

**Delaware Estuary Levee Organization  
Steering Committee  
Minutes  
April 12, 2006**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>E-mail</b>	<b>Phone</b>
Bill Sumiel	Salem County Engineering and Salem City	William.sumiel@salemcountynj.gov	856-935-7510 X8549
Robert Brewer	Cumberland County Planning	bobbr@co.cumberland.nj.us	856-453-2175
Chuck Romicki	Gloucester County Planning	cromick@co.gloucester.nj.us	856-307-6650
Rick Westergaard	Gloucester County Planning	rwesterg@co.gloucester.nj.us	856-307-6681
Ken DiMuzio	Greenwich Township (Gloucester County)	kdimuzio@hdhlaw.com	856-845-8243
Jim Watt	NJDEP – Dam Safety and Flood Control	James.watt@dep.state.nj.us	609-292-2296
Ken Taaffe	South Jersey RC&D Council	Ken.taaffe@nj.usda.gov	609-561-3223
Greg Westfall	USDA-NRCS	Gregory.westfall@nj.usda.gov	732-537-6054

Welcome and Introductions

Meeting began at 9:40 a.m. Ken Taaffe, Coordinator, South Jersey RC&D Council, welcomed attendees and asked each of them to introduce themselves and their affiliation.

Delaware Estuary Levee Organization (DELO) Webpage

Ken provided an update on the status of the DELO webpage. It can be found at <http://www.sjrca.org> and by clicking on Delaware Estuary Levee Organization. The site will ultimately have the DELO Vision and Mission statement, meeting minutes, map of the region that it covers, and other useful information. Bill Sumiel, Salem County, asked for the procedure for Counties to add things to this website. Ken suggested that any information be sent directly to him at [ken.taaffe@nj.usda.gov](mailto:ken.taaffe@nj.usda.gov)

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## Delaware Estuary Levee Organization

Is New Jersey protected from a major flood? Evidence suggests that we are not. The state's flood control infrastructure is old and crumbling, responsibility is fragmented and uncoordinated. It is in the state's best interests to maintain or improve its levee infrastructure. South Jersey's ancient flood protection provides many benefits to local residents as well as everyone else.

SJRC&D was the catalyst for forming the Delaware Estuary Levee Organization to identify, update, and ensure maintenance for the 35+ levees located throughout South Jersey.

Two articles have been already been written on this fledgling organization:

1. "A New Orleans Style Flood - Could It Happen Here?" by Kenneth A. DiMuzio was the feature article in the February 2006 issue of *New Jersey Municipalities* and may be viewed online by clicking on the link at the left.
2. "Flood Protection: Southern NJ Wake-up Call" by Lance Lindstrom, SJRC&D Publicist is nearing completion and will be made available shortly.

Stay tuned. This page will be updated soon!

## Mannington Meadow Update

Ken noted that there had been a concern expressed by representatives of the Mannington Meadow Company in Salem County regarding their loss of liability insurance coverage at the March 8<sup>th</sup> DELO meeting. Bill Sumiel, Salem County, noted that State Routes 49 (Pennsville) and 45 (Mannington Township) tend to circumscribe the Mannington Meadow with the City of Salem in a middle “V”. Joe Ruggieri, NJDEP, and Kathy Stuart, State Senator Sweeney’s Legislative Assistant, met with the representatives following the meeting. Since neither Mr. Ruggieri nor Ms. Stuart were present, the group will await their return to get an update on this issue.

## Discussion of Tasks

Based on previous meeting inputs from DELO, Ken and Greg had developed a list of tasks. Ken had further developed the information to add a spreadsheet under each task listed showing who, when and the priority.

