

PECONIC ESTUARY PROGRAM

FY00 WORKPLAN AND BUDGET

Submitted by:

**Peconic Estuary Program
Management Conference**

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**Peconic Estuary Program (PEP)
FY00 Workplan and Budget**

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PECONIC ESTUARY PROGRAM

FY 00 WORKPLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

The Peconic Estuary system consists of over 100 distinct bays, harbors, embayments and tributaries, which cover an area of over 100,000 acres. The population of the East End towns surrounding the Peconic Estuary system is 115,000 year-round (1989 estimate), increasing to over 280,000 during the summer. These residents and visitors use the system and its resources extensively for beach-going, swimming, boating, fishing, shellfishing, and water-dependent industries, contributing significantly to the local economy. However, there are problems in the system ranging from increased nutrient loading to declines in habitat quality and quantity, and reduction in catch of commercially and recreationally important finfish and shellfish. Other issues of concern include closure of shellfish beds due to contamination by coliform (used as an indicator for pathogens), potential contamination with toxic substances, the relationship of land use to water quality and the health of the living resources, and persistence of brown tide. The effects of these problems are a significant threat to the health of the Peconic Estuary system and its resources.

2. OVERALL FUNDING SOURCES

The core FY00 budget (see Table 1) reflects the following sources of funding:

EPA FY00 Base Funding	\$ 338,000
Non-Federal Match	\$ 113,000
<hr/> TOTAL	<hr/> \$ 451,000

The non-federal match consists of Suffolk County Department of Health Services (SCDHS) and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC).

The actual match for the FY00 period is expected to greatly exceed the commitment reflected in the budget table.

3. PROGRAM STATUS

A Draft Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan Public Summary document (September 1999) is included in Attachment A. This includes an overview of program management status.

The Management Conference believes that the PEP has effectively administered the funding it has received to support appropriate and necessary efforts which will result in a truly comprehensive,

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meaningful, and site-specific CCMP. Especially significant are the following factors which, individually and collectively, make the PEP unique:

- * the focus on early action, which resulted in a firm "no net increase of point source nitrogen" commitment for the western bays system, as well as a commitment to establish a progressive water quality preservation policy for the eastern portions of the Peconics.
- * the level of detail (e.g., parcel-specific land use information for the entire study area)
- * the extent of monitoring and data collection (e.g., thousands of groundwater and surface water samples)
- * the powerful management tools which are being utilized (e.g., state-of-the-art hydrodynamic and water quality modelling)
- * the goals of site-specificity for management, with focus not only on the main bays system, but also on subwatersheds for creeks and embayments
- * state-of-the-art technical characterization techniques which will be essential to PEP management (e.g., sediment flux and accretion measurement; sophisticated groundwater underflow measurement techniques)
- * the early focus on finance and implementation, with a state-of-the-art, full valuation of market and non-market resources being performed to support these tasks.
- * the level of involvement of all levels of government, which has resulted in the preparation of the Base Programs Analysis draft nonpoint source program inventory.
- * a comprehensive Geographic Information System program.
- * emphasis on water quality preservation, and interaction of living resources with water quality management

With the exception of the draft Habitat and Living Resources and Nutrients modules of the CCMP (which were delayed due to technical factors of several ambitious studies), the PEP has been generally successful in adhering to product timelines, including timing guidance and requirements from USEPA and the schedule set forth in the Management Conference Agreement. An update of the status of the timing for Management Conference Agreement commitments is as follows:

- Conference Agreement and Year 1 Workplan deadline: July 1993;

