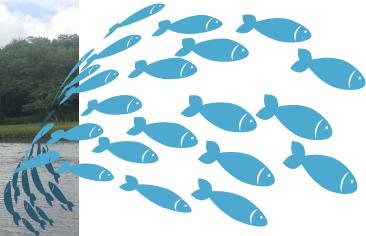
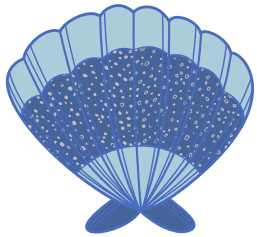


## IMPORTANCE OF CLEAN WATERS IN THE PECONIC ESTUARY

Fishing, shellfishing, recreation, and tourism on the East End of Long Island are closely tied to the Peconic Estuary's health. Changes in estuarine health can affect not only wildlife and habitats, but also human quality of life and the local economy.



One of the most serious issues affecting water quality in the Peconic Estuary is excess nitrogen loading, which can cause harmful algae blooms, low dissolved oxygen, and degraded aquatic habitats. Pathogens and toxic contaminants also contribute to water pollution in the Estuary, and can make fish and shellfish unsafe to eat.

## PECONIC ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP CONTACT INFORMATION

**Riverhead County Center**  
**300 Center Drive, Room 250S**  
**Riverhead, NY 11901**  
**Email: [peptalk@peconicestuary.org](mailto:peptalk@peconicestuary.org)**



The Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) is a blueprint of goals and actions for the next decade that the Peconic Estuary Partnership has adopted to protect and restore the Peconic Estuary and its watershed. To learn more about PEP's work for climate change, visit our website to view the goals and actions in our CCMP.

**[peconicestuary.org/ccmp2020/](http://peconicestuary.org/ccmp2020/)**



## CLEAN WATERS



**For Ecosystem Health and Safe Recreation**

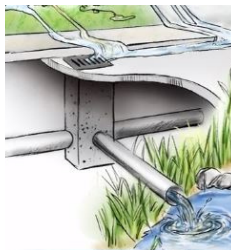
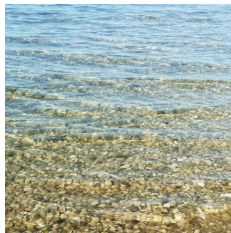
# ISSUES IMPACTING THE PECONIC ESTUARY'S WATER QUALITY

## • **Septic Systems and Wastewater**

- Wastewater is the largest land-based contributor of nitrogen (50%) to the Peconic Estuary.
- Nutrient loading from residential septic systems and cesspools are the main reasons for hypoxia, harmful algal blooms (HABs), and habitat degradation in the Peconic Estuary.
- Wastewater can also introduce pathogens to the Estuary, closing shellfish beds and bathing beaches.

## • **Fertilizers and Pesticides**

- Fertilizers from agriculture, lawns, and golf courses contribute to over ¼ of the land-based nitrogen that enters the Estuary.
- Pesticides and nitrogen from fertilizers move through the soil and pollute our groundwater. These pollutants are also transported to the Estuary via stormwater runoff.



## • **Stormwater Runoff**

- Stormwater pollution occurs as runoff from rain and snow flows over impermeable surfaces, collecting and transporting debris, nutrients, pathogens, toxins, and plastics into nearby water bodies.
- Over 90% of stormwater drains on the East End of Long Island discharge directly in the local bays without being treated.
- Learn more about stormwater runoff by visiting our website, [peconicestuary.org](http://peconicestuary.org).

# HOW IS PEP WORKING TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY IN THE PECONIC ESTUARY?

## • **Nitrogen Management**

- The Peconic Estuary Solute Transport Model, Nitrogen Load Reduction Assessment, Rain Garden Project in Sag Harbor, and working with our partners, like Suffolk County and the Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan, are just a few examples of how PEP works to mitigate and manage nitrogen pollution to help reduce HABs and degradation of habitat. Click on the Clean Waters tab on the PEP website to read more on these projects.

## • **Pathogen Management**

- PEP has created 12 subwatershed management plans to address pathogen loads to waterbodies troubled with pathogen pollution. These plans focus on identifying cost-effective practices to reduce overall pollutant loadings (i.e. bacteria, sediment, nutrients) and runoff volume to subwatersheds. Successful implementation of these plans is expected to help reduce stormwater runoff pollution and improve overall water quality conditions. This should in turn improve shellfish harvesting capacity, eelgrass habitat, and degraded marsh areas.

## • **Toxic and Plastic Pollution Control**

- In 2015 Suffolk County banned micro-beads in personal care products, which went into effect on January 1st, 2018. PEP was instrumental in informing what the environmental impacts of micro-beads are and the logistics of banning their use, which contributed to the successful passage of the micro-bead ban bill.
- PEP assisted Suffolk County in assessments of legislation to reduce the use of single-use plastic bags. Legislation established a 5 cent fee on single-use plastic bags, which went into effect in 2018. Most recently, NYSDEC enforces a NY Plastic Bag Ban which began October 2020.

# HOW CAN YOU HELP WATER QUALITY IN THE PECONIC ESTUARY?

## • **Utilize the PEP's Homeowner Rewards Program**

- If you live in the Peconic watershed, apply to the program and earn up to \$500 to offset the expense of installing rain barrels, rain gardens, and native plant gardens on your property.
- **67,453 square feet of native plant gardens, 3,300 square feet of rain gardens, and 67 rain barrels** have been installed through the program, reducing fertilizer and pesticide use, lowering water use for yard care, and reducing runoff throughout the community.
- Get inspired! Check out the PEP rain garden at the Peconic Riverfront in Riverhead which filters pollutants and traps debris from entering the river. Visit the PEP native plant garden at the Big Duck in Flanders to see how beautiful natives can grow to be without fertilizers or pesticides.

## • **Upgrade your septic system or cesspool**

- Outdated septic systems and cesspools do not treat wastewater and pollute our groundwater and bays. Innovative/advanced onsite wastewater treatment systems are available. The Suffolk County Septic Improvement Program can help you pay for the upgrade. East Hampton, Southampton and Shelter Island also provide rebate programs. Our website has resources to help you get started.

## • **Reduce Toxics and Plastic Pollution**

- Reduce hazardous waste inputs to the environment by utilizing the S.T.O.P program near you.
- PEP has installed monofilament fishing line receptacles around the Estuary to provide a place for fishermen to discard their excess fishing line and help combat marine plastic debris. Fishing line is recycled and repurposed. Help keep plastic out of the environment!