The tasks are as follows:

### **Delaware Estuary Levee Organization (DELO) Tasks**

#### ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS

##### Formalization of the Delaware Estuary Levee Group

- Identification and contact of County Freeholders and/or representatives
- Identification and contact of municipal leaders and/or representatives
- Request resolutions of support for the organization from county and municipal leaders
- Formation of Steering Committee with minimally multi-county representation
- Review and adoption of appropriate bylaws
- Election of chair, vice-chairpersons and secretary
- Consider becoming a non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization
- Develop and implement a plan of work which would identify the group’s goals and objectives

##### Creation of a website showing:

- Map of the region with selected levee locations
- Pictures from various levee sites and monthly group meetings
- Identification of the four counties and 25 municipalities
- Vision statement
- Mission statement
- Officers
- Bylaws
- Monthly meeting minutes
- Meeting schedule for 2006 showing the date, time and location for meeting
- Links to various agencies, organizations including the Corps of Engineers, FEMA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, NJDEP, PSEG, USFWS, etc.

## Speakers' Bureau

- Develop a listing of potential speakers for County and municipal elected officials meetings for discussion of the problem, request for input on the inventory and to provide a contact for further information

## Newsletter

- Develop a quarterly or semi-annual newsletter for mailing to all County Freeholders, Mayors, County Planners, County and Municipal Engineers, Mosquito Commissioners, and known Meadow Bank Companies

## TECHNICAL TASKS

### Levee inventory

- Acquire information on location and extent of levees/banks from municipalities and counties
- Assemble 2002 aerial photography
- Identify the location and extent of levees/banks from aerial photography
- Using the digital elevation model or topographic information to determine the following:
- Identify the length of levees
- Identify the ownership and/or responsible party for maintenance of levee
- Identify the HUC code (s) of the upstream (inland) watershed for each levee
- Identify the municipality and county location for each levee including municipalities upstream in the watershed
- Identify PL83-566 projects
- Identify whether municipality has an All Hazards Mitigation Plan
- Identify whether municipality has an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) for evacuation in the event of levee failure
- Determine the levee condition using some type of scoring system
- Determine number of acres that would be inundated by levee failure
- Determine number of acres of each of the NJDEP Land cover/use coded areas (urban, ag, etc.) flooded
- Determine number of structures (homes and businesses) potentially flooded
- Determine location and number of critical facilities (fire stations, emergency ambulance service, schools, Post office, etc.) flooded
- Acres of cropland without irrigation water from surface water sources
- Type and acres of crops affected
- Roads, railroads and other transportation infrastructure impacted
- Number of farmers and their characteristics affected
- Develop economic impact information
- Summarize the results of the analysis in the form of maps and analysis spreadsheets
- Summarize all of the above in a final report to include an executive summary and recommendations from the sponsors' organization

### Knowledge Base Showing Groups/Agencies, their expertise and contact information

### Catalog of Available Grants

Bill Sumiel, Salem County Engineering and Salem City Council President, stated that the resolutions of support from each of the counties and the municipalities are very important. He suggested that there should be a letter showing who the group is, what they do and incorporating a sample format of a resolution in the mailing to the prospective units of government. Ken DiMuzio, who represents Greenwich Township, Gloucester County, noted that FEMA's plans for map modernization and levees and that these could have impacts on local residents' flood insurance premiums could be very important parts of this letter. He suggested that there is an institutional vacuum and that there needs to be a political payoff for any prospective supporting unit of government. Ken DiMuzio offered to draft this letter and will make it available for the May 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

There was discussion regarding the representation of Cumberland and Salem Counties at these meetings. Ken DiMuzio noted that KP Kirkpatrick's research shows that there is only one meadow company in Cumberland County. Greg Westfall and Bob Brewer noted that there are others.

There was discussion regarding the PSE&G Estuary Enhancement Program and how they were able to work with the existing meadow companies since multiple levees. Ken Taaffe noted that Brenda Evans, PSEG, has been invited to speak at the May 11<sup>th</sup> meeting. Don Wilkinson, NJDEP Fish and Wildlife, will also be speaking. It was suggested that a request to Brenda Evans be made for a list of the meadow companies that they have dealt with. Greg Westfall noted that the Delaware River Levees and Dikes map produced by PSEG and NRCS has the names of the locations, but not meadow companies, where work has been done.

