



**US Army Corps
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New York District



**THE PORT AUTHORITY
OF NY & NJ**



New York - New Jersey
Harbor Estuary Program

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and partners announce plan to restore the New York & New Jersey Harbor Estuary

NEW YORK (May 7, 2009) -- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey announced the release of the Draft Hudson-Raritan Estuary (HRE) Comprehensive Restoration Plan (CRP). The CRP was developed in partnership with the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary Program (HEP). The HEP is a consortium of federal, state, municipal, non-governmental organizations and other regional stakeholders focused on improving the quality of the harbor estuary. The CRP sets forth a consensus vision, master plan and strategy for future ecosystem restoration in the NY/NJ Harbor. The NY/NJ HEP intends to adopt the CRP as their future restoration plan for the region. There will be public outreach meetings throughout the year to obtain input, comments and further build consensus on important restoration projects and priorities within the region.

Surrounding the Hudson-Raritan Estuary exists one of the nation's most populated urban areas. Balancing the economic needs of this metropolitan area with the estuary's environmental integrity is a challenging responsibility. To achieve this balance, and fulfill the recommendations of the Harbor Estuary Program, Congress authorized the Hudson-Raritan Estuary Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study in 1999.

The study has been conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. A major product of the study is the CRP, which aims to restore the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary – an area that encompasses approximately 2,000 square miles with an average density of nearly 6,000 people per square mile. The restoration outlined in the CRP will protect, preserve, and restore habitat, improve degraded water and sediment quality and reconnect the communities to this valuable resource. The overall goal of the CRP is to develop a mosaic of habitats that provides society with renewed and increased benefits from the estuary environment.

“The Corps is proud to have served as a facilitator to bring the region together to develop this historic plan. It is envisioned that regional stakeholders will work toward a series of common restoration goals that will create and restore habitat, improve water and sediment quality and provide access and recreational benefits to the region,” said Col. Nello Tortora, the Army Corps’ New York District commander. “The Comprehensive Restoration Plan will be the road map that will enable us to see short-term and long-term environmental improvements that will help us achieve our vision of a world-class estuary.”

The Port Authority serves as the local sponsor and equal cost-sharing partner for this project to complement port redevelopment efforts, improve natural resource values and allow for greater public access and use opportunities within the Estuary.

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"Our multibillion in investments in the region's transportation infrastructure must be accompanied by an equally ambitious vision to make sure our environmental resources are preserved for future generations," said Chris Ward, Port Authority Executive Director. "We've taken steps in recent years to be good environmental stewards, and this report will set the bar higher as we look at what must be done in the future to protect the critical estuary in New York Harbor."

Along with a cost-sharing role, the Port Authority is taking an active role in the restoration initiatives as well, such as land preservation.

"We've taken on a regional leadership role over the years to ensure our environmental resources are preserved, including our ambitious program to spend \$60 million to buy and preserve environmentally sensitive tracts of property," said Susan Bass Levin, Port Authority deputy executive director. "This study will build on the past efforts as we look to the future and the need to facilitate even more environmental initiatives in the region."

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is another key player in this environmental initiative.

"This plan will go a long way toward restoring the harbor so that it can better support fish and wildlife and so that people can enjoy the myriad benefits the harbor provides," said George Pavlou, U.S. EPA Acting Regional Administrator. "The harbor faces numerous stresses from the urban environment that surrounds it and it is only through concerted efforts, such as the multi-agency NY/NJ Harbor Estuary Program, that we can effectively address them."

Congressional leaders from both New York and New Jersey have shown support for the plan.

"Protecting our precious natural resources is about keeping the Garden State green, but it's also about securing things like clean water for our families. It is important that we map out this strategy to preserve the Hudson-Raritan Estuary by taking into account the voices of advocates and area residents and create awareness of how important this effort is for future generations," said Sen. Robert Menendez of New Jersey. "The Hudson-Raritan Estuary is situated in some of our most densely populated areas, and we must do everything we can to protect its ecosystem so that the needs of the surrounding community and nature can co-exist in our region."

The "Comprehensive Restoration Plan for the Hudson-Raritan Estuary" is available on the web at www.nan.usace.army.mil/harbor/crp and also available in hard copy.

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