

February 6th 2014 S.W.I.M. Public Meeting  
NRDC Office, 10AM - 12PM  
Meeting Notes

### **1. SWIM Strategic Planning Survey Results Summary**

presentation by Rob Crauderueff, available on our website under "S.W.I.M. Materials" on the Resources page ([http://swimmablenyc.info/?page\\_id=6](http://swimmablenyc.info/?page_id=6))

### **2. Focus Groups: Developing S.W.I.M.'s priorities moving forward**

1. Financial or policy incentives for green infrastructure
2. Climate Adaptation policy and planning
3. Continued assessment of the DEP's Green Infrastructure Plan
4. Public Notification of CSO Events
5. Green Infrastructure maintenance - funding and public support

Focus Group Summaries:

Priorities #1 and #5: **Financial or policy incentives for green infrastructure**, and **Green Infrastructure maintenance - funding and public support**

- incentives should be for All sizes, not just large properties
- SWIM as a clearing house for funding opportunities- that would be a very helpful service
- DEP is expanding its GI grants program
  - they are doing serious outreach and looking for technical support
  - there will be a minigrant program for smaller projects
- there are various policy incentives for implementation
  - current funding issues with competing funding needs
  - how to impact policy
- The Office of Management and Budget - taking revenue from real estate
  - should do research/cost-benefit analysis of various policy initiatives
  - "budget neutral" policies will have a better chance of passing
- should keep green jobs in the discussion - job creation is a "benefit" in the "cost/benefit" analysis of policy initiatives
- example of a policy that promotes GI: a soil volume mandate - minimum soil requirement for street trees
  - better for trees and stormwater management - better return on the investment
- The stormwater fee - separate the utility bill from a stormwater charge
  - look at Philly's model
- Potential for SWIM to develop a model
  - condense best practices and make available
  - SWIM could be a clearinghouse to condense this information

Priority #2: **Climate Mitigation Policy and Planning**

- suggest the city undertake an agency specifically for Climate Change policy and funding
  - no agency has jurisdiction over climate change planning- now spread among several agencies
  - lack of leadership in which city agency will take climate change forward

- Should climate change adaptation planning and policy address the immediate needs of affected communities, or the larger, long term impacts climate change that are larger scale?
- Merging GI with climate change
  - how can we address both the frequent 1 inch rain events with coastal inundation events through GI?
  - open the dialogue for GI as a mechanism to mitigate climate change, not just stormwater management
- Urban Heat Island effect
  - Analyze GI as a means of reducing urban heat island
  - bring this to the main stage, as a proactive approach to planning (rather than a reactive approach like post-Sandy planning)
- Bring stormwater management and climate change policy to DiBlasio's agenda by inserting it into his framework of housing and education policy

Priority #3: **Continued assessment of the DEP's Green Infrastructure Plan**

- There is a need for policy to make it *easier* to do the right thing, not harder!
- Right now, city agencies are stepping in their own way
  - which agency is responsible for maintenance needs? DEP? Parks?
- City is focusing on bioswales
  - will they build as many as targeted? Whats plan B?
  - There is a need for monitoring to get data to improve those designs, make it a feedback loop
  - monitor water quality, flows through system, CSO volumes
- MS4 program draft permit is open for comment
  - how does it deal with water quality goals?
  - it's focused on best management practices, but not best results of water quality goals
  - there is a big deficiency in how that permit is phased
- Is GI the only thing we should be focusing on? Define GI?
  - the continuum between green and grey infrastructure
  - how should SWIM be incorporating that?
- minimizing water usage should be a part of that piece too

Priority #4: **Public Notification of CSO Events**

- SWIM should get involved in commenting on CSO regulations
- there is a lack of sophistication in how DEP operates with their information
- the city should be distributing information better
- DEP could improve communication
- the waterbody advisory is unspecific and unuseful
  - CSO overflow advisory is more useful
- Riverkeeper has been monitoring water quality for 8 - 10 years
  - they present their information in an easily digestible way
- Newtown Creek Alliance has 10 weather stations around the creek
  - they have a very specific, detailed idea when CSOs are happening
  - city could be doing that