Ken Taaffe noted that he was at recent meeting on other issues and a farmer came up to him regarding levee maintenance issues. There was discussion regarding the fact that a number of farmers likely maintain these levee systems and are not represented in this group. Bob Brewer noted that the Sheppard family (David) have a levee system and that Dave is involved with the State Board of Agriculture and has been previously on the County Agricultural Development Board. Ken DiMuzio noted that legislation for resolving the meadow company issue has not yet been drafted but that his main reason for involvement with this group is to get legislation passed. He said that political leaders will not want any surprise groups coming out the of the woodwork once legislation is drafted. We need to involve all affected groups at the outset of this process. Bob Brewer will contact Dave Sheppard and other members will contact individual farmers as well as their County Boards of Agriculture to attempt to involve the farm community.

Ken DiMuzio noted that he is working on an interlocal agreement with the Gloucester County Improvement Authority which is providing the local share to the State Flood Control Bond Act funding to replace the Repaupo Creek tidegate structure.

Ken DiMuzio noted that FEMA will want to know who the owner of a levee is, who is the operation and maintenance responsible party, and the ability to qualify for emergency assistance.

Under the task “review and adoption of appropriate bylaws”, Ken DiMuzio suggested that the organization should develop formally as soon as possible so that people know who to contact. Later, the organization could become non-profit. Chuck Romick suggested that the larger group should be asked if we should have bylaws. The Steering Committee recommends that we have full bylaws. Ken Taaffe noted that elections could come following adoption of bylaws.

Under the task “consider becoming a non-profit 501 ( c )3 organization”, there were questions raised. A question was raised as to what becoming a non-profit organization does. Ken Taaffe noted that it would give the organization identity. Bob Brewer stated that the organization could handle and accept grants. Jim Watt noted that funding from the federal and state level requires that an organization be either a municipality or non-profit organization. Ken DiMuzio noted that if this organization becomes a non-profit it would provide two things, namely, funding availability (grants) and a legally identifiable organization according to state statute. He suggested that this information be provided to the larger group and ask for authorization to pursue non-profit status.

Under the task “develop and implement a plan of work which would identify the group’s goals and objectives”, Ken noted that this list of tasks and identification of who, when and its priority for each task will act as such a plan of work.

Chuck Romick asked whether we had decided on whether Cap May County would be included in this organization. It was noted that State Senator Sweeney’s legislative district (Kathy Stuart) covers the three counties (Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem) but not Cape May. Greg noted that he and Ken had done major mailings to the Mayors of the municipalities and the County Freeholders in all four counties (including Cape May) but that we have not had anyone from Cape May in attendance at our meetings. Rick Westergaard, who knows Cape May Freeholder Ralph Sheets, will reach out to him to see whether the levee issue extends to Cape May and whether they are intending to join the organization.

Bob Brewer noted that DuPont had given a nerve gas presentation to the Cumberland County Development Corporation. He noted that George Garrison, former Mayor of Commercial Township, is President of this group. He asked whether there could be a Power Point presentation to various groups including the South Jersey Freeholders Association. Bill Sumiel noted that Sue Beswick of Salem County is currently president of this organization. Bill will follow-up with her to see if they would be interested in a presentation on this group and its goals and objectives. Greg and Ken will work to redevelop the Power Point presentation first given at the November 8th meeting so as to fit the time schedule and objectives of this and other organizations that may be interested in seeing it.