- * Actually adopted: June 25, 1993

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- Public Participation Strategy deadline: Oct. 1993
 - * Outline adopted: June 25, 1993
- Program Office establishment deadline: Oct. 1993
 - * Program Office agreed upon: June 25, 1993; began role immediately
- Data Management Strategy deadline: Oct. 1993
 - * Draft strategy produced in September 1993; final strategy issued December 22, 1993
- Base Programs Analysis deadline: July 1994
 - * Preliminary programmatic recommendations included in Action Plan in December 1994
 - * Draft nonpoint source inventory produced: November 1994
 - * Full analysis to be integral part of the final CCMP
- Characterization Report (trend study, cause/effect study, loading study) deadline: July 1994
 - * Brown Tide Comprehensive Assessment and Management Program was accepted as a preliminary characterization report for purposes of developing an Action Plan in July 1994. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations have been fully incorporated in the Action Plan. All other major characterization reports (nutrients, habitat/living resources, toxics, submerged aquatic vegetation, etc.) have been issued.
- The Draft CCMP produced in September, 1999, final CCMP target is now December, 2000.
 - * Action Plan: December 1994
 - * Preliminary Working Draft CCMP produced: Nov. 1995
 - * Draft CCMP: September 1999
 - * Due to delays in key technical work tasks, the Management Conference will require a extension of the final CCMP date to December, 2000. However, the CCMP will have a tremendous amount of site-specific technical supporting information, and detailed recommendations and actions, rather than just a plan to arrive at detailed recommendations and actions.
 - * The New York State Department of State will need to review the CCMP and specify its consistency with the New York State Coastal Zone Management Plan prior to submittal to the EPA Administrator.

4. ELEMENTS OF THE WORKPLAN IN RELATION TO THE NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM PURPOSES

Purpose 1. ASSESS TRENDS IN THE ESTUARY'S WATER QUALITY, NATURAL RESOURCES, AND USES.

The Peconic Estuary Program Management Conference used the Brown Tide Comprehensive Assessment and Management Program as background to provide information on trends in nutrients,

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brown tide, and other general water quality parameters (e.g., temperature, salinity, turbidity, etc.) and physical characteristics. Additional historical and current data sets on toxic contaminants, habitat quantity and quality (e.g., wetlands, eelgrass, etc.), abundance of finfish, shellfish, and wildlife, land uses, and pathogen contamination are being identified and analyzed to determine trends in these ecological parameters. Trends in the uses of the estuary have been determined through examination of the economic value of the system in terms of commercial and recreational fishing, tourism, water-dependent recreational activities (e.g., boating, swimming), and other activities.

Purpose 2. IDENTIFY CAUSES OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS BY COLLECTING AND ANALYZING DATA.

The Management Conference has used the data sets collected above to identify the environmental problems of the system, and to identify critical data gaps that need to be filled. (Some of the environmental problems in the western portion of the system were already identified by BTCAMP.) Based on this assessment, the Peconic Estuary Program has sponsored monitoring and research to fill critical data gaps that will help identify the causes of environmental problems. All data that is collected during the course of this study will be input into the selected data and information management system and used for modelling purposes as necessary.

Purpose 3. ASSESS POLLUTANT LOADINGS IN THE ESTUARY AND RELATE THEM TO OBSERVED CHANGES IN WATER QUALITY AND NATURAL RESOURCES.

The Management Conference used BTCAMP to provide information on nutrient loadings. Additional work has been conducted to assess the sediment flux of nutrients. Loadings of pathogens have been assessed through site-specific data collection and monitoring. These loadings have been related to the impairments identified in the estuary, such as a reduction in certified areas for shellfishing and declines in the distribution and abundance of submerged aquatic vegetation.

Purpose 4. RECOMMEND AND SCHEDULE PRIORITY ACTIONS TO RESTORE AND MAINTAIN THE ESTUARY, AND IDENTIFY THE MEANS TO CARRY OUT THESE ACTIONS (I.E., THE CCMP).

An initial Action Plan was developed by the Management Committee and approved by the Policy Committee, with input from the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and Local Government Committee (LGC). The Action Plan includes commitments for action by Federal, state, county, and local governments. This Action Plan was adopted on August 18, 1994, and finalized on December 1, 1994 based in large part on recommendations provided in the BTCAMP summary document. It was revised as a preliminary CCMP in November 1995.

The CCMP will address the priority problems identified in the Peconic System by the Management Conference and provide recommendations and commitments for action by all levels of government.

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A draft CCMP was released in 1999 including recommendations and commitments for the most serious and pervasive problems facing the Peconic Estuary and its watershed. The final CCMP will include a consistency review and a monitoring plan as well as a new Critical Lands Protection Strategy. It will be released following a public comment period and USEPA administrative review. Writing and coordination of the CCMP will be initially undertaken cooperatively by USEPA, New York State, and Suffolk County program coordinators with input as described above; a professional technical writer worked on reformatting the document.

Purpose 5. ENSURE COORDINATION OF IMPLEMENTATION AMONG FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL PARTICIPANTS IN THE CONFERENCE.

