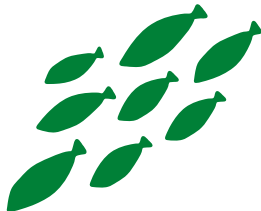


IMPORTANCE OF THE PECONIC ESTUARY ECOSYSTEM

Within the estuary area, there is a larger percentage of undisturbed habitats and a greater diversity of natural communities than anywhere else in the coastal zone of New York State.

There are over 100 species found in the estuary that are rare or endangered globally, nationally, and locally.



Additionally, there are individual habitats in the Peconic Estuary region that are rarely found elsewhere in New York State or on the east coast of the United States. Pine barrens, eelgrass beds, salt marshes, and diadromous fish habitat name just a few habitats that are important and treasured here in the Peconic watershed.



PECONIC ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP CONTACT INFORMATION

Riverhead County Center
300 Center Drive, Room 250S
Riverhead, NY 11901
Email: 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 healthy habitats and wildlife, visit our website to view the goals and actions in our CCMP.

peconicestuary.org/ccmp2020/



HEALTHY ECOSYSTEM WITH ABUNDANT, DIVERSE WILDLIFE



**The Peconic Estuary is home to
some of the most valuable and rare
habitats in the world.**

ISSUES FACING ECOSYSTEMS & WILDLIFE IN THE PECONIC ESTUARY WATERSHED

- **Hardening of Shorelines:** Structures like sea walls and bulkheads are used to control erosion, sea level rise and storm surges, however, these structures transfer wave energy to neighboring shorelines, exacerbating erosion elsewhere. They also hinder natural shoreline processes and block wildlife from habitat, resources, and spawning.
- **Development and Human Activities:** The more we disturb and develop - habitat loss and degradation continues, and remaining open space is under pressure.
- **Dams:** Diadromous fish travel to the Peconic Estuary to find freshwater streams to spawn. Barriers like dams prevent fish from accessing their ideal spawning habitat.
- **Climate Change:** Rising seas threaten to drown tidal wetlands and shoreline habitats that cannot migrate inland due to natural or manmade barriers. Higher temperature can alter what species inhabit the estuary and can prevent crucial habitat from thriving.
- **Pollution:** Due to fertilizers, outdated septic systems, road runoff, household hazardous waste, and marine debris, habitat quality decreases and wildlife suffer from chemicals, entanglements, and harmful algal blooms that are fed by excess nutrients.
- **Invasive Species:** Non-native species can outcompete native plants and animals, threatening biodiversity and reducing habitat value.



HOW IS PEP PROTECTING AND RESTORING HABITATS & WILDLIFE?



- **The first Peconic Estuary Living Shoreline was created at Widow's Hole Preserve in Greenport.** This is a beneficial alternative to hardening shorelines. We introduced native salt marsh grass, beach grass, and sediment to strengthen this site that was experiencing heavy erosion. Benefits include open access for wildlife, strong root systems that prevent erosion, a natural shoreline that absorbs wave energy and can migrate inland with sea level rise, and improved water quality. The site is monitored for its success in mitigating climate change impacts. **Partners:** Peconic Land Trust and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County.
- **Opened up 35 acres of freshwater habitat on the Peconic River in support of improving populations of diadromous fish.**
 - You can help identify habitats that have diadromous fish (river herring like Alewife). Your recorded sightings in Seatuck's River Herring Survey help PEP and partners to move forward with fish passage projects that allow fish to move past river barriers to spawn. Visit our Education and Outreach section of our website for details!
- **Completed more than two dozen Habitat Restoration Projects since 2000.**
 - Among many, this includes beach, wetland, and shorebird habitats.
- **More PEP projects that increase the health of our ecosystem on our website: peconicestuary.org**

HOW CAN YOU HELP TO PROTECT THE PECONIC ESTUARY ECOSYSTEM?

- **Create a Peconic-Friendly Yard**
 - Reduce pollution by installing rain barrels that minimize runoff and planting natives in your yard that require little to no fertilizer, pesticides, water or care.
 - If you live in the Peconic watershed, you can apply to PEP's Homeowners Rewards Program to be reimbursed for green infrastructure projects.
- **Upgrade your outdated cesspool or septic system.**
 - Our groundwater and bays are impacted by outdated systems that leach wastewater, and therefore excess nutrients.
 - Take advantage of the Suffolk County Septic Improvement Program that can help you pay for upgrades. Visit our website to access resources.
- **Choose a living shoreline instead of a hardened shoreline if you live on the water.**
- **Get involved in the Wildlife Monitoring Network!**
 - This is a 'one-stop-shop' for wildlife monitoring surveys that are conducted for species found throughout Long Island. Whether you need to record data for more than one species or want to learn about the different community science projects near you, these surveys are now all in one place! [Check it out on PEP's website.](#)
- **Leave No Trace**
 - While enjoying the outdoors, dispose of any garbage or pet waste properly, follow boating and fishing regulations, and respect the wildlife and people who live in the watershed.

