



PEP Citizen's Advisory Committee Meeting

Monday February 5th 1:00-3:00pm
Cornell Cooperative Extension
1st Floor Conference Room
423 Griffing Avenue
Riverhead NY 11901



AGENDA

- 1:00PM Introductions
 Kevin McDonald- CAC Chair
- 1:10 PM Program Office Update
 Sarah Schaefer- Acting Director
- 1:25 PM CCMP Update
 Sarah Schaefer- Acting Director & Christie Pfoertner-PEP Outreach &
 Education Coordinator
- 1:40 PM PEP Website Tour
 Jenna Schwerzmann-PEP Outreach & Education Assistant
- 1:55 PM Town and County Septic Rebate
 Kevin McDonald- CAC Chair
- 2:10 PM CAC Ambassadors- Ways you can be an active CAC member
 Jenna Schwerzmann-PEP Outreach & Education Assistant
- 2:25 PM Habitat Restoration Projects in the Peconic Estuary
 Elizabeth Hornstein- State Coordinator
- 2:55 PM Closing Remarks and Adjournment

CONTACT

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PEP CAC Meeting Notes

Monday February 5th, 2018

Cornell Cooperative Extension

423 Griffing Avenue, Riverhead NY, 11901



- Introductions by CAC Chair, Kevin McDonald
- Program Updates by Sarah Schaefer, Acting Director
 - PEP Director left her position late in 2017, we are hoping to have a new director hired by the end of April.
 - Coastal resiliency and critical lands protection strategy meetings are underway.
 - Engineering designs are being drafted for upper mills dam fish passage.
 - A demonstration living shorelines project at an old Exxon station in Greenport is in the permitting stages of the project. May have a volunteer planting day if the project gets running by spring.
 - Conceptual habitat restoration plans are being created for 4 sites in the estuary. Will be pursuing funding opportunities once designs are completed.
 - I Heart Estuaries social media campaign is from February 12-14th. This campaign is to gain support from the Administration and Congress, to show how important estuaries are to people. PEP will have a seal hike in Montauk to celebrate the campaign.
(<https://www.facebook.com/events/470109800051588/>)
- CCMP Update by Sarah Schaefer and Christie Pfoertner, Outreach Coordinator
 - 1st CCMP was created in 2001, is PEP's blueprint for stakeholders to show how to protect the Peconic Estuary. Include priority topics such as brown tides, pathogens, habitat restoration, critical lands protection, outreach and how the program will be funded. In the process of updating the CCMP.
 - Consultants were hired to assist with the rewrite of the CCMP. Peter Taylor from Waterview consulting has 17 years experience running the organization. He will be compiling notes from the public, stakeholders and committee members to formulate the new document. Mark Amaral from Lighthouse Consulting will be gathering public input to gain a regional consensus on priority issues to be included in the document. A kickoff meeting was recently held and they are in the beginning stages of their work. A profile of each contractor can be found on our website (<https://www.peconicestuary.org/protect-the-peconic/ccmp/>) Expect large stakeholder meetings in the spring with Mark, which will be announced by email, on our website and social media.

- The education and outreach team has updated our public input survey to be shorter and more effective at gaining valuable feedback. The survey is available to fill out online (<https://www.peconicestuary.org/protect-the-peconic/ccmp-public-input-survey/>). CAC members were asked to fill out the survey, copy version present at meeting, and to take two copies to give to community members to fill out as well. The outreach team will assist the facilitator to advise on who PEP's stakeholders are and appropriate places for meetings.
- Website Update by Jenna Schwerzmann, PEP Outreach Assistant
 - PEP's homepage now has a calendar of events <https://www.peconicestuary.org/>, Discover tab, Parks, Preserves and Beaches has interactive maps for hiking, beaches, and other recreation <https://www.peconicestuary.org/discover-the-peconic/parks-preserves-and-beaches/> PEP's committee tab gets you to the CAC page <https://www.peconicestuary.org/protect-the-peconic/committees-and-advisory-groups/citizens-advisory-committee/> where you can find meeting minutes, presentations from past meetings, video recordings and reminders for upcoming meetings. These can be added to your personal digital calendars.
 - Under "What you can do" we have a plant database with filter options, create a Peconic friendly yard and the Homeowner Rewards Program.