- What role can we play in public interest?
  - water quality is the top page on Riverkeeper
    - shows people ARE interested in water quality
- What can SWIM do? continually push the city to show that the public is interested in these notifications
- Phillip and Willis Elkins could potentially co-chair this campaign

Overall takeaways from focus groups: *(not fully synthesized yet)*

On the policy side

- need for evaluation of existing plans
- need for advocacy of new plans and policies
- opportunities for research

For projects

- looking at best practices

Event

- SWIM DRINKS! a need for a broader networking event

### **3. NRDC's Green Edge Report**

presentation by Larry Levine, available on our website under the "Member Documents" on the Resources page ([http://swimmablenyc.info/?page\\_id=6](http://swimmablenyc.info/?page_id=6))

### **4. Announcements:**

- MS4 30-day draft Commenting Period (announcement by Larry Levine, NRDC)

On Feb. 5, NYSDEC issued [notice](#) of a draft Clean Water Act stormwater permit for the portion of New York City that is not served by a "combined" sewer system. The draft permit covers nearly [half](#) of the city, where polluted stormwater runoff flows into waterways through stormwater-only public sewers or via direct overland flow. The permit would give the city a 3-year deadline to develop a comprehensive stormwater management plan for those portions of the city, for both public and private property. It requires the City to engage the public in development of the plan. After DEC review and approval, the plan would become binding on the city. Importantly, the draft permit sets the minimum requirements for what this new stormwater plan must include, which means that weighing-in on the permit now is critical to affect the contents of the plan later.

The [draft permit and fact sheet](#), including a detailed summary of the draft permit, are available for review [here](#). The SWIM Coalition will closely review it and submit comments to DEC. All SWIM members and supporters are also encouraged to do so as well – see the DEC contact info below. Please also share your thoughts on the permit with SWIM, by writing to [swimmablenyc@gmail.com](mailto:swimmablenyc@gmail.com). And look out for an announcement of a public meeting that DEC is planning to discuss the permit.

Based on SWIM's preliminary review, some areas of concern in the draft permit include: (1) requirements to manage stormwater on new private development would apply only to sites of at least one acre in size, which is a very small proportion of sites in NYC; (2) the permit focuses on improving "best management practices," without also creating a framework to ensure that water quality standards are met in the receiving waters.

DEC's public 30-day comment period ends on **March 7th**. Comments (or requests for an extension of the comment period) should be directed to:

Steve A Watts  
NYSDEC Region 2 Headquarters  
47-40 21st St  
Long Island City, NY 11101  
[\(718\)482-4997](tel:(718)482-4997)  
[r2dep@gw.dec.state.ny.us](mailto:r2dep@gw.dec.state.ny.us)

- **Urban Green Council Stormwater Strategies Panel** (announcement by Jaime Stein, Pratt Institute)

Join the [Urban Green Council](#) for a Stormwater Strategies Panel on February 20th. The panelists will discuss DEP's recently revised its stormwater rules for new development and redevelopment in combined sewer areas. The event is hosted by the Mohawk Group.

**SCHEDULE**

6:00 - 6:30pm Registration and Reception  
6:30 - 8:00pm Presentation and Panel Discussion

**LOCATION**

[The Mohawk Group](#)  
71 West 23rd Street, 18th Floor  
New York, NY 10010

This panel discussion will feature Angela Licata, NYCDEP's Deputy Commissioner for Sustainability, Michael Nilson of Langan Engineering, and Jeff Miles of Kiss + Cathcart Architects. Angela will explain the new stormwater rules, while Michael and Jeff will explore innovative methods they have used to manage on-site stormwater in numerous NYC developments. Jaime Stein, Head of Sustainable Environmental Systems Program at Pratt Institute and S.W.I.M. Steering Committee member, will moderate.

For more information, visit the [event page](#).

- **Saw Mill Creek daylighting event in April** (announcement by Evan Mason, Sustainable Yards)

Green Home NYC Forum: Daylighting the Saw Mill River in Downtown Yonkers  
April 2014, 6:30-8:00pm Manhattan Location TBD

Speakers:

Ned Sullivan, Scenic Hudson  
Joe Fleming, P.E., PS and S Engineering  
Rick Magder and Ann-Marie Mitroff, Groundworks

More details to come – look for more information in an e-blast.