Peconic Estuary Program CAC Meeting Notes

December 5th, 2019

Feedback

Water Quality Monitoring & Data Sharing

- Want to have an extended discussion on water quality monitoring and citizen science monitoring more widespread so that people don't get sick at the beach.
- Why aren't independent water quality monitoring data shared more broadly?
- We have a lot of data, why can't we put it together?
- People have a short attention span and believe whatever small bites of information they're told without fully understanding it. How can we get the information across in a relatable, translated way so that the public can understand it? How do we make this information available and useful to the public?
- Day in the life program may help contribute data
- Does this make sense/is this resonating? Attendees nodded and agreed that the goals, targets and story flow is making sense and resonating.

Increasing Community Engagement

- Increasing engagement among people outside of those already in the meeting room. How do we reach people who aren't interested or aware?
- Increase interest among tourists who visit seasonally but don't live here year-round? How do you reach them in a meaningful way? The people are involved with programs and the environmental protection in their own home, not necessarily when they act as tourists.
- People who come out here and pay well to do so are often well-connected environmentally but not thinking about our estuary. How do we reach them?
- How do you set targets or numbers for these goals? How do you know when you've achieved a goal? How do we measure achievement of an environmental goal?
- We should link things like fish passages, eelgrass, etc. to recreational opportunities that people value. Economic and recreational values as they link to the estuary should be better presented to the public.
- Public engagement has changed from in-person conversation and meetings to more of a social media, fast-paced, short message atmosphere. Most of the time people show up for a meeting

only when they think someone is about to do something to them. How do we better reach the public?

- We need talking points, or an elevator pitch to discuss things clearly and concisely with people we meet to tell them about things. We should take big picture information and condense it into a 'neighborhood' local story so people feel it is interesting and relatable to them and can digest it easier.

Economic valuation for more inclusive support from the community.

- How do you show the value of the estuary to those who don't know?
- How much do you care? Are you prepared to upgrade your septic system? What are you willing to pay to care for your estuary?
- Value of eelgrass and other habitats to fishery health in our area should be better presented to the public. Some people would care more about the economic value than they would about the intrinsic value of our estuary.
- Hotels, restaurants utilize the edge of the estuary. Their location near the estuary attracts people to their business. Add this to economic valuation.
- What comes to mind when you think about the economic value of tourism on the east end are usually the vineyards, not usually the estuary.
- Realty values also go up when there is clean water and nature in the area. If you have a clean, safe place to recreate and fish and play outside, that's a lot more valuable than the same piece of real estate elsewhere. It also effects neighboring homes, not just waterfront homes. There's a 'value-lost' factor to consider as well if that area wasn't so pristine and ideal.
- Added value of meeting our targets if we do meet our targets is also something to consider. The added value of a cleaner bay on properties is a big, important thing to share with people.
- Public officials will only do things they believe the public will not punish them for. So will the community and culture support change? A public official needs to be either rewarded or not punished for implementing change.
- The bag ban – For years there was a reward of five cents for not using a plastic bag, but few people acted. Once the bags had a penalty of a five cent charge, people stopped using them. Punishment for using a bag works better than a reward for not using a bag.
- Tourism on LI brings in 1.6 billion dollars/ year. Tremendous industry and tax base for both counties that needs to be factored in somehow.
- Inviting local real estate agents to these CAC meetings might be a good idea.

- It's really unromantic to ask someone to marry you on the edge of a body of water filled with dead fish and red tide… an unhealthy bay is bad for business. It's one of those things that you don't really appreciate as a business owner until it's a problem.
- Showing the contrast and photos of the alternative might help people better value the estuary—"if you don't do this, you'll have this huge problem."

Stoplight graphic Comments:

- Certain areas have worse water quality than shown on the graphic. Each embayment, such as Accabonac harbor, Three Mile Harbor, etc., will behave differently than the average lines sort of suggest. Make sure you show more than a few parameters to paint a more accurate picture of water quality for a certain embayment. Make sure smaller embayment's poor water quality representation doesn't get wrapped up in a larger area that has good water quality.
- Areas with less flushing, less open-water access have a different gradient than the more open areas that tend to have the water quality stations and testing.
- Can we add more specific water quality data for each unique area of the Peconic Estuary?
- The stoplight graphics are too much information and visually overwhelming for the public. Stick with colors and words like bad ok and good.

Comments on the Story Board Presentation

- Shifting baseline mentality- people see everything for what it is because it's better than what they're used to, but that's because their baseline is now not in the past when it was better. So sharing history of what was happening in the past. Maybe we should use the long-term goal of reaching past conditions. Using the vision of what a healthy bay is and showing that visual of what was lost will help people understand the full story of what has been lost and what needs to be done to get back. Pick a past condition of seagrass etc. and set that as your goal, not just preserving what's left but also restoring the past conditions. We have to 'reset the norm' or show people what normal should look like.
- We should also show people the progress we already made. People think they can relax rules (eg. The Clean Water Act) because things are fine because they weren't around to see it when it was bad and how it has improved over the years. Osprey may be a great example of a success story.