Chair: We welcome all members to view website in more detail and provide feedback.

Comment: Robin Simmons has a demonstration rain garden at the Audubon Center, maybe it can be included on this page?

- Homeowner Rewards Program overview- \$500 reimbursement for watershed residents to plant native gardens, rain gardens and/or rain barrels. Application will be available to fill out online soon. A download for the application is available now. <https://www.peconicestuary.org/what-you-can-do/create-a-peconic-friendly-yard/homeowner-rewards-program/>

Question: Is there a limit to the number of applicants? No, the program will keep running until the funding runs out.

Question: How much money is available? Approximately 8,000-10,000 through September 2018.

Question: Is this federally funded? Yes.

Question: Does it have to be a new garden? No, you could alter an existing garden.

Question: Why have non-native plants on the website? An additional education tool.

Question: Are there plans to contact garden centers? We have in the past but it seems there needs to be a demand for centers to be motivated to provide natives. We will be reaching out to ask if nurseries would like their native plant inventory on our website.

Comment: A committee member pulled up lawn to replace it but couldn't dispose of it.

Question: Will there be a certification program? PEP provides links to partner groups who do pledge and certification programs.

Comment: At the next CAC meeting, maybe a "Top 10" list for healthier options and environmentally friendly suggestions. This will be added to CAC Ambassador Talking Points and can be emailed to the towns asking them to facilitate the list.

Comment: What you're doing is fantastic, the website and native plant pages have been very helpful to me.

- Septic Rebate Program Update by Kevin McDonald
 - Nitrogen loading a major issue especially in recent years. County and towns are providing rebates for septic system improvement/advanced alternative wastewater disposal systems. Program launched in July. A thousand county applications but only has money for 200 systems per year. Granted 189 grant certifications. Everyone is encouraged to apply early. More information can be found at <http://suffolkcountyny.gov/row/septicimprovementprogram.aspx>

Question: Are there priority areas? Yes, failing systems for example get higher priority. See map

http://suffolkcountyny.gov/Portals/60/docs/RECLAIM_Priority_unseweredSurfaceWtrs_26x80_17cd06r.pdf

Comment: New house construction does not qualify for rebate.

Question: Will there be rebates for commercial? Maybe in the future, for now they are focusing on high flow areas.

Comment: Let us know how the application process went for you if you apply.

- Ambassador Talking Points (see below for more details)
- Presentation: Habitat Restoration Projects in the Peconic Estuary.
- Meeting adjourned.



CAC AMBASSADOR TALKING POINTS

February 2018

CAC Ambassador Program

The purpose of the Citizen's Advisory Committee Ambassador Program is to provide members information about the Peconic Estuary Program, upcoming meetings and scheduled events to share with your community. Together we can spread the message of healthy ecosystems, clean water and ways in which people can participate to reach this common goal.

#IHeartEstuaries Campaign

In order to demonstrate support for key federal programs that benefit estuaries and to raise awareness among Congress and the Administration, Restore America's Estuaries (RAE), the National Estuarine Research Reserve Association and the Association of the National Estuary Program are joining forces to celebrate Valentine's Day through a 3-day I Heart Estuaries campaign. Be involved by using the hashtag #IHeartEstuaries on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Tell the world why you love estuaries! Visit estuaries.org for more information.

Share Peconic Estuary Posts on Facebook

This is an easy way to help PEP spread the word about what is happening in our estuary. When you share or like our Facebook posts we reach and educate more people.

PEP Talk Monthly

PEP is creating a monthly video segment discussing environmental issues such as plastics, habitat restoration, nitrogen loading and more. Each month the video will be uploaded to our Vimeo page and posted on Facebook. This segment is an effort to reach our stakeholders in a new format more appealing to the public.

Inform People About the Local Fertilizer Law

Local Law 41-2007 prohibits lawn fertilizer application between November 1st through April 1st in Suffolk County. During this time period, lawn grass doesn't grow and therefore fertilizers are rendered useless. The purpose of this law is to reduce the amount of nitrogen released into our groundwater and surface water. Retailers are required to post signs near fertilizer displays notifying customers of the date restrictions. Violators, whether it be homeowners, landscapers or other parties risk fines of \$1,000. Watch and share our Nitrogen Reduction video on Facebook.