Ken Taaffe asked the Steering Committee who they would like to see speaking at future meetings. He provided the group with a handout as follows:

## Ideas for Future Presentations to Sponsors' Group

- John Moyle (NJDEP)/Paul Miller (NJOEM) present information on number of repetitive flood losses, flood insurance policies and status of evacuation plans for the four county vicinity and available funding for operation, maintenance and rehabilitation of structures.
- John Moyle/John Scordato or Paul Weberg (FEMA) to discuss the nature, progress extent and schedule for Map Modernization Program for FEMA Flood Insurance Maps in the South Jersey region
- Andrew Law, USDA Rural Development, present information on available funding for operation, maintenance and rehabilitation of structures
- Dennis Hart, NJ Environmental Infrastructure Trust Fund, present information on available funding for operation, maintenance and rehabilitation of structures
- Dan Sebert, Executive Director, National Watershed Coalition to discuss organizational and funding issues for forming a regional or state watershed coalition and the prospects for including levee and associated structure rehabilitation in the PL83-566 Rehabilitation Program
- Brian Mulvenna, Corps of Engineers, to discuss the proposed S. 1836, sponsored by Vermont Senator Jeffords, to establish a National Levee Safety Program (similar to the existing National Dam Safety Program) and its prospects for becoming law
- Don Wilkinson(NJDEP DFW)/Eric Schradung (USFWS) to discuss wildlife habitat restoration funding and technical assistance that may assist project sponsors in maintenance and/or rehabilitation of structures
- NJDEP Person (Name to be Provided by Mark Mauriello) to discuss the legal aspects and responsibilities of meadow bank companies
- Mark Mauriello (or rep) of NJDEP Land Use Regulation to discuss permit requirements for operation, maintenance and rehabilitation for levees and tidegates
- John Moyle to discuss the Flood Mitigation Task Force Final Report
- Jeffrey Pantages/Brenda Evans presentation on PSEG Estuary Enhancement Program and how inventory was conducted
- Representatives (DuPont, Mobil, Hercules, etc.)of the private sector who maintain and rehabilitate their levee system
- Zeyuan Qiu, NJIT, discussion of economic impact of levees

Ken noted that PSEG and NJDEP Fish and Wildlife reps would make presentations at the May 11<sup>th</sup> meeting. Bill Sumiel noted that the Salem County Mosquito Commission Superintendent Dennis Mahoney says it is very important to let freshwater in, not saltwater, to reduce mosquito problems.

Ken began review of technical tasks, specifically, the development of the levee inventory which the group requested in November. Bob Brewer asked what capabilities in terms of GIS, etc. South Jersey RC&D has. Ken said that the RC&D program leverages assistance from others. Rick Westergaard suggested that a review of projects planned and completed would be useful. He suggested inviting contact people

for such projects as studies that the Corps of Engineers is doing at Westville and National Park. Greg Westfall suggested that gathering existing information from landowners, municipalities and counties might be useful in pulling together a regional inventory of levees (where they are, what they protect, etc.). Rick Westergaard said that NOAA has a series of maps showing structures including levees. He suggested that a new paper on the Delaware Estuary website would be useful in identifying potential contacts. He also noted that Stockton College is doing a LIDR study and will provide contact information to Ken Taaffe. He also suggested a presentation be given to the Emergency Management group that covers a number of the counties. This group has representatives of pipeline, power and other cos.

Ken DiMuzio suggested that we target meadow bank companies. He said this group could do a pilot study which could develop the methodology to do a similar inventory in other areas.

Here was a consensus that the group should invite several NJDEP reps to the June 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. Using the above listing on Ideas for Future Presentations, it was agreed that a request for an NJDEP person to discuss the legal aspects and responsibilities of meadow companies and an NJDEP person to discuss permit requirements for operation, maintenance and rehabilitation of tidegates and levees would be made through Jim Watts. Jim thought that Joe Ruggieri could address the first item. He also suggested Bruce Wallauer to discuss the conditions that need to be met to continue flood insurance coverage as it relates to meadow companies.

#### Next Meetings and Adjournment

The next meetings of the larger group will take place at 10 a.m. on May 11<sup>th</sup> and June 8<sup>th</sup> at the Cumberland County Extension Center. A Steering Committee meeting may be scheduled in between these meetings, if needed.

Meeting adjourned at 12 noon.