

SUMMER NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2022



HUDSON RIVER
ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIETY

NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear HRES Members:

We have certainly been experiencing some very nice spring/summer weather in the Hudson Valley this year. Hopefully, you and your families have been able to enjoy those activities that make our summers here so special. The newsletter committee has included many interesting articles to let you know what programs we have been working on this year.

We are honored to include an interview with Fran Dunwell who recently retired from her position as the Hudson River Estuary Coordinator at the NYS DEC. Fran was responsible for developing, implementing, and leading the Hudson River Estuary Program

Our next symposium will be in April 2023. We plan to have a live Awards Dinner on October 20th to HRES awardees from 2019, 2021 and 2022 at the Ole Savannah Southern Table in Kingston. Thank you for your continuing support. As always, stay safe out there.

- Jim Morrison

HRES Membership: Our 2022 Membership period for renewals and new members is still active.

You can print out the application online at www.hres.org and mail with your check to: HRES, PO Box 279, Marlboro, New York 12542.

INTERVIEW WITH FRAN DUNWELL.

Fran Dunwell recently retired from state service as the Coordinator of the Hudson River Estuary Program since the 1980s. Over the past nearly 50 years, Fran has observed firsthand the rebirth of a river that had been neglected and abused for many decades. Her leadership of the Estuary Program through the years has been instrumental in bringing this change.

In recognition of her long commitment and leadership to the Hudson River Estuary and the people of the Hudson Valley, HRES has awarded Fran the new **Dennis J. Suszkowski Leadership Award**. Commemorating Dennis Suszkowski, PhD., this awards an individual who has demonstrated strong leadership qualities throughout their career. This award recognizes an individual whose contributions to the Hudson Valley directly reflect their ability to motivate people through communicating a compelling vision and need, showing heart-felt respect and concern for others, always making those around them feel important, empowering and respecting those they work with, and showing a deep sense of gratitude to others. Dennis embodied these leadership traits and left a lasting impression on all who had the honor to know and work with him.

We will present Fran with this award at the HRES Awards Dinner on October 20th at the Ole Savannah Southern Table in Kingston.

Jim Morrison, HRES President: Fran, thank you for speaking with me for our Summer 2022 Newsletter. Also, thank you again for your leadership over the years within the Hudson River Estuary.

Jim: What inspired you to pursue a career focused on helping people “enjoy, protect, and revitalize” the Hudson River Estuary?

Fran: I love that the Hudson is full of surprises—there’s always something new. You’re never experiencing the same river from moment to moment. The clouds change, the mist rises, the sun reflects on the changing tides, a sturgeon leaps.

I grew up in Poughkeepsie and was inspired by the beauty of it, but our family didn’t swim in the river because it was so polluted in those days. That was in the 1950s and 60s before the Clean Water Act was passed. Our family fished,

but not in the Hudson. In fact, I recall getting a shot just to be able to go out on the river in a neighbor's boat, in case I fell in. In the early 1970s, I got inspired to action. I recall going to a Clearwater festival on the waterfront in my hometown and learning more about the pollution of the Hudson and what the organization was doing to get the new Clean Water Act enforced. I decided to try for an environmental career and volunteered for the county environmental management council. They hired me a few months later, and that was the beginning of many decades of work. When I started working for DEC in 1984, I paid more attention to the living river. I have been appreciating the fish and crabs, the bald eagles, and the aquatic plants as well as their amazing life cycles through the seasons ever since.

As researchers and managers of the River ecosystem there is always something new that makes our work unpredictable and challenging. This year it's the arrival of the round goby, a fish from Eurasia that will likely disrupt the life cycle of other fishes in the Hudson. The opportunity to make a difference motivates me a lot. I'm also very inspired by the people I work with who share this love of our river. We energize each other. Saving the Hudson is very personal for me. It's a big part of my life.

Jim: What do you consider to be your greatest achievement during your career with NYS DEC?

Fran: Everything I have done since 1975 has a common thread, which is helping people understand, enjoy and appreciate the river so they know how to protect it. That includes writing two books, working with legislators and governors to pass legislation and adopt new policies, developing DEC action plans and progress reports, conducting research, and promoting community science. Communication and outreach lead to conservation accomplishments. Within that context, I'm proud of what I've done to conserve forests, fields, and natural areas through helping key legislation get passed. When I worked



at Scenic Hudson, I organized coalitions in support of two laws that passed. One made it easier to use conservation easements on private lands and has led to the protection of hundreds of thousands of acres in New York State.

