

Summary of Findings, Recommendations and Decisions from the Peconic Estuary Program Leadership's Retreat

October 9, 2019

Key Findings and Recommendations from the Organizational Assessment

Finding: It's time for a re-building of the partnership and a renewal of commitment. As stated by interviewee: "Look at what we have in place or are in the process of putting in place. The sub-watershed plans are in place. The solute model is coming forward. Our monitoring co-op is also being finalized so our Towns can now measure their progress directly. The organizational assessment is underway. The Peconic Estuary Program is the entity that can pull all this together."

Recommendation: Agree to work towards a fall 2020 timeframe for renewing the partners commitment to the goals of the Peconic Estuary Program through a formal agreement signed by the engaged partners and signing the final revised CCMP. Consider staging a public ceremony for these signings, signaling a renewal of the partnership to the public. Consider changing the name from "Peconic Estuary Program" to "Peconic Estuary Partnership" so that it's clear right from the start that this is a partnership, not just a program.

Decision: Agreement to work toward a 2020 timeframe for renewing the partnership, including a signing a formal partnership agreement, a public CCMP signing ceremony and a program name change.

Due Dates: Timeline should consider town budget cycles. Draft partnership agreement by the spring 2020 and final ready for signing by early fall 2020.

Finding: The Program needs clear definitions of measures of success and reporting of progress towards success and these measures of success should be numerical goals which are directly measurable and easily communicated to the public.

Recommendation: Charge the Technical Advisory Committee to form workgroups to initiate development of numeric targets for eelgrass suitability (acres); water quality metrics adequate to support eelgrass recovery and other resources; and water quality metrics adequate to reduce harmful algal blooms and macroalgae. The Technical Advisory Committee will work with the Citizens Advisory Committee as the initial 'sounding board' to ensure that the draft numeric targets are understandable by, and resonates with, the public prior to presentation for review by the Management Committee and consideration and decisions by the Policy Committee.

Decision: Agreement to move forward with development of numeric goals, which are feasible to achieve and understandable by the public, working through the TAC workgroup formed to develop them goals and engage the CAC to ensure the goals are understandable by the public.

Due Date(s): Policy Committee wants to ensure work to support development of measurable goals is in next year's budget in addition to modifying an existing contract to initiate this work now. Draft CCMP includes a September 2020 date for goal development.

Finding: The current management structure is missing key community and partner representatives, committees are disconnected, there is widespread lack of understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the different committees and all are lacking basic governance procedures.

Recommendations:

1. Charge the Program Office staff to work with the chairs of each of the committees and workgroups to prepare draft roles and responsibilities for each respective committee and workgroup.
2. Charge Program Office staff to work with each committee/workgroup chair and their respective committee/workgroup, to develop by-laws for each committee/workgroup, for review by the Management Committee and consideration and decisions by the Policy Committee. Consider the issues identified through the organization assessment and by survey participants, including frequency of meeting, selection and terms of chairs, selection, diversity and representativeness of membership, and voting/building consensus.
3. Charge the chairs of the Management, Local Government, Citizens Advisory and Technical Advisory Committees to discuss increasing the role of the chairs in helping shape the agenda for the larger partnership as well as managing the business of the partnership through the management structure. The Chairs will bring their recommendations to the joint meeting of the Management and Policy Committee for consideration and decisions.
4. Convene a joint meeting of the Policy Committee and Management Committee to work with all the committee and workgroup chairs to define: the roles and responsibilities for each committee and workgroup; how policy decisions are made and approved; how programmatic and technical decisions are made and approved; how consensus decisions will be reached by the advisory committees and technical workgroups; expectations for how information and recommendations for actions and decisions will flow among the committees and workgroups; and how the committees and workgroups will interact with each other. The Policy Committee and Management Committee will review and approve by-laws for each of the committees and workgroups, working from the recommendations put forward by the respective committee and workgroup chairs.

Decision: Agreement to move forward with development of by-laws applicable to the entire partnership, defining roles and responsibilities specific to each of the committees and

workgroups, and defining the roles of the chairs. The PEP Office staff will work with the committee chairs in drafting the by-laws, committees' roles and responsibilities and the chairs' roles.

Due Date: Have the draft by-laws, committees' roles and responsibilities and chairs' roles ready for review during the February 2020 joint Policy/Management Committees meeting.

