

Appendix J: Public Comment Summary

Comments on the Draft Hutchinson River Watershed Management Plan,
 Directions: Please add comments to the table below, adding more lines if needed. Return to
 Save the Sound at reducerunoff@savethesound.org

Save the Sounds Response

Section		Page (in draft)	Initials
1	Introduction	5	
	Should this state anything about flooding? I find most people respond to flooding problems and care less about water quality or ecosystem services. I realize flood mitigation is not the primary goal.		
	Introduce Biohabitats and state what it is?		
	<i>I agree that flooding is a larger draw for most people. Because flooding is not the focus of the plan we think it is best to hold off on mentioning it until later in the plan.</i>		
1.1	Nine Element Watershed Plan		
1.2	Watershed Planning Process		
	Is Pollutant Load Modelling	9	
1.3	Additional Relevant Efforts		
	Is stormwater management a reference to flooding?		
	Village of Pelham Manor recently completed a Draining Assessment by the same engineer as Village of Pelham (Also completed recently).	10	
	<i>Added to table 2</i>		
	What types of BMP does Resilient New York and the Army Corps of Engineers offer?		
	<i>The plans are still underway and will be posted at Resilient NY website: https://dec.ny.gov/environmental-protection/water/water-quantity/resilient-ny</i>		
2	Baseline Conditions		
2.1	Watershed History and Current Profile		
	Is it possible to break down or show graphically Westchester County owned land that is being landscaped by other jurisdictions? I.e. VoPM stewards portions of land along the Hutchinson River Parkway. I believe Pelham School cares for some parts that <i>may</i> be County owned.	13-14	
	<i>The information needed was not readily available</i>		
2.2	Geomorphology		

2.3	Utilities		
	NYSDEC rolled out a new MS4 permit which has a couple significant adjustment from the previous permit. Is there a difference to what is listed?	21	
	<i>I believe the information in the plan is still relevant, if significant changes have been made this will be updated in the next iteration of the plan with the Bronx portion of the watershed.</i>		
2.4	Water Quality		
	Are larger catch basins and larger pipes appropriate mitigation for flooding described here?	28	
	<i>Although these strategies are appropriate for moving stormwater quickly off roadways, they do not slow or treat stormwater prior to it discharging into the waterway</i>		
2.5	Ecological Conditions		
2.6	Ecological Challenges		
2.7	Social Vulnerability		
	I am a bit critical of equitable distribution of resources for watershed areas due to the nature of improvement in one area positively affecting other communities, particularly downstream. This may be more directed for community-led local initiatives than large scale engineering projects. I also feel that local government who refuse to act to improve the environment, put their residents at risk.		
	<i>This section is to acknowledge the need for implementation of recommendations across the full watershed.</i>		
2.8	Comparative Subwatershed Analysis		
3	Watershed Goals		

3.1	Water Quality		
3.2	Habitat and Ecology		
3.3	River Access	43	
	<p>Increasing public access to the Hutchinson River and connectivity of water bodies and open space are two very different things. Increasing the connectivity of water bodies may refer to actions such as dam removals, for instance. Yes, undoing what was done in the past to divide the waterways is good for the environment and for us all. Increasing public access to the Hutchinson River however, is less about the natural world, and more about public benefit, and their use of it. Increased access points and promoting added uses should not be explored, since it is detrimental to the nature of the rivers and its inhabitants, and does not take into account what increased usage and access will do to the environment. There are already examples of greenways and bike trails within the Westchester County Parks system that, after increasing access points and creating more trails and greenways, have issues with unauthorized motorized vehicles such as motorcycles passing through their trails. Adding more greenways and trails will only incentivize more travel and misuse of the trail system, regardless of the nature and river. If you want to improve public use, safety, appreciation and stewardship, increasing access to the river and connecting trails to make essential a “roadway” along the river like the highway already does, is no good for both the public, or the wildlife. To do so would result in people treating the river and the natural landscape as just another route to travel from point A to point B. If you truly would like to increase public use and safety, as well as appreciation and stewardship, start by increasing education and awareness of the vulnerability and responsibility we all have to the natural world. Increasing foot traffic and promoting recreational activities will only result in more damage to the environment. Opportunities to promote on-water recreation such as canoeing and kayaking should not be explored. There are natural water bodies very close to the Hutchinson River where one can go to do that. Why bring these sorts of activities to a river that is already suffering and in need of repair and attention? Furthermore,</p>		

	<p>what would the river and its inhabitants gain from on-water human recreation? Lastly, let us not look at it as a give and take scenario, because humans have historically (whether disconnected or not from the river) brought heavy damage and pollution to rivers and waterways (whether consciously or not), and now is the time to repair this damage and give to the rivers and waterways, and their inhabitants, rather than take away from and use them.</p> <p>Why not engage communities that have historically been disconnected from the river by generating opportunities for them to experience it in a constructive and educational way? Why bring forth plans for increased human traffic and usage in these highly vulnerable and biodiverse areas that are in need of our respect rather than our usage? Haven't we used and created enough of a detrimental footprint on the natural world?</p> <p>The majority of public input regarding the type and accessibility of river use to guide future implementation will of course lean towards the side of increasing it. That is the nature of humans, to use and expand their territory and reach. However, this is a watershed plan for the Hutchinson River. The Hutchinson River needs to be considered as a living being that deserves to be cleaned up, and taken care of, and not at the expense of being used for enjoyment and increased access as a result. Why can't these actions of stewardship exist without the burden of adding greenways and trails to areas of the river and its natural habitats?</p>		
	<p><i>Response: We understand this concern and those related section 6.1. The need for increased river access for all member of the community was something that was repeatedly brought up during public meetings and by the steering committee. We also believe that equitable access to local water bodies is an important element for environmental stewardship. Identifying appropriate locations for public access is critical and should not be done without consideration for ecologically sensitive areas and can be done in a manner that preserves, existing intact habitat and protects the natural beauty of an area.</i></p>		
3.4	Educational Opportunities		
4	Community Involvement		
4.1	Project Steering Committee		

