

# PEP Talk

## Newsletter of the Peconic Estuary Program

Volume 7, Issue 1.....Winter 2011

### Input Sought: Peconic Blueway Trail

A blueway is similar to a hiking trail, with one major difference - it's in the water! It is a mapped area that provides easy access for passive recreational boaters to enjoy a specific natural area. The Peconic Estuary is an excellent place for a blueway trail, because of its natural abundance of wildlife and beautiful scenery. In fact one could argue the trail is already there, we just hope to provide people with information about these great paddling sites in the Peconic Estuary while educating them about this important natural resource.

Providing this water trail information should lead to a number of benefits to our east end communities. It will help to attract daily visitors who will rely on local businesses for their kayaking needs, for their meals and snacks, and for other shopping. It will also provide educational information about the Peconic Estuary and our local environment, and how best to protect it while visiting. Ideally the trail will incorporate sights for people to stop and see, ranging from places for food or lodging to historical and natural sights.

**See PECONIC BLUEWAY TRIAL Page 4**

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### Saving Spring Pond

Last year, the Peconic Estuary Program awarded Group for the East End and the Gardiners Bay Estates Homeowners Association with a \$5,000 Mini-Grant to help improve the water quality in Spring Pond, a tributary to Gardiners Bay and the greater Peconic Estuary system. The grant specifically calls for the renovation of a boat ramp road ending that would prevent stormwater runoff from neighboring streets and properties from draining directly into the Pond. The project utilizes “green” innovative infrastructure such as permeable pavers, bio-swales planted with native vegetation to collect and filter runoff, and educational signage to teach people the importance of stormwater runoff prevention.

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## SAVING SPRING POND



The signage is an important part of the project, as it helps to spread the message that each one of us on our individual properties can play a positive role in preventing stormwater runoff. Stormwater runoff degrades water quality and habitats. The simple, yet effective “what you can do” portion of the sign lists a number of proactive suggestions such as: installing rain barrels, creating a rain garden, eliminating or reducing fertilizer and pesticide use, picking up after your pet and naturalizing your property to reduce managed turf.

Construction is scheduled to take place in Spring of 2012. In the meantime, the community is proactively taking steps to improve other drainage and stormwater problems within the neighborhood to help restore and protect Spring Pond and educate their homeowners.

~Jennifer Hartngel

*Group For the East End*



PEP Talk is published by the Peconic Estuary Program (PEP), a partnership of governments, environmental groups, businesses, industries, academic institutions, and citizens. The PEP's mission is to protect and restore the Peconic Estuary system. Learn more at [www.peconicestuary.org](http://www.peconicestuary.org). Edited by Emily A. Fogarty



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## **COLD STUNNED SEA TURTLES**

victim to cold stunning in the winter months. Cold stunning is a condition similar to hypothermia that is brought on when cold-blooded animals are in water at temperatures below 50°F. Sea turtles inhabit New York waters during the summer and fall before heading south to safe, warmer waters. Since cold stunning is a condition that slows the movements of afflicted sea turtles, many may appear lifeless. This condition, if left unnoticed, can become fatal. This is why the Riverhead Foundation needs your help. The sooner these animals are found and reported to the Riverhead Foundation, the higher their chance for survival!

Thanks to a few concerned beach walkers, we've already recovered three cold stunned sea turtles this winter. An Atlantic Green sea turtle was found in East Hampton, NY on December 11, 2011. A Kemp's ridley sea turtle was found on December 14, 2011 in Sag Harbor, NY and another Atlantic Green sea turtle was found on December 15, 2011 in Southampton, NY. They were all transferred to the Riverhead Foundation hospital where biologists worked to save them. You can see the cold stunned patients on the Riverhead Foundation website ([www.riverheadfoundation.org](http://www.riverheadfoundation.org)) via the sea turtle webcams.

The Riverhead Foundation cannot do this alone. Without public support through donations and volunteering, the Riverhead Foundation would not be able to patrol Long Island's beaches to recover and rehabilitate marine animals in need of assistance. If you would like to become a registered beach patroller for cold stunned sea turtles, please call the Riverhead Foundation at 631-369-9840. To report a stranded whale, dolphin, seal, or sea turtle call the 24-hour rescue hotline at 631-369-9829.

~Kathy Sotolotto

*Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation*

### **2012 PEP CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**February 15<sup>th</sup>** - Citizen's Advisory Committee Meeting  
(6:30 pm - 9:30 pm), Flander's Community Center, Flanders, NY.

**February 16<sup>th</sup>** - Technical Advisory Committee Meeting (10:00 am - 12:30pm),  
Location TBD

**February 23<sup>rd</sup>** - Natural Resource Subcommittee Meeting (10:00 am - 12:30pm),  
Location TBD

**March 8<sup>th</sup>** - PEP Management Committee Meeting (TBD)

Confirm meetings on our website [www.PeconicEstuary.org/calendar.php](http://www.PeconicEstuary.org/calendar.php)  
or by contacting the Program Office during business hours.

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## **INPUT SOUGHT: PECONIC BLUEWAY TRAIL**

The Peconic Estuary Program and Group for the East End, are partnering with local community groups to develop a blueway trail for the Peconic Estuary. We hope to start with a leg of the trail in Southold Town, and need your support and ideas to make it happen.

