP demonstration sites, a hands-on group activity, and group discussion.

Presentations covered ecological principles, regulatory perspectives, lessons learned from implementation, sea level rise projections, physical forces modeling, and the forensic analysis. Continuing education credits were offered for engineers and landscape architects.

How do you effectively share information and tools with end users so they can apply the findings in decisions?

Workshop Components

1. Convene a group of people with a variety of professional backgrounds and provide opportunities for networking and relationship building.

Engineers, state agency staff, ecologists, and landscape architects were all in the same room to share information, learn about each other’s challenges, and network. This was key to the workshop’s success and required holding a list of who to invite, encouraging attendance (for example, by offering continuing education credits), providing opportunities for networking, and ensuring that small groups are diverse.

2. Experts and experienced practitioners share information about the findings and their applications.

Scientists and engineers from the HRSSP team gave short presentations on the project’s findings and tools and answered questions from participants. Participants learned about how to access and apply the available resources.

3. Give participants an opportunity to talk to experienced practitioners and ask questions about the specific issues they face.

During the “Lightning Round,” participants visited stations to hear about the HRSSP shoreline demonstration sites from the professionals involved and ask them questions. Participants rotated to different stations to hear about a variety of projects and lessons learned.

4. Incorporate a hands-on group activity for participants to apply what they have learned, utilize the tools, and work together.

Participants from different professional backgrounds worked together in small groups to apply the HRSSP resources to a site along the Hudson River. They became familiar with the available resources and also identified other information and tools that would be useful.

Workshop presentations and HRSSP resources are available at www.HRNERR.org

Outcomes of the Workshop

Participants: (from evaluation forms)
- Felt the workshop was a good use of their time
- Learned about the issues and new tools
- Appreciated the opportunity to meet people and make connections
- Heard about the concerns of other professionals involved
- Learned something they will apply to future work or decisions:
  - “I can evaluate sustainable shoreline projects with more confidence”
  - “I will consider the needs of others”
  - “I will pass this knowledge along to my coworkers”
  - “I have a better idea of resources I can use to design projects”
  - “I will promote and use the [website and resources”

The HRSSP team:
- Accumulated a list of additional research and resource needs proposed by the participants, and suggestions for other stakeholders that need to know about the HRSSP findings
- Heard about the obstacles stakeholders are facing in designing and implementing ecologically enhanced shoreline treatments

Lessons Learned (from participants’ evaluation forms)

What worked well?
- Participants liked the informational presentations
- “Lightning Round” session facilitated personal interactions
- Interactive work helped participants understand available data
- Group activity and breaks enabled intense and networking
- Workshop components complemented each other well

What could use improvement?
- Too much lecture in the morning
- Needed more information on regulatory issues
- Needed more time for “Lightning Rounds” and group activity

Other Reflections
- Designing and implementing the group activity was very complex and time-intensive, but it paid off.
- There were many different components of the workshop that needed to be integrated, and the presenters, facilitators, and workshop organizers all needed to coordinate.
- Getting people from different professions in the same room, learning from each other and working together was key to success.

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