Finding: At the local scale, the Program is considered a fringe player, the Program's role is unclear to many local officials, the Program is considered a minor player by the local governments, and not recognized but not central to water quality issues facing the local governments.

Recommendation: Charge the Local Governments Committee to work with the Program Director and staff to re-examine where and how local governments are represented throughout the Program's management structure as well as what roles should local government representatives be carrying out within the partnership into the future. The Local Government Committee Chair and the Program Director will present their findings and recommendations to the Management Committee for review which will forward their recommendations to the Policy Committee for consideration and decisions.

Decision: Agreement to evaluate where and how local governments are represented throughout the Program's management structure as well as what roles should local government representatives be carrying out within the partnership into the future.

Due Date: Conduct the evaluation and develop recommendations in time to be presented to the Policy and Management Committees at the joint February meeting.

Finding: There are continued concerns about whether previous issues about lack of autonomy, transparency and accountability for expenditure of Peconic Estuary Program funds have been fully addressed and raises questions about the need to consider a different home organization for the Peconic Estuary Program/Program Office staff.

Recommendations:

1. Convene and charge a small task force of recognized regional and local leaders who clearly have no conflict of interests to explore the need for and potential alternatives for an organizational home, considering: costs and benefits; ability to fully address EPA's 2017 program evaluation requests for more autonomy and fiscal transparency as required by all National Estuary Programs; and other relevant findings from the organizational assessment. The Task Force will present its findings to the Management Committee which, in turn, will present its recommendations to the Policy Committee for its consideration and decisions.

2. Charge the same task force to re-evaluate existing Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs) and other agreements between the Suffolk County and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and the Program as well as current relationships between Program, the County and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and how they can be strengthened and further institutionalized. The Task Force will present its findings to the Management Committee which, in turn, will present its recommendations to the Policy Committee for its consideration and decisions.

Decision: Agreement to convene a Task Force, composed of Laura Jens-Smith, Kevin McDonald, Carrie Meek Gallagher, Javier Laureano, John Bouvier, and Fred Thiele, to determine the critical functions of the Partnership, develop pros and cons of different possible home entities based on those critical functions, evaluate existing MOUs and other agreements between state, regional and local partner agencies and organizations, and provide recommendations.

Due Dates: After November 5th, the PEP Office will convene the Task Force and provide any support requested by the Task Force. The Task Force will present its recommendations at the February 2020 joint Policy/Management Committees meeting.

Finding: The Program Office staff cannot fully support the Program, the management structure and all its partners as currently configured.

Recommendation: Charge the chairs of the Management Committee, Citizens Advisory Committee, Local Government Committee, and Technical Advisory Committee to work together with the Program Director evaluate the ability of the current Director and three staff positions, in their existing roles and responsibilities, to fully support a re-invigorated, significantly more active Peconic Estuary Program and its underlying more rigorous and functional management structure. This evaluation will include, but not be limited to, the findings from the organizational assessment, the physical office location of the director and each staff person, the home organization of each staff person, direction and oversight of each staff person, the need for any additional staff to fill specifically defined roles and responsibilities not covered by the existing director and staff, and the funding and programmatic support implications of all these evaluations and the resultant recommendations. The Committee Chairs and the Program Director will present their findings and recommendations to the Management Committee which, in turn, will present their recommendations for consideration and decisions by the Policy Committee.

Decision: Hold off on conducting the recommended evaluation of the Peconic Estuary Program Office's staff capacity to support ongoing and anticipate addition effort until after the partners have agreed to by-laws, committees' roles and responsibilities, and completed the evaluation of the partnership's functions and pros and cons of different possible home entities and made final decisions.

Due Date: Start the evaluation of PEP Office's staff capacity in spring 2020.

Finding: Given nearly unanimous concerns about limited funds for implementation, there is a willingness and a strong interest in exploring other means and mechanisms for seeking additional program funding beyond EPA.

Recommendation: At the joint Policy and Management Committees meeting, outline elements of a funding strategy, and assign responsibilities and timelines for developing the strategy and its review by the Management Committee and consideration and decisions by the Policy Committee.

Decision: Agreement to initiate development of a funding strategy in parallel to work on the other organizational assessment recommendations. EPA Region 2 will take the lead working with the Regional Environmental Finance Center.

Due Date: Present the draft outline elements of a funding strategy for the Peconic Estuary Partnership at the February 2020 joint Policy/Management Committees meeting.

