Citizens’ Advisory Committee Meeting
What is the PEP?

As a National Estuary Program, the Peconic Estuary Program is a partnership of Federal, State, Local Governments, Non-Profit and Community Organizations and interested members of the public who want to be a part of preserving and restoring the waters of the Peconic Bays and the watershed.
Rebranding the PEP
Our Mission
To Protect and Restore the Peconic Estuary and Its Watershed

Our Vision
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.

Our Core Values
Sound Science, Strong Partnerships, Community Leadership, Effective Communication
The Story of the Peconic Estuary

“One of the last great places in the Western Hemisphere”

-The Nature Conservancy
Harmful Algal Blooms
In 1985, Brown Tide turned the waters of the Peconic Estuary brown and led to the near collapse of the Peconic bay scallop population, in addition to severe declines in other shellfish species and eelgrass... Harmful Algal Blooms still persist in many colors...


“Cyanobacteria blooms found in Forge Pond and Peconic Lake; health officials warn residents to stay out of the water” – Riverhead Local (2016)


“Peconic River is turning brown with dense ‘mahogany tide,’ algal bloom blamed in last year’s massive bunker fish kills” – Riverhead Local (2016)


“Red Tide Causes Shellfish Closures in Sections of Peconic” - PeconicBathTub (2017)

“In Peconic Estuary, rising temperatures appear responsible for several issues” – The Suffolk Times (2016)
“Long Island Sees a Crisis as it Floats to the Surface” – The New York Times

“Algal blooms, rising temps caused fish kills in Peconic River” - Newsday
Marine Debris & Pollutants
Hardening Shorelines
Eelgrass Decline

Seagrass Distribution in 1930 vs. 2014 in the Peconic Estuary

Long Island Sound

Gardiners Bay

Peconic Bay

Atlantic Ocean

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Unit: Meter
Author: Peter Litas

Cornell University Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County

2014 Eelgrass Distribution

1930 Eelgrass Distribution
Habitat Loss and Degradation
Pathogens – Bathing Beach Closures
The Baymen’s Nightmare: All the Scallops Are Dead

There have been lean years in Peconic Bay, on Long Island. But fishermen have never seen a failed harvest like this one.
A Better Tomorrow - Goals

• Clean clear waters that are swimmable and fishable

• Healthy habitats with abundant diverse wildlife

• Resilient communities prepared for climate change

• Strong collaborative partnerships

Restoring & Protecting
Targets

Scientific numbers or benchmarks to achieve to reach our goals
Site-specific (different types of areas throughout estuary)

Water quality metrics should always be measured – temperature, salinity, pH, DO etc. as indicators or predictors
Clean Clear Waters

Water Clarity = Secchi depth greater than 2 meters (6.56 feet) during the growing season (April 1 through October 31)
Clean Clear Waters

**Chlorophyll-α concentration** = should not exceed 5.5 µg/L during the growing season
Clean Clear Waters

Dissolved oxygen (DO) concentration = Not less than 3.0 mg/L, and >4.8 mg/L as a daily average in 90% of samples
Harmful algal blooms (HABs) = HABs with environmental impacts should not occur more than once in any 10-year period. HABs with human health impacts should not occur in any 10-year period.

* COMPLEX
Clean Clear Waters

Pathogens = Enterococcus levels measured at bathing beaches
Clean Clear Waters

Current macro/micro plastic pollution and toxic contaminants concentrations
Reporting:
Potential stoplight graphic and management zones (coastwise partners)
### Reporting:

Stoplight graphic for reporting pathogen-related beach impairments

#### Enterococcus exceedances by beach and year

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\% of beaches with exceedances: 25.0% 32.1% 17.9% 21.4% 3.6% 14.3% 17.9% 32.1% 60.7%

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Data source: SCDHS

Exceedance threshold = 104 cfu/100mL
Healthy habitats with abundant diverse wildlife

Eelgrass = Increase in shoot density and extent in existing beds
= Suitability (acres) with use of Seagrass Bio-Optical Model
Healthy habitats with abundant diverse wildlife

Tidal Wetland Habitat = Restore 250 acres

Diadromous Fish Habitat = Restore 242 acres of the Peconic River and additional 60 acres in watershed, increasing alewife population from current level
Resilient communities prepared for climate change

Shorelines = No net increase in hardened shorelines, protect existing open access land
Steps taken...

**Water Quality**
- TMDL (Pollution Diet)
- Sewage Treatment Plant Upgrade and Re-Use
- Vessel Waste No-Discharge Zone
- Suffolk County Fertilizer Reduction Law
- Homeowner Rewards Program (HRP)
- Suffolk County Septic Improvement Program
- Suffolk County Subwatersheds Wastewater Plan
- Suffolk County Plastic Bag Law

**Climate Change**
- Critical Lands Protection Strategy

**Habitat & Natural Resources**
- Efforts allow over 100,000 Alewife in the Lower Peconic River!
- Shellfish Restoration - grown and seeded in 2013
- Habitat Restoration Plan 2017
- Living Shoreline Projects
- Seagrass Bio-Optical Model
The Peconic Estuary is the heart of the East End
Economic Value $$$

$18.4 M
Commercial Fish and Shellfish Landings (1994)

$442 M
Estuarine-Dependent Sectors Gross Revenue (1993)

$117 M
Estuarine-Dependent Wages Paid (1993)

$49.3 M
Birdwatching and Wildlife Viewing annual value (1995)

$22.4 M
Recreational Fishing annual value (1995)

$18.1 M
Boating annual value (1995)

$12.1 M
Swimming annual value (1995)

Improved Water Quality = Increase in Values
*New Economic Valuation of the Peconic Estuary System is needed
What you can do...
We live by the water’s edge because we love it

Let’s protect and restore what we treasure
Feedback:
Citizens’ Advisory Committee
Proposed Roles and Responsibilities

The Citizens Advisory Committee represents the broader interests, issues and perspectives of the business, commercial, and advocacy communities and partners as well the interested public within the PEP. The Citizens’ Advisory Committee has responsibilities for the following....
1.

Represents the collective perspectives, concerns, and opportunities of the full array of business, commercial, and advocacy communities and partners present in the Peconic Estuary watershed in the consensus-based decision- and policy-making of the Peconic Estuary Program.
Actively liaisons with full array of business, commercial, and advocacy communities and partners to understand their perspectives, engaging them in the roles they can play in implementation of the CCMP, and brings the resultant insights back to the decision-making with the Peconic Estuary Program.
3.

Takes the lead as the sounding board for other PEP committees and PEP office staff in the development of public messaging that can be readily understood by the interest public and other target audiences.
Recommends the best approaches to be taken by partners in engaging citizens in PEP’s restoration and recovery strategies.
5.

Oversees development, review and delivery of PEP’s outreach and education elements.
Reviews and recommends for Management Committee approval of products to communicate PEP’s mission, targets and goals, challenges, and progress.
CAC@Peconicestuary.org