Suffolk County Septic Improvement Program

Thousands of properties are currently served by cesspools and septic systems that will never be connected to a sewer system. Reversing degradation of water quality will depend on replacement of existing systems with new, individual Innovative and Alternative Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (I/A OWTS). Suffolk County has devised the Septic Improvement Program consisting of both a grant and low-interest financing program as a way to assist residents to transition to systems that better protect water quality. More information can be found at www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Planning/ReclaimOurWaterInitiativeUpdate.aspx.

CCMP Update Participation

This year the Peconic Estuary Program is embarking on a revision of the Peconic Estuary Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). It's been 15 years since the Peconic Estuary Program first released our plan to conserve and restore the Peconic Estuary. Much has changed since the first plan was written and it is your turn to be a part of molding the new CCMP. Improving water quality in the Peconic Estuary is a complex issue and requires the cooperation and coordination of multiple groups. Help us refocus our efforts on the latest threats to the waterbodies of the Peconic by encouraging people to fill out a survey on PEP's CCMP website page.

Fishing Line Receptacles

In December 2016, volunteers helped assemble monofilament fishing line receptacles to be installed around the Peconic Estuary. We are now looking for all fishing line receptacles to be included on an interactive map for the recreational fishing community to utilize. Please e-mail cac@peconicestuary.org to inform us of locations you are aware of.

Encourage Homeowner Reward Program Participation

The Peconic Estuary Program offers up to \$500 reimbursement for residents of the Peconic Estuary watershed who plant native vegetation on their properties or install a rain barrel or rain garden. This program will only be available until 2019 so be sure to encourage your community to apply soon! PEP's new website will have a full plant database and suggestions as to where people can purchase native plants.

PEP's Updated Website

Upgrades include a native plant database, online submission for the Homeowner Rewards Program, downloadable kids material, best management practices, quizzes to test your estuary knowledge, responsible boating practices and more! The website will have an updated look and will be easier to navigate.

Alewife Monitoring

Each year alewife migrate up river to spawn in fresh water. The Long Island River Herring Survey aims to find the tributaries where "remnant" runs still exist and then to monitor the size and timing of those runs. Knowing this information will help us identify restoration sites for fish passages and dam removal. Restoring local populations of these ecologically important fish will provide a larger food source for commercially valuable species.

About the Peconic Estuary Program

The Peconic Estuary Program (PEP) is one of 28 National Estuary Programs around the country under section 320 of the United States Environmental Protection Agency's (USEPA) Clean Water Act. The program is responsible for creating a management plan to protect the estuary. The PEP was established November 1992 after citizen groups formed in response to the Brown Tide algal bloom events in the mid 1980's and early 1990's. At that time, it became the 20th National Estuary Program in the country.

The PEP is comprised of all stakeholders within the estuary. Committee members from each stakeholder group meet quarterly to discuss concerns and solutions with the PEP program staff: "CAC" Citizen's Advisory Committee- citizens, business leaders "TAC" Technical Advisory Committee- scientists, environmental groups "MC" Management Committee- program staff, USEPA, NYSDEC, Suffolk County, local townships and east end incorporated villages. The PEP program office is located in Yaphank at the Suffolk County Dept. of Health Services, Office of Ecology. Public outreach and education is contracted annually, currently to Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County.

PEP Accomplishments

- Development of Critical Lands Protection Strategy and implementation of Community Preservation Fund to protect land from development
- Riverhead Sewage Treatment Plant effluent to irrigate Indian Island Golf Course
- Enactment of the Suffolk County Fertilizer Reduction Law (Local law 41-2007)
- Development and implementation of sub-watershed specific management plans
- Continuous long-term monitoring of water quality and sea grass distribution
- Peconic River Rock ramp passage in Grangebél Park, Riverhead and installation of eel and fish passage Edwards Avenue, Calverton
- Implementation of Peconic Estuary nitrogen and pathogen pollution reduction plans and upgrades of Sewage Treatment Plants
- Support bay scallop restoration efforts

Contact Us

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Protecting and Restoring Long Island's Peconic Bays.