The other was the Coastal Management Act, which has funded local waterfront revitalization plans across the state. I also made the case for NOAA to establish an Estuarine Sanctuary (now Research Reserve) on the Hudson. Later, at DEC, I helped formulate the ideas that the legislature put into the 1987 Estuary Management Act, which created the Estuary Program. Leading that Program from its infancy is my proudest accomplishment. Over the last 35 years, the Estuary Program grants, coupled with state land acquisitions, have created new or improved access in every shoreline community and preserved several peninsulas on the river side of the railroad tracks.

Ideas from our Estuary Action Agendas made their way into State of the State initiatives such as the swimmable river goal, which led to major investments in the clean-up of the Hudson in the Capitol region. The Estuary Program is actively restoring river habitats and our signature fisheries. The program has inspired dozens of land trusts and local governments in the region to conserve key natural resources through sound land use practices and has helped watershed groups and local agencies to focus on all our major tributary streams. There are more Climate Smart Communities in the Hudson Valley than any other part of the state, which reflects the leadership role we have played in helping people understand how to adapt to climate change so they can effectively participate in this statewide program. The program also created a robust river education curriculum which is used in about 80% of school districts in the region, and the program invested in environmental education centers from New York City to Troy. Underlying all of this is a strong foundation of science to inform decision-making. Finally, I put the word estuary into our vocabulary and empowered thousands of local residents to become knowledgeable and active stewards of the river and the valley.

Jim: In your opinion, what are the challenges still facing us today on the Hudson River?

Fran: Unfortunately, we are still wrestling with the contamination of the Hudson from GE's discharge of PCBs into the Hudson. Getting the company to take full responsibility remains a priority. By contrast there are major investments now in water quality infrastructure improvement, made possible by recent state and federal legislation. Communities in the Hudson Valley need to take advantage of it and apply for grants. Another concern is the arrival of invasive species from other ecosystems, especially through the Erie Canal. The progress we have made in sustaining our native species can be reversed when some of these new creatures arrive. We saw a major impact from zebra mussels, and we now wonder how round goby will affect the Hudson. Other disruptive species are on their way. Putting a portage into the canal would be a big help. Think of it as a highway rest stop for boats moving through the canal. It's a quick fix that would have a big impact.

We also need to do more to protect the natural areas of the region. Forests protect our water resources. Many people are migrating the Hudson Valley now and they can telecommute from anywhere. There will be enormous pressure on our open spaces and natural areas. Similarly, our water resources are not adequately managed. It's a free for all. There needs to be a regional conversation about assuring that we have enough water for the people who come here to live and enough to sustain our farms and ecosystem. We need to invest in the science to help us manage the Hudson River and our ecosystem as the climate changes. We also need to bring more people into the conversation. In our increasingly fractured society, the river can be a unifying force around which we can create community. Love of the river transcends political, social and economic boundaries. Working together for the Hudson has provided me with wonderful camaraderie. I highly recommend it!

Jim: Are there any words of encouragement or advice you would like to share with anyone considering pursuing a career in environmental policy or science?

Fran: The great thing about an environmental career is that there is a place for everyone. Climate change is putting conservation front and center. Whether you are a data geek, an artist, a biologist, hydrologist, or sociologist, there is a role for you to play, and the need will only increase. My advice is to identify your strengths and go where you are needed and wanted.

“I love that the Hudson is full of surprises—there’s always something new. You’re never experiencing the same river from moment to moment. The clouds change, the mist rises, the sun reflects on the changing tides, a sturgeon leaps.” – Fran Dunwell

2022 MCKEON RESEARCH GRANT AWARDS

HRES is pleased to announce our 2022 McKeon grant winners: **Sophia Erling** and **Leo Horton**.



Sophia, a junior at Germantown Central School, is participating in a 3-year SUNY Albany Science Research program and conducting research on “Microplastics in the Hudson River Watershed,” under the direction of her faculty advisor, Dale Strong and Maija Neimisto (NYSDEC). Sophia’s research approach includes collecting surface water samples from several Hudson River tributaries, including the Poestenkill (Troy) and the Fallkill (Poughkeepsie), as well as conducting microplastics assays of glass eels collected during their annual spring migration. Sophia’s previous experience as a participant in the Hudson River Eel project led her to formulate her interesting research question and unique study design.