Agenda Items for the February 2020 Joint Policy/Management Committees Meeting

Decision: Agreement on the agenda items for the February 2020 joint Policy/Management Committees meeting.

- Draft partnership by-laws and organizational chart for review and decisions
- Draft description of committees functions and roles for review and decisions
- Draft descriptions of how the committees and workgroup will interact, communicate, work together on decision making for review and decisions
- Report out from Task Force convened to evaluate partnership needs and host entity for review, discussion and agreement on next steps
- Draft formal agreement for review, discussion, agreement on next steps
- Update on development of numeric goals, feedback and next steps
- Update, feedback and next steps on communications plan for the public
- Finance plan outline for discussion and agreement on next steps
- First draft outline of annual workplan for review, feedback, and direction
- Agreement on issues for discussion/decision at the May 2020 meeting

Leadership Retreat Participants

Policy Committee Members

Contact	Title	Voting Rep for
Javier Laureano	USEPA Clean Water Division of EPA Region 2, Director	EPA
Laura Jens-Smith	Town of Riverhead Supervisor	Local Government
Carrie Meek Gallagher	NYSDEC Region 1 Director	NYSDEC
Peter Scully	Suffolk County Deputy County Executive	Suffolk County

Management Committee Members

Contact	Title	Voting Rep for
Aisha Sexton-Sims	EPA Region 2, Chief of the New York Watershed Management Section	EPA
John Bouvier	Town of Southampton Councilman	Local Government
Richard Friesner	NEIWPC, Director of Water Quality Programs	NEIWPC
John Sohngen	Suffolk County Department of Health Services, Office of Ecology-Chief, Principal Public Health Engineer	Suffolk County
Kevin McDonald	The Nature Conservancy, Conservation Policy Advisor	CAC
Matthew Sclafani	Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County, Marine Program	TAC
Julia Socrates	NYSDEC Bureau Chief, Marine Habitat, Division of Marine Resources	NYSDEC

Peconic Estuary Program Partners

Contact	Title
Susan Van Patten	Watershed Section B Section Chief, NYSDEC Division of Water
Aimee Boucher	USEPA Region 2 PEP Program Manager
Irene Donohue	Chief of Staff- Suffolk County Legislator-District 2- Bridget Fleming
Gwynn Schroeder	Legislative Aide- Suffolk County Legislator - District 1- Al Krupski
Al Krupski	Suffolk County Legislator - District 1
Michael Jensen	SC Senior Public Health Sanitarian- Supervisor of the Bureau of Marine Resources
Dawn McReynolds	Assistant Director, NYSDEC Division of Marine Resources
Jeff Sander	North Haven Village Mayor
Pat Aitken	Peconic Estuary Protection Committee (PEPC) Coordinator

Facilitators

Rich Batiuk	CoastWise Partners
Holly Greening	CoastWise Partners

Summary of Findings, Recommendations and Decisions from the Peconic Estuary Program Management Committee Meeting

October 10, 2019

Recommendation: Charge the Technical Advisory Committee and the Program Office staff to develop a “Peconic Estuary Story” based on monitoring and other data as part of the identify campaign. The Technical Advisory Committee Chair and Program Office staff will work with the Citizens Advisory Committee and Local Government Committee as initial ‘sounding boards’ to ensure that the draft “Peconic Estuary Story” is understandable by, and resonates with, the public and local officials prior to presentation for review by the Management Committee and consideration and approval by the Policy Committee.

Decision: Agreement to develop a ‘Peconic Estuary Story’, evaluate draft numeric targets at the December 4th TAC meeting, and update the existing economic valuation study.

Due Dates: At the December 4th TAC meeting, evaluate methods to report water quality monitoring data and assessing proposed water quality targets from the sub-watershed plans as initial or interim targets. Evaluate data needs for telling the Peconic Estuary Story and their availability. At the December 5th CAC meeting, evaluate the Peconic Estuary Story elements from public understanding perspective.

Finding: Widespread, strong commitment to the overall goals and mission of the Program.

Recommendations:

1. Adopt the draft CCMP Mission Statement, clarified as “Protect and Restore the Peconic Estuary and Its Watershed”.
2. Adopt the draft CCMP proposed vision, clarified as “A successful partnership dedicated to restoring clean water, protecting and enhancing vibrant ecosystems and communicating sound science for nature-based coastal planning in the Peconic Estuary and its watershed”.
3. Adopt the proposed Core Values, clarified as “Sound Science, Strong Partnerships, Community Leadership, Effective Communication” for publication in the draft CCMP.

