



South Shore Blueway Trail



Stakeholder Outreach Report



Submitted to South Shore Blueway Advisory Committee
by Going Coastal, Inc.
June 10, 2013

Funding for the South Shore Blueway Trail has been made possible by the Village of Freeport, a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program grant from the New York State Department of State under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund, and the Nassau County Environmental Bond Act Program.

Going Coastal conducts ongoing outreach to provide opportunities for community involvement throughout the trail planning, development and implementation process. Public outreach and planning for the blueway trail and stakeholder meeting were pushed back to the spring due to the severe impact of Hurricane Sandy in October, one month after the project's initial kickoff meeting. In the interim, Going Coastal involved the community in the process of inventorying public access sites suited for put-ins, trail routes, researching amenities, and upland places.

Outreach Methods

- Stakeholder Meeting Workshop
- Website
- Presentations
- Event tabling
- Postcards & Flyers
- Social media
- Trail User Surveys
- Launch Site Assessments by paddlers
- Mail Chimp
- *On the horizon* – Draft Plan Announcement and Public Meeting

Going Coastal, Inc. prepared a joint press release announcing planning for the South Shore Blueway Trail, which was released on March 5, 2013 by the press office of Nassau County and the Village of Freeport publicity department, as well as Going Coastal to local media. Newsday's waterways writer Bill Bleyer met with members of the advisory committee for a photo op at Seaside Park in Freeport and had a Q&A session about the trail planning process and ran a story about the water trail and announced the stakeholder meeting.

The open invitation stakeholder meeting was held April 4, 2013 at the Freeport Recreation Center. Invitations were sent electronically. Contact lists of local stakeholders, paddle clubs, environmental groups, government agencies, etc. were generated by Going Coastal and advisory committee members, as well as Citizens Campaign for the Environment. In addition, the stakeholder meeting invitation was included in the NACK and LI Paddlers kayak club announcements, Kayaker Meetups, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other social media. A media advisory was issued to calendar listings two weeks prior to the meeting date and ran in close to a dozen local publications and online calendars. Both the local online editions of the LI Herald and Patch ran the meeting announcement. A follow-up email was sent in advance of the stakeholder meeting, and calls were made to organizations who assisted in spreading the word to community stakeholders, including Molloy Sustainability Institute, Citizens Campaign, Vision LI, and Operation SPLASH, which forwarded the notice to their lists and promoted the event on their social media sites.

Going Coastal created and distributed 500 flyers announcing the meeting and promoting the project website, which was distributed by North Atlantic Canoe and Kayak (NACK) at their booth at the Northeast's largest paddlesport event, the NJ Paddlesport Show on March 22/23. We distributed to attendees at the Reel Paddling Film Festival in Manhattan on March 22 at the Manhattan REI store and to persons attending the

Sustainable Film Festival at Molloy College Institute on Sustainability. Flyers were also distributed at Empire Kayaks and at the Nassau County, Long Island locations of REI and Eastern Mountain Sports. Advisory Committee members printed and copied the flyer for distribution at local libraries, sporting goods shops and at paddle club meetings.

The stakeholder meeting began a planning process directly engaging residents in a conversation about what they want in the South Shore Blueway Trail. In addition to gathering feedback on launch sites, attendees drew trail routes and trips, noted hazards and other information. Participant recommendations and notes about the launch sites were entered into a Site Inventory database. Over a dozen paddlers signed up to evaluate existing and potential launch sites. These were conducted and submitted throughout May via online form on the project website. The Meeting Summary submitted last month details the feedback gained at this meeting.



Website

The project website southshoreblueway.com, launched through the free Google Sites in September 2012, is central to trail development providing mechanisms for public feedback and comments while serving as a vehicle for project updates and news. All materials, meeting minutes, press and promotional materials are publically available on the website. A Blueway google map marks all potential and existing sites, cultural attractions, restaurants, trail hazards and is updated regularly with new information from stakeholder input. As the project moves forward, the Draft Plan will be made available for download from the website.

Mail Chimp

Regular email announcements, meeting notices, news, and monthly project updates are sent out using mail chimp, a free email marketing and list manager. Anyone can sign-up for the e-news on the project website or facebook page. To date, we have developed lists containing 250 stakeholders who have received five project notices since March. We can easily track the success of each campaign in getting the project message out with reports on each e-blast.

Facebook:

Going Coastal established a project page at facebook.com/southshoreblueway to interact with stakeholders. We purchased advertising on Facebook targeting the population living within Nassau County's south shore communities and ran the above Stakeholder Meeting Announcement for 30 days prior to the meeting date. The meeting ad appeared in the sidebar of the facebook page of all local residents. The advert generated 90,000 impressions and 385 clicks. The announcement was also shared and posted to the newsfeed of 50 well-matched local facebook pages, which helped to further share the announcement.



Please join us! Help create the water trail in the Hempstead Bays and South Oyster Bay. Identify launch sites, suggest ways to promote safety, and find ways to tell about the rich history of South Shore waterways.

Freeport Recreation Center 130 E. Merrick Road, Freeport, NY 11520.
RSVP <http://bit.ly/13JoNaG>. For more information, visit www.southshoreblueway.com.

Daily uploads to the project facebook page include images of launch sites and events, project updates and requests for paddler feedback.

