

RIVER ECOLOGY & GOVERNANCE TASK FORCE SCIENCE & DESIGN WORKING GROUP

TUESDAY, JUNE 18, 2019

10 – 11:30 AM

10TH FLOOR, ROOM 1003-A

CHICAGO CITY HALL

121 N. LA SALLE STREET

MEETING NOTES

- 1a. The two mayoral fellows who will be assisting in a mapping exercise for the River Ecology & Governance Task Force were introduced; Chair Debra Shore announced she had hired an intern to help catalog and organize science data, analysis, reports and resources.
- 1b. DPD and the US Army Corps of Engineers provided an overview on the Scope of Work being developed for a Chicago Rivers Restoration Framework Plan. Funds would be provided through the USACE's Planning Assistance to States (PAS) program and an in-kind match from the City and its partners in the way of staff time and participation in Task Force and working group meetings.

It was mentioned that in many places, habitat restoration and river edge improvements may be constrained by the required navigational channel width; USACE commented that their charge is to evaluate any installations along the navigation channel to ensure that such modifications do not “impair the usefulness” of the waterway.

- 1c. Nelson Chueng from DPD walked the group through the discussions and negotiations with Amtrak on the 1/2-mile segment of sea wall they will be reconstructing along the South Branch of the Chicago River. An Amtrak representative was present and the agency seems on-board with the idea of providing a roughly 9-foot planting strip along the entire extent of the sea wall for plantings, trees and some habitat restoration. The City is working with Amtrak now to develop an access agreement for ongoing maintenance of any plantings that are installed, and MWRD has offered to provide the soil for free.
2. Judy Pollock provided an update on the work of the wildlife subcommittee, which has continued to develop a species list and identify those species that are of concern and would most benefit from habitat restoration.
3. At the end of the discussion, three representatives from the City's Department of Public Health broke the group into 3 and took each through a public health “scoping pathways” exercise. The aim of this exercise was to begin to have a conversation about the potential impacts that work along the river might have on public health. These impacts can be positive or negative, and could be very directly observable, or be more indirect. At the end of the exercise, the chairs of Science & Design suggested that the other three working groups of the Task Force go through the same exercise at their next meetings in order to more fully incorporate public health into the conversations we have and work that we do. Future goals and projects within the working groups and in the larger Task Force could be run through this public health lens.