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SURGE WATCH



A Note from the Storm Surge Working Group (SSWG) Chair



We are advocates for a “layered defense” system encompassing both an offshore regional barrier system and a network of on-shore perimeter defenses that would be developed together by New York City and all the coastal communities surrounding the 1,000 miles of shoreline of New York Harbor, its tributaries, and the lower Hudson River.

This specifically separates the function of the regional barriers, designed to hold back dangerous storm surges from future megastorms, but not the slow but insidious rise in sea level. Regional storm surge barriers must be held open 99.99% of the time for the purposes of navigation, fish migration, fisheries, tidal currents, river discharges and harbor flushing. There is no way they can hold back sea level rise.

This then shifts the responsibility of protecting the City and other perimeter Harbor and Tributary (HAT) communities in NY and NJ from sea level rise through the construction of modest seawalls, abutments, and barrier beach re-nourishment projects in a grand partnership. We don’t oppose the City’s proposal to build more than 100 perimeter barriers. We want to partner with them to protect the City and region from both damaging storm surges and sea level rise. We believe this system of layered defense can protect the whole metropolitan region for more than a century into the future.

Only in this way can the essential tasks of protection against both storm surges and sea level rise be accommodated in an advantageous cost/benefit scenario, plus gain the support of Metropolitan residents who will not accept 20’ high walls built around their iconic shoreline views of the New York City, Hoboken, Port Elizabeth, Jersey City, and other coastal communities and infrastructure.

Malcolm Bowman,
Senior Editor

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Image Credit: Left—Flickr User Robwelds via Inhabitat, Right—NY Harbor Nature

Can NYC Survive the Sea?

NYCH2O hosted a lecture focusing on New York City’s response to rising sea levels and coastal flooding. Speakers included Catherine McVay Hughes, who presented the concept of a layered regional protection system (minute 9 of video), and Ted Steinberg, who presented on the City’s history of development in the floodplain and the City’s approach to management of coastal flood risk (minute 32 of video). [Continue Reading...](#)

Forum Series Session 1 - Storm Surge Barrier: Traditional and Innovative Finance Options

On February 28, 2018, National Institute for Coastal and Harbor Infrastructure (NICHI) and the NY-NJ SSWG held the first in its series of four Forum Sessions that are designed as “think tanks” to address important issues related to the proposed NY NJ Storm Surge Barrier System which is currently Alternative 2 in the USACE Harbor and Tributaries Study (HATS).

The First Forum, entitled “Traditional and Innovative Finance Options,” was held on February 28th at 200 West Street in Lower Manhattan. Forum speakers included Moderator Bill Golden, President of NICHI; Professor Malcolm Bowman, Chair NY-NJ SSWG, Marvin Markus, Goldman Sachs Managing Director; Gwen Dawson, Battery Park City Authority (BPCA) VP Real Estate; Paul Josephson, Duane Morris, Senior Partner; Jack Kingston, Squire Patton Boggs Principal; and Martin Nicholson, CH2M Senior Partner. Professor Robert Yaro, Co-Chair of the NY-NJ SSWG and President Emeritus of the Regional Plan Association, led the “think tank” discussion and analysis that followed the panel presentation.

Marvin Marcus (Goldman Sachs) presented the innovative option of an insurance surcharge on property and casualty and auto insurance premiums. Gwen Dawson (BPCA) focused on how the BPCA authority intended to finance its sea level rise and interim storm surge system by reallocating real estate derived revenues. Jack Kingston (Squire Patton Boggs) discussed and analyzed the availability of federal funding through the President’s infrastructure initiative. Paul Josephson (Duane Morris) cited his involvement in a Pennsylvania public private partnership to rebuild and maintain 600 bridges. Martin Nicholson (CH2M) discussed a new USACE program that utilizes a federal, state and local finance option.

The NICHI NY-NJ SSWG Forum Series is sponsored by: Battery Park City Authority, Cameron Engineering and Associates, Chelsea Piers, CH2M, Downtown Alliance, Hazen and Sawyer, Howard Hughes Corporation, JP Morgan Chase, Langan, NY General Contractors Association, Squire Patton Boggs, S&P Global Ratings, Skanska and Tetrtech.



Thank you for keeping up with the SSWG. For more information, please visit our [website](#)

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See What NYC’s Famous Landmarks Look Like Submerged Under Water

Climate Central, a nonprofit organization that focuses on climate science, has developed a powerful visualization of the impacts of sea level rise on famous landmarks throughout the US. This tool can be used with Google Earth’s 3D maps to zoom in on waterfront communities to show conditions if global seas levels were to rise eight feet. [Continue reading...](#)



Image Credit: Climate Central

The Social Justice Case for a Metropolitan New York-New Jersey Regional Storm Surge Barrier

NICHI and the NY-NY SSWG issued a statement for Water Day setting forth the case as to why a New York-New Jersey Metropolitan Storm Surge Barrier System is the only “Social Justice” solution to protect poor and low-income communities from the devastation of storm surge. The press release coincided with the release of the April issue of the LexisNexis Environmental Law in New York Review, which includes an article on this Social Justice topic co-authored by members of NICHI and SSWG. [Continue Reading...](#)

Other Flooding and Climate Change News

Hunts Point Lifelines on WNET’s Peril and Promise.

[Continue Reading...](#)

WNET | February 7, 2018

Rockaway flood protection draft report to be released this summer; coastal Protections could include a sea wall, jetties, and groins. [Continue Reading...](#)

AM New York | March 20, 2018

Community Board 3 Parks Committee meets to discuss East Side Coastal Resiliency Project. [Continue Reading...](#)

ESCR Project | March 15, 2018