Presentations:

April 16, LI Paddlers Club monthly meeting

Going Coastal presented a power point presentation and facilitated a discussion about the South Shore Blueway Trail with 70 members of Long Island Paddler's Club. The focus of this meeting was trail needs, amenity priorities and safety concerns.



LI Paddler feedback:

- Emphasize safety, lifejacket use; more safety education for new kayakers is vital
- Top amenities: parking, restrooms
- Need for showers or rinsing station so paddlers can clean up to visit upland locations.
- Solution to crowding at ramps with motor boats/jet skis have alternative site just for human-powered boaters.
- The hurricane changed the geography of the south shore affecting currents and conditions in some places, people need to be aware of it
- Suggest kayaker participation in the launch design

process, such as floating docks, which often are not easy to use, there is a preference for specialized kayak docks similar to Jet Ski launch pads.

- Paddler's stated there are few destinations to paddle to and like the idea of offering themes or suggesting places to visit.
- Problem of fishing debris left at boat ramps by powerboaters
- Concern for long carries to the water at locations like Cow Meadow.

LI Paddlers have developed a skill level scale for paddle routes, which they offered for the Blueway Trail to adopt. This will notify paddlers which locations are best for the less skilled and routes that require advanced skills. LI Paddlers offered to take out Advisory Committee in tandem kayaks to visit sites.

Postcards:

Going Coastal developed a promotional postcard to raise awareness of the water trail planning process and stimulate public engagement. 1000 postcards have been distributed to the public at event tabling, paddling outfitters, outdoor store REI and, beginning in June, handed out to paddlers at ramps and launch sites.



Event Tabling:

Saturday, April 27 The Dinghy Shop Test Paddle Day

Over 100 kayakers visited the outfitter to test drive different kayaks, everyone showed a great deal of interest in the Blueway Trail and even expressed that they hope that the same type of project can be done for Suffolk County. Paddlers talked about Alhambra Road as the best launch to South Oyster Bay, only needed a seasonal port-a-potty, otherwise a great beach launch to calm waters. Paddler's like the idea of themed routes and more destinations, such as the "South Shore Clam Route".

Sunday, April 28 Empire Kayaks Grand Re-Opening

80 people arrived in intervals throughout the day to support the grand opening and "Earth Day" kayaking event. This was a dual effort to support Empire Kayaks and to keep the environment clean by to remove garbage leftover from Sandy. Many people were excited to hear the Blueway project, years in the process, was

finally being realized. Suggestions included a theme route for youth specifically so that they could have something to do after kayaking, as well as for trail planning to check out conditions for parks with playgrounds near the water. Finding appropriate take off places were important, many locals said that due to the storm, many were under water or destroyed in some cases.



Saturday, May 17, Jamaica Bay Kayak Fishing Tournament
Over 300 kayak fishers from throughout New York camped out for the annual tournament, a qualifier in the Hobie World Championships, coordinated by Long Island's Captain Kayak. Jerry welcomed us to visit with paddlers and distribute Blueway postcards during the tournament dinner.

Saturday, June 1 Freeport Nautical Mile Festival

Operate SPLASH graciously shared their table space with Going Coastal during the return of the Freeport Nautical Mile and disseminated hundreds of postcards to attendees. Nassau County Executive Mangano's booth joined us in distributing Blueway postcards to the public, as did Freeport Kayak Rentals, Friends of Freeport and the Harbor Surf & Sports Shop.

Trail User Surveys

One of tools Going Coastal created to inform the trail planning process is the Trail User Survey. 70 paddlers completed the online survey, accessed on the project website and facebook page, in addition, a QR code was created for users to complete the survey by smart phone and the survey was emailed to paddling clubs and paddlers via mail chimp e-blast sent April 25 to 216 stakeholders. The Survey Summary Report is attached.



At the request of Kyle Rabin, Going Coastal conducted research about kayak trail naming conventions concerning names blueway vs. watertrail and did a naming survey engaging stakeholders via mail chimp and facebook resulting in the name South Shore Blueway gaining 85% of the 45 responders selecting it. Other choices included South Shore Estuary Water Trail, Nassau County South Shore Water Trail and Long Island South Shore Blueway.

Launch Site Paddler Assessments

From September 2012 to April 2013, visitors to the project website had the ability to add launch points to a Google map and even add trail routes to the "Suggest a Launch" maps, which took in 10 markers. Through the month of May, two dozen paddlers have conducted site evaluations of 15 existing

HELP DESIGN

The South Shore Blueway Trail

and potential new put-ins within the project area, completing the evaluation form online through the project website where the information enters directly into a database. Going Coastal has incorporated this data, plus the recommendations from the stakeholder meeting, into Site Profile Forms, which will provide an overview and photos of each launch site, as part of the draft plan

In addition to engaging paddlers in the trail planning process, community leaders have been invited to appraise interpretive details for the trail, such as LI Traditions, the Freeport Historian, SSER and others adding historical, cultural, and environmental input.

After collecting stakeholder feedback through the various outreach tools and techniques, Going Coastal, Inc. and Cameron Engineering and Associates will develop the South Shore Blueway Draft Plan. Continuing to engage with the community will help the Blueway Trail project better serve the needs of the human-powered boating community as the process moves forward. ###