Leo, a high school student at the Masters School, in Dobbs Ferry, is studying “The Effects of the Changing environment in Annsville Marshes over Four Centuries,” under the direction of Dr. Dorothy Peteet (Columbia/LDEO). Leo’s project, a combination of literature/data review and

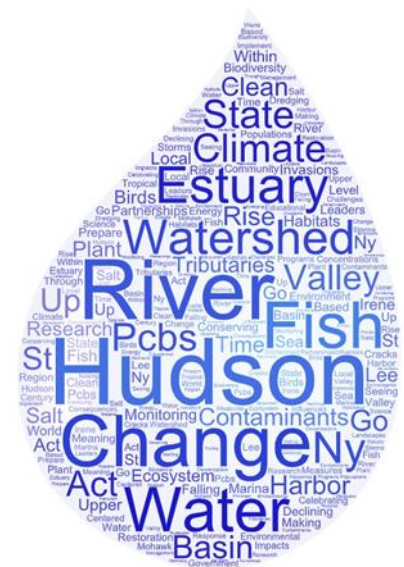
field sampling addresses two fundamental questions: 1) is there evidence of historic industrial pollution in the marshes? and 2) can changes in climate and land use be detected in marsh cores and how can these changes affect carbon sequestration?

Congratulations to Sophia and Leo on their awards. We look forward to seeing and hearing more from you as your projects continue. The HRES McKeon Research Grant program is overseen by an HRES committee led by Secretary Lucy Johnson, PhD.



We need your help. Interested in volunteering your time to support the HRES mission?

Contact an HRES Board Member today!



2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION RESULTS

The results are in for the HRES Board of Directors Election. Margie Turrin, Bill Dey, Karin Limburg and Zion Klos were unanimously reelected to the Board for the term beginning January 1, 2022 and running through December 31, 2024. David Yozzo has also joined the Board for 2022. We look forward to working with the Class of 2022 and appreciate their commitment to helping HRES meet its mission.

Welcome Dave Yozzo to the HRES Board

HRES Executive Committee

Jim Morrison (President)

Chuck Nieder (Vice President)

David S. Davis (Treasurer)

Lucy Johnson (Secretary)

Emilie Hauser (Ex Officio)

HRES Board Members

Bernadette Connors, Ph.D.

Chris DeRoberts

William Dey

Stuart Findlay, Ph.D.

Zion Klos, Ph.D.

Karin Limburg, Ph.D.

Mark McLean

Margie Turrin

David Yozzo, Ph.D.

We are pleased to introduce our newest HRES board member - Dr. David Yozzo. Dave is the founder and sole proprietor of Glenford Environmental Science. His professional and research interests include fisheries, urban ecology, community ecology of tidal wetlands and coastal/freshwater habitat restoration. He has over 25 years of experience with coastal habitat restoration, compensatory mitigation, and permitting, mainly for navigation/transportation projects throughout the United States, but mostly in and around the Hudson-Raritan Estuary. In addition, he has worked extensively to develop and implement research grant programming in the region, including co-administering the Hudson River Foundation's Tibor T. Polgar Fellowship Program since 2008. Dr. Yozzo is an Adjunct Professor of Environmental Studies at Purchase College, SUNY, and serves on the editorial board of *The Northeastern Naturalist*. Previous experience with environmental societies includes serving as Past-President of the Atlantic Estuarine Research Society (AERS) and serving on the Governing Board of the Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation (CERF).



A perfect day on the River near Germantown

Outside of work, in appropriate weather and tidal conditions, Dave can be found paddling his kayak on the Hudson and its tributaries and trying to catch a fish. These activities are often (but not always) conducted simultaneously. Additional paddling and angling destinations of interest (outside of the Hudson Valley) include the New Jersey Pine Barrens, and various streams and rivers flowing into Delaware Bay and Chesapeake Bay. So what does Dave look forward to accomplishing as an HRES board member? "I would like to help out with programming for funding and showcasing student research in the Hudson Valley. I would especially like to help promote HRES to undergraduate institutions that in the past, may not have been aware of or benefitted from HRES's efforts to promote student research in Hudson River ecology."

A HUDSON VALLEY PHOTO GALLERY



Esopus Meadows (left)

Photo Credit: A. Morrison



Newburgh Waterfront (right)

Photo Credit: J. Morrison

Like What You See? Please share with us your favorite inspirational photos of the Hudson Valley for possible publication in upcoming issues.



Albany Waterfront in Summer

Photo Credit: D. Yozzo

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hres.org/

Founded in 1970, the Hudson River Environmental Society is a nonprofit, non-advocacy organization that delivers the science behind Hudson Valley issues to citizens, scientists, and decision makers. We enable objective discussions, provide forums for rigorous science, connect disparate views, and showcase the region's natural heritage. We are academic researchers, government officials, nonprofit scientists, private consultants, teachers, students, and interested residents who find real solutions.