Visit our new blueway webpage at: [www.PeconicBlueway.org](http://www.PeconicBlueway.org). We want your ideas, comments, concerns, and support!

*~Jennifer Skilbred Group for the East End/PEP*

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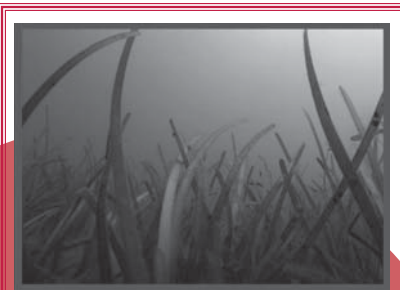
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## **EELGRASS EDUCATIONAL BROCHURE**

Group for the East End partnered with the Southampton Town Trustees to develop an educational eelgrass brochure with the support of a Peconic Estuary Program (PEP) mini-grant. This brochure will be heavily distributed to community members who visit the Southampton Town Trustees office, particularly those with commercial and/or recreational shellfish permits, with mooring permits, and those using local boat ramps.

Why did we focus this educational opportunity on eelgrass? Well, the eelgrass in our local waterways provides essential habitat for a wide variety of marine organisms we rely on, including flounders, scallops, and blue crabs. The eelgrass also helps improve water quality, control sediment loss, and protect shorelines. While PEP staff and their partners have been working to improve the unfortunately declining status of eelgrass in our estuary, to really see a change we will need public support and involvement in protecting this essential habitat. One way to do this is to get the word out to everyone who spends time on or around the Peconic Estuary; our actions on the water AND on land can greatly impact the quality of habitat in our waterways.

Some of the most important information included in the brochure is the section that describes steps we can all take to help protect this resource. These include: avoiding the use of chemical pesticides, fertilizers, and herbicides; picking up after pets; properly cleaning up oil and fuel spills; and avoiding disturbing eelgrass beds as much as possible. The brochure was developed to be easily edited and re-printed for use in other towns around the Peconic Estuary.



*Photo provided by: [www.seagrassli.org](http://www.seagrassli.org)*

*~Jennifer Skilbred Group for the East End/PEP*

## A Note From the NEW PEP Program Director Alison Branco



*Alison Branco  
Director PEP*

I have been with the Peconic Estuary Program since October 2011 and have enjoyed learning about the many initiatives going on within the program and meeting some of our dedicated partners. I look forward to getting more involved in each project and meeting the rest of the dedicated group of institutions and individuals who make this program so successful.

I come from a background in science, with a bachelor's degree in zoology from Connecticut College and a Ph.D. in Oceanography from the University of Connecticut (UCONN). I had my first exposure to the National Estuary Programs as a graduate student: I was the first Long Island Sound Fellow, working with the Science and Technical Advisory Committee of our neighboring program, the Long Island Sound Study. While at UCONN, I participated in research addressing human impacts on the coastal zone and focusing on the links between nitrogen loading and eelgrass habitat. My doctoral research focused on the factors affecting light attenuation in shallow estuaries. After some post-doctoral work on water column optical properties and their effect on primary producers, here in the U.S. and in Australia, I led the marine environmental consulting group in a global engineering firm in Perth, Western Australia.

I am thrilled to be a part of the Peconic Estuary Program and hope that my broad experience and specialized knowledge of the ecological issues affecting the Peconic system will help this program reach its full potential.

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## A Note From the NEW State Coordinator Julie Nace

I have been on board since April 2011 and I am very excited to be part of the program. I bring a very diverse background to this position and hope that it adds a beneficial dimension. I have spent almost twenty years working in the conservation field. I have worked at all levels of government – federal, state and local, and for non-profit organizations. Though my career has taken me to many different parts of the country, I have usually found myself working in coastal communities, protecting coastal resources. I have spent many years studying endangered species, restoring wetlands, administering land conservation regulations and teaching environmental education. But as a Long Islander, I found myself wanting to return to Long Island. I was born and raised in Huntington and now I reside there again, living in the community that I love. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to work for the Peconic Estuary Program and provide support to all the conservation projects within the program. I have met many wonderful people in the past few months and look forward to meeting and working with many more.



*Julie Nace  
NYS DEC  
Coordinator*

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## COLD STUNNED SEA TURTLES

**HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED IF THERE WERE SEA  
TURTLES AROUND LONG ISLAND?**

**WOULD YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO IF YOU SAW  
ONE ON THE BEACH?**

One of the most common questions we get at the Riverhead Foundation is “how can you tell the difference between a sea turtle and a land turtle?” One easily identifiable trait you can look for is how many claws the turtle has. Sea turtles typically have one or two claws on their flippers while land turtles can have four or five claws on the tips of their flippers, or legs. Sea turtles also lack the ability to retract into their shells. There are four different species of sea turtles found in Long Island waters—Leatherback, Loggerhead, Kemp’s ridley, and Atlantic Green sea turtles. These sea turtles can fall

**See TURTLES Page 3**



**Kemp’s ridley**

Found in Sag Harbor on Dec. 14, 2011

*Photo provided by: Riverhead Foundation for Marine  
Research and Preservation*