The Final CCMP will include both commitments and recommendations. Management Conference participants recognize that completion of the CCMP is not the end of the process, but rather that it is the implementation to follow that is important to protect and restore the Peconic Estuary. It will also be necessary to periodically review progress of actions and monitoring results, and adjust program priorities and activities accordingly. Continued coordination at all levels of government, with the private sector, and with citizens will be important in this regard. The CCMP includes a Post-CCMP management structure and financing options to support this continuing effort.

Purpose 6. MONITOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ACTIONS TAKEN UNDER THE PLAN.

Ongoing monitoring activities such as Suffolk County water quality sampling, and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's shellfish sanitation program and finfish survey will continue throughout the program. An integrated monitoring plan incorporating the ongoing activities has been drafted. This monitoring plan will be included as part of the CCMP. The development of criteria and measurable goals will help to ensure the effectiveness of actions taken under this plan.

In addition to monitoring water quality and natural resources-related parameters, the management conference participants will also address intermediate indicators which may be used to assess the effectiveness of actions. These intermediate indicators track action or behavior undertaken by persons or organizations that can affect water and natural resource quality, but do not measure end results. Examples including tracking progress of estuary protection actions undertaken by governments, businesses (such as those using hazardous materials), households, and boaters.

Purpose 7. ENSURE THAT FEDERAL ASSISTANCE AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE GOALS OF THE PLAN.

Relevant Federal, State, and local programs are being reviewed in the Base Program Analysis to determine if such programs are consistent with, and further the purposes and objectives of, the CCMP. This review will be included as part of the CCMP. Enforceable actions will be incorporated

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into the State's Coastal Management Plan.

5. PECONIC ESTUARY PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The Peconic Estuary Program is administered by a Management Conference, as outlined in the Management Conference Agreement. However, funding will be provided for support of most Management Conference activities, in the form of NYSDEC and SCDHS staff. State and County staff will provide many functions that are vital to the success of the Peconic Estuary Program. These tasks include planning and coordinating Management Conference activities, developing support documents for the Program, and providing State and County input into all levels of the Program. Staff support of the PEP is more fully discussed below.

The SCDHS Office of Ecology has been designated as the PEP Program Office. As such SCDHS, as the working arm of the Management Committee, is responsible for management and coordination of all routine aspects of the PEP.

6. OVERALL PROGRAM APPROACH

The Peconic Estuary Program will follow the general approach outlined in the Management Conference Agreement. This approach has three key elements: 1) technical, 2) administrative/regulatory, and 3) public involvement. These elements are outlined in general here, and the specific tasks that fall under each element are described below.

The technical element includes research and monitoring activities, designed to synthesize our understanding of and further our knowledge of the Peconic Estuary System. It can be further broken down into three categories: 1) extending the geographic scope of BTCAMP, and 2) performing detailed natural resources investigations, 3) conducting management efforts, additional research and pilot demonstration projects (including brown tide research).

The administrative/regulatory element will include, but not be limited to, an inventory of applicable Federal programs for purposes of consistency review, development of procedures for ensuring that programs are consistent with recommendations of the Peconic Estuary Program, a program analysis with respect to Federal, state, and local water quality and natural resources management, and a detailed set of recommendations regarding implementation, including a financial component.

Public involvement is addressed through a Public Participation strategy developed by the Citizens Advisory Committee. The Public Participation and Outreach Program will include disseminating information to educate the public regarding the scope, goals, and progress of the Peconic Estuary Program. This information will be disseminated through pamphlets, booklets, public service announcements, conferences, workshops, and other methods.

7. KEY FY00 ACTIVITIES

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The following are key FY00 activities, along with the federal funding required to conduct the activities. The activities are summarized in Table 1.

A) Technical Program Tasks

All FY00 technical tasks will be post-CCMP management-oriented. The technical program tasks are designed to address the priority problems of the Peconic Estuary as discussed in the Management Conference Agreement and Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan. These tasks includes establishing long-term monitoring and management frameworks, and facilitating necessary technical and administrative efforts to allow effective CCMP implementation oversight. All efforts will be consistent with CCMP recommendations and actions.

The project descriptions include funding allocation which reflects the relative importance of the tasks as well as anticipated efforts required to accomplish these tasks. Precise project details and requirements will be specified by the Management Conference as the PEP proceeds.