4.2	Public Input		
5	Identifying Restoration Opportunities		
	Are stormwater retrofits always nature-based? Is there ever a suggestion of underground storage reservoirs and diesel pump stations that channel stormwater to the River during overflow, “even cleaner through the use of filters.”?		
	The recommendations tend to focus more nature-based solutions. Underground storage reservoirs can be effective, but tend to be much more costly to install, unless coupled with an existing construction project. Mechanical filtration also involves significant maintenance.		
5.1	Restoration Opportunity Prioritization		
6	Management Measures		
6.1	Watershed-Wide Recommendations		
	<p>These comments are in reference to page 54 of the draft for the Hutchinson River Watershed, under the section titled: “Improve Stream and River Accessibility”. I strongly suggest that you consider the portions of the Hutchinson River where development is not high, and to not suggest increased access to these portions. Communities do need to access the river, especially if they have been historically separated from it. However, this should not come at the cost of portions of the river that are inhabited by and in tranquility from, public access points or usage.</p> <p>Increasing the amount and accessibility of people onto and near portions of the river that are largely protected and considered natural sanctuaries for aquatic and land wildlife, wouldn’t be right for nature, or fair to its inhabitants. There has to be other ways to serve historically underserved</p>	54	

	<p>communities that does not involve intruding upon the natural landscape of the river, or increasing activities on it. There must be other ways to enhance public appreciation, that does not involve using recreation as a means for people to be conscious and caring of the natural world.</p> <p>Opportunities for trails and paddle craft launching should not be explored, whether in private or publicly owned lands, because it poses a threat to the peace and undisturbed nature of the living spaces for so many wonderful and rare aquatic and land animals. We have plenty of wildlife who would disagree with these initiatives to use the water bodies for the benefit or enjoyment of people, when there are already so many water bodies in the area (and in the state) that people can go to do that. Please consider holding off on and eliminating this portion of your plan in the watershed-wide recommendations.</p> <p>I sincerely hope you can find it in you to look at the bigger picture and realize that we need to start cleaning up and taking things out from these waterways and natural landscapes, not adding into them, more infrastructure and access for our use and enjoyment. At this point in history, we have done so much of this already, and in so many places around us, that few areas of truly undisturbed natural habitats are left, especially within Westchester County. Even considering adding recreational activities such as water recreation, is a detriment to the aim to restore and protect these rivers and spaces that are in need of our respect and attention. They are not in need of more foot traffic or activities that impede into and onto natural habitats that are for wildlife to thrive in.</p> <p>If you suggest this watershed-wide recommendation you are doing so without the knowledge of the consequences and plainly ignoring the nature of human activity, as well as dishonoring the aquatic and land animal life that is rich, diverse, and very much in need of protection from that very human activity (recreational or otherwise). Irreversible imprints are not what we need, and that is what would happen if you were to add more trails or push for water recreation. Humans have already done enough to pollute the rivers. This watershed-wide recommendation will only bring more pollution and disturbance to the few natural areas left for the river’s and its inhabitants. I suggest you omit it.</p>		
	<p><i>Please see the response to the comments in section 3.3 above</i></p>		
	<p>This comment is for the section titled “Trash Monitoring”and it is in reference to the suggestion of implementing “in-stream trash traps in strategic locations throughout the</p>	<p>55</p>	

	<p>watershed”.</p> <p>This implementation need only be done after careful observation of the wildlife, since these devices could be a deterrence to the natural habitats and activities of the river and its inhabitants.</p> <p>If there is a way that trash can be collected from the river that does not involve putting devices into the water to capture it all, that would be great.</p>		
	<p><i>Response: this is just one option and should not be employed without considering all options and impacts.</i></p>		
6.2	Site Specific Recommendations		
6.3	Additional Restoration Projects		
7	Current Pollution Load and Future Pollution Load Reductions		
7.1	Existing Pollutant Loads		
7.2	Estimated Pollutant Load Reductions		
8	Implementation Plan		
8.1	Funding		
	<p>Are all of these grants solely for nature-based solutions? Will NYSDEC Resilient New York program provide funding for grey infrastructure assessments recommended engineering firms?</p>		
	<p><i>The types of project eligible for funding under these programs varies and may change from year to year. I would recommend looking at the guidance prepared for each program at the beginning of the funding cycle</i></p>		
9	Monitoring Plan		

11	Appendices		
A	Acronyms and Glossary		
B	Baseline Report and Appendices		
C	Community Involvement Participants		
D	Field Work and Prioritization Summary Memo and Appendices		
E	Summary of Restoration Opportunities		
	Overall, it would benefit each municipality to have their own charts and up-close map of their watersheds. This would help me target where I can advocate for projects. I still don't understand the exact boundaries. It may come if I use the other link to pan over the maps, but it would be good to have it in the report somehow.		
	<i>As valuable as an implementation matrix for each municipality would be, it is outside the scope of this project. We can look into adding a "municipality" column to this table.</i>		
F	High Priority Restoration Opportunity Summary Sheets		
	What happened to Julianne's Playground? (RtFT_46)		
	<i>At this time summary sheets were only developed for high priority opportunities. Based on the ranking criteria outlined in the plan Julianne's Playground (RtFT_46) was identified as a "medium priority." This is still viewed as a beneficial project and implementation should be supported/advocated for, especially with work currently being planned for the playground.</i>		
G	WTM Output for Future Load Reductions		
H	Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP)		
I	WTM Technical Assessment Methodology		

Comments by February 16, 2024
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