Decisions: Agreement on the recommended mission statement, vision and core values.

Due Date: Incorporate the recommended mission statement, vision and core values in draft CCMP now.

Finding: Widespread, strong commitment to the overall goals and mission of the Program.

Recommendations:

1. Adopt the proposed key characteristics that reflect the vision statement, taking into account the survey results and comments, for use in public communication.
2. Adopt the draft CCMP Goals: Improve water quality by reducing current and future sources of pollution; Develop and implement strategies to manage historical pollution loads in groundwater; Expand scientific understanding of the estuary ecosystem; Restore and protect key habitats; Develop stronger engagement with under-represented groups; Empower local communities to take meaningful, well-informed action to prepare for and minimize climate change impacts to the Peconic Estuary; Strengthen the role of municipalities.
3. Charge the Citizens Advisory Committee with developing recommendations on ways to keep the public informed on progress (or lack of) towards goals. The Citizens Advisory Committee Chair will present these recommendations to the Management Committee and the Policy Committee for follow-through actions and decisions.

Decisions: Agreement to adopt the proposed key characteristics as an initial starting point, adopt the draft CCMP goals, and move forward with development of a strategic communications plan for the Partnership.

Due Date: Bringing on strategic communication support is dependent on next year's budget and work plan. Start the dialogue with the Citizens Advisory Committee at their December 5, 2019 meeting.

Finding: Functions, roles and benefits of the Program are unclear to the program participants much less the public.

Recommendations:

1. The Management Committee and Program Office staff will define the principle functions and roles and benefits that the Peconic Estuary Program provides to its partners and the community, for review and approval by the Policy Committee. These may include other functions not identified in the survey, such as providing sound science on regional issues.
2. Charge the Citizens Advisory Committee and the Program Office staff to design a Peconic Estuary Program 'identity campaign' to raise awareness of what PEP is and does in the community, for review by the Management Committee and approval by the Policy Committee.
3. Charge the Program Office staff to develop a web-based 'Peconic Estuary Program member/volunteer package' tab, for new and existing members, that includes an overview of the Peconic Estuary Program's mission and goals, its organizational structure, bylaws or guiding principles of each Committee (including its charge, member organizations, etc.), lists of members for each committee and a summary of major accomplishments. Update as needed.

Decisions: Charge the CAC to draft up the table describing the roles of the Peconic Estuary Partnership compared to other organizations. Agreement to move forward with the above three recommended actions. Need to further flesh out the next steps needed to move forward on each of these items.

Due Dates: CAC to work on at the December 5th meeting and bring their recommendations forward to the Management Committee at their February 2020 joint meeting with the Policy Committee.

Due Dates, Timelines and Next Steps to Move Forward on the October 9 Retreat Decisions

Decision: The Management Committee added two additional agenda items to the February 2020 joint Policy/Management Committees meeting:

- Draft telling the Peconic Estuary story
- Plans for developing the Peconic Estuary Program identity program

Management Committee Meeting Participants

Management Committee Members

Contact	Title	Voting Rep for
Aisha Sexton-Sims	EPA Region 2, Chief of the New York Watershed Management Section	EPA
Richard Friesner	NEIWPCC, Director of Water Quality Programs	NEIWPCC
John Sohngen	Suffolk County Department of Health Services, Office of Ecology-Chief, Principal Public Health Engineer	Suffolk County
Kevin McDonald	The Nature Conservancy, Conservation Policy Advisor	CAC
Matthew Sclafani	Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County, Marine Program	TAC
Julia Socrates	NYSDEC Bureau Chief, Marine Habitat, Division of Marine Resources	NYSDEC

Peconic Estuary Program Partners

Contact	Title
Kristin Kraseski	NEIWPCC Environmental Analyst; Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan, New York State DEC Region 1
Aimee Boucher	USEPA Region 2 PEP Program Manager
Emma Gildesgame	NEIWPCC PEP Program Manager
Pat Aitken	Peconic Estuary Protection Committee (PEPC) Coordinator
Scott Curatolo- Wagemann	Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County

Facilitators

Rich Batiuk CoastWise Partners
 Holly Greening CoastWise Partners