Tasks will be designed and conducted in a manner which will maximize geographic information system (GIS) use to manage resulting data. GIS mapping will occur as funding for specific tasks permits. Tasks also will conform to the data management strategy (December 22, 1993). The strategy will be designed to maximize accessibility and usefulness of data by systematically integrating the data management needs of the various project tasks.

The program tasks are summarized as follows:

i) Living Resources/Long-Term Monitoring (\$55,000 federal funding)

Based on key issues, management programs, and indicators identified in the CCMP under development, a monitoring program will be developed to allow the evaluation of the effectiveness of implementation of CCMP actions. This will allow the Management Conference to assess the effect of implementation on environmental conditions, to analyze the effectiveness of programs in relation to their intended goals, and to make corrections in the course of the CCMP process. Programs will include, but not be limited to, submerged aquatic vegetation, shoreline hardening, benthic mapping and wetlands post CCMP monitoring.

ii) Water Quality Monitoring Program/Long-Term Monitoring (\$40,000 federal funding)

Based on key issues, management programs, and indicators identified in the CCMP under development, a monitoring program will be developed to evaluate the effectiveness of implementation of CCMP actions. This will allow the Management Conference to assess the effect of implementation on the environment, to analyze the effectiveness of programs in relation to their intended goals, and to make corrections in the course of the CCMP process. The monitoring program will include conventional water quality and Brown Tide monitoring in several main bays

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and key embayments. The purpose will be to establish trends in nitrogen, dissolved oxygen, and submerged aquatic vegetation habitat criteria, and to relate those trends to land use and water quality management program approaches in the CCMP. SCDHS match is expected to significantly exceed the EPA award for this task.

iii) Peer Technical Evaluations (\$10,500 federal funding)

Moneys have been set aside to support peer technical evaluations and other related activities necessary for effective post-CCMP management.

iv) Support of Technical Advisory Committee and Local Government Committee (\$2,500 federal funding)

The Technical Advisory Committee and Local Government Committee will be allocated \$2,500 to support committee activities, including administrative costs associated with reproduction and mailings.

v) Travel (\$10,000 federal funding)

\$10,000 will be set aside for travel to National Estuary Program related-meetings.

To date a total of \$71,000 has been awarded for employee travel (\$41,000) and non-employee travel (\$30,000). The Program Office estimates that approximately 70% of the employee travel funding has been expended, and that 76% of the non-employee travel funding has been used (approx. \$51,500 total expended; see Attachment B).

The travel funds have been used for numerous travel purposes, including:

- Attendance of NEP Directors Meetings.
- Attendance at NEP-related technical, public education and outreach, local government-oriented meetings.
- Attendance at national and regional conferences to provide technology transfer (of PEP technologies).
- Travel support for peer reviewers and other professional and technical attendees at PEP conferences to provide input to the PEP.

The Program anticipates that the rate of use of travel funding will increase substantially in the near future. As reliance on major contractors diminishes, the PEP will be seeking to hold more workshops where experts are invited to discuss PEP and other NEP issues. These workshops are in addition to the other travel needs specified above.

vi) NYSDEC/SCDHS Staff (\$75,000 federal funding)

NYSDEC will receive \$75,000 to fund a year of one Peconic Estuary Program Coordinator. The purpose of this support will be to carry out day-to-day post-CCMP work required by the Management Conference.

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vii) Program Office (\$75,000 federal funding)

SCDHS serves as the PEP Program Office. The roles and responsibilities of the Program Office are defined in the Management Conference Agreement. The budget for the Program Office is contained in Table 2.

viii) Supplemental Funding (Biennial Review Support (\$20,000 federal funding))

These funds are to be used to assist in addressing challenges identified by EPA in the 1999 Biennial Review. In particular, these funds will assist with tracking and reporting on progress in implementing CCMP actions. Use of these supplemental funds in this manner can also strengthen the programs capacity to show and produce environmental results. It will also enhance EPA's ability to accurately measure NEP progress for reporting under the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA).

Supplemental funds may be used for staff or outside support to initiate or implement activities in one or all of the following areas (the first two items could be combined):

- 1) develop or enhance a CCMP report card or environmental progress report on the estuary (provides information on environmental results achieved during CCMP implementation or from early action);
- 2) develop or enhance a CCMP implementation tracking system (indicates level of progress being made in implement CCMP actions); or
- 3) develop new or augment existing environmental indicators (including any necessary monitoring, modeling or data management activities, or to conduct workshops).

**TABLE 2
SCDHS Program Office Budget**

<u>Program Management Needs</u>	<u>Expenditures</u>
Environmental Analyst (for post-CCMP management)	\$59,600
Office Equipment and Photocopy Machine	\$10,000
Furniture (file cabinets, terminals, etc.)	2,000
Miscellaneous Supplies	<u>3,400</u>
TOTAL	\$75,000

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9) Citizens' Advisory Committee Program (\$50,000 federal funding) (Public Participation Strategy Summary provided by CAC)

"Informing and involving the public and getting its support can be the most difficult aspect of an estuary program, yet it is the cornerstone of a successful NEP program . . .

"Because so much is at stake, it is important to put the best talent, adequate resources, and full program commitment into designing and executing an effective process for public participation and commitment . . ." USEPA Journal, SAVING BAYS AND ESTUARIES

A proposal for an effective Public Participation and Outreach Program has been developed to ensure full public participation and understanding leading to a successful Peconic NEP. In FY 98, the Citizens' Advisory Committee program will focus on Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan implementation.

The proposed program is based on:

1. USEPA National Estuary Program as outlined in "Saving Bays and Estuaries: A Primer for Managing Estuary Programs."
2. The mission of the PEP: A CCMP for the restoration and preservation of the Peconic Estuary system.
3. The mission of the PEP CAC: a) to assist the Management Committee in communicating with key segments of the public and b) to create a groundswell of public opinion, through an organized program, that will lead to actions to engender the political will necessary to adopt and implement the CCMP for the Peconic Estuary.

The proposed program incorporates the concerns and suggestions of the various Focus Groups of the current NEP CAC and builds on the successful public participation and outreach program of the BTCAMP CAC. The strategies and techniques proposed are deemed vital to creating a climate that will result in an exchange of understanding leading to support and action.

The proposed program recognizes the need for a positive approach to the East End business community, a segment of the public vital to CCMP implementation. It also recognizes the need to reach out to that segment of the general public which has not been involved. These needs were emphasized by several CAC Focus Groups in their written reports to the CAC Chairman. A component of the program is to help people feel good about living, working, playing and visiting in the Peconic Watershed, one of the "last great places in the western hemisphere" (as designated by the Nature Conservancy) and that the Peconic Estuary is dear to their hearts - a commonly held treasure that they should care for. "People will protect what they love." (Jacques Cousteau)

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The messages to the public will follow a watershed, ecological theme "It's all connected" and emphasize that everyone can do something to help the bays.

The CAC strategy will also involve the Management Committee, Local Governmental Committee and Technical Advisory Committee and will help to support their efforts and help to build trust in government. For a fully-effective public education strategy, all NEP committees should integrate their outreach efforts with the CAC.

In order to ensure that scarce resources are utilized effectively, the proposal includes materials for use in Town Halls, etc. Members of the NEP committees will be featured in the proposed television program and in other components of the program.

The Peconic NEP Public Participation/Outreach Plan has four major components:

- ▶ developing and implementing an education and awareness campaign;
- ▶ citizen action plans based on BTCAMP and NEP fundings;
- ▶ explaining the problems and solutions as identified and interpreted by the Management Conference; and
- ▶ developing and implemntating a long-range sustainable education plan.

The Public Participation/Outreach Plan is designed to comport with the general categories of public participation proposals as set forth in USEPA guidance. These categories are summarized as follows:

- ▶ projects designed to provide the public with information necessary to participate in the selection of estuary management options for the CCMP; and
- ▶ projects designed to demonstrate the effectiveness of public education as a management strategy for preventing or decreasing pollutant loadings or use impacts on estuarine resources.

The CAC program includes a priority budget as presented in Table 3, consolidated for FY98, FY99 and FY00. The plan recommends that the CAC continue to raise supplementary, non-NEP funds for education programs not funded by NEP. There will be no money used on inappropriate, expensive-to-produce materials. All education and promotion materials will be attractive, easy to read and developed to lead to action. In-kind services will be donated. All materials also will be reviewed by appropriate NEP committee for approval. All major budget item activities shall be individually awarded on a competitive Request For Proposals basis coordinated by the CAC.