



Peconic Estuary Partnership Policy Committee Meeting

October 12, 2022

10am – 12:30pm

Hybrid Meeting

In person:

Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE)
423 N Griffing Ave
Riverhead, NY 11901

10:10 Welcome and Introduction PC (PEP Policy Committee Chair, Javier Laureano, PhD, USEPA)

*Indicates in person attendance

PEP Policy Committee member:

- Javier Laureano, PhD, Water Division Director (USEPA, Region 2)
- Cathy Haas, Director (NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Region
- *Peter Scully, Deputy County Executive (Suffolk County)
- Scott Russell, Supervisor, Town of Southold (Local Government Representative)

Javier Laureano welcomed Barry Volson to the PEP team

10:15 Welcome and Introduction Management Committee

(PEP Management Committee Chair, Bob Nyman, USEPA)

Management Committee Organizations	Individual
US EPA Region 2 (Chair)	*Bob Nyman
DEC Division of Marine Resources	*Julia Socrates
DEC Division of Water	Sue Van Patten
New York State Department of State	*Jeremy Campbell
Suffolk County Dept of Health, Office of Ecology	Ken Zegel
Suffolk County Dept. of Economic Development and Planning	Sarah Lansdale represented by Camilo Salazar

Peconic Estuary Program Office · Riverhead County Center

300 Center Drive · Room 204N · Riverhead, NY 11901

www.PeconicEstuary.org

Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District	*Corey Humphrey
Suffolk County Legislator District 1 & 2	*Al Krupski
Bridget Fleming - official MC representative not in attendance, office represented by Irene Donohue; vote proxied to Al Krupski	
Local Government Rep to the MC	Councilman John Bouvier
PEP Chair Local Government Committee	Jim Colligan
PEP Chair Technical Advisory Committee	Matt Sclafani, PhD
PEP Chair Citizens Advisory Committee	Kevin McDonald
Stony Brook University (SBU)	Paul Shepson, PhD (limited availability after 10:30am)

Additional Attendees:

*Joyce Novak (PEP), *Valerie Virgona (PEP), *Jade Blennau(PEP), *Sara Cernadas-Martin (PEP), *Barry Volson, *Sung-Gheel (Gil) Jang, PhD (SBU), *Gordon Taylor, PhD (SBU), *Luis Medina Faull, PhD (SBU), Jodi Giglio (NYS Assembly), C. Theresa Masin (Town of Southampton), Irene Donohue(Legislator Bridget Fleming's Office), *Marina Kobasiuk (SC Soil & Water Conservation District), Holly Sanford (PLT), Camilo Salazar (Suffolk County), Scott Curatolo-Wagemann(Cornell Cooperative Extension), Ken Zegel (Suffolk County Health), Pat Aitken(Peconic Estuary Protection Committee), Peter Brandt (EPA), Kimberly Shaw (East Hampton Town), Aimee Boucher (EPA) ,Elizabeth Butler (EPA), John Aldred (East Hampton Town Trustee) , LI Farm Bureau Representative, Jerry Kang (SBU) , Jun Ho Lee (SBU), Shavonne Smith (Shinnecock Nation)

10:15 Discussion and Approval of Meeting Minutes from the Management Committee meeting held on July 13, 2022.

ACTION: Approval of MC meeting minutes.

Approved Minutes Motion by Kevin McDonald and seconded by John Bouvier. None opposed.

During the October 21, 2021 Joint PC/MC meeting, the CAC Chair recommended the addition of a community representative to the Policy Committee. This item was tabled until the Spring Management Committee and is now tabled again as potential candidates and organizations are still under review for recommendation. Any recommendations will be put forward to the PC after MC consensus.

10:30 Formal approval of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) 2022 Final Workplan and Budget

ACTION: At the May 11, 2022 meeting, the Policy Committee approved three projects to be included in the BIL22 work plan. At this time, approval of the final work plan for BIL22 is sought.

Peter Scully motion to Approve BIL 2022. 2nd by Cathy Haas.

10:40 Review the draft BIL23 PEP Workplan and Budget, for recommendation (Joyce Novak, PhD – PEP Executive Director)

- Review of BIL requirements and timetable under the EPA Guidance
 - Document DEIJ Plan
 - Justice 40 Requirements
 - Five Year Plan
- BIL23 PEP IDEAS (Inclusion. Diversity. Equity. Access. Strategy.)(A Stony Brook University Initiative)
 - As we prepare for the development and finalization of a formal plan, PEP is building on the Stony Brook IDEA Strategy. Aligning with this strategy will be a building block of future work.
 - Outline of proposed projects and actions for the BIL23 Work Plan

Note: This discussion is not formal approval.

Personnel discussion:

Kevin McDonald asked for clarity on the role of the grants manager role. Joyce Novak added that their main role is to manage BIL funded grants. In addition they will look for & write up additional grants and manage any such grant.

Javier Laureano suggested changing the role from Outreach assistant to specialist.

Peter Scully asked if as grants manager/ education outreach position is only for 4 years, will these individuals know that this is a grant funded position that will end and if there is thought for their future afterwards. Joyce clarified yes, and she is hopeful they will gain skills to move them forward in their careers.

Peter Scully also clarified that the IDEAS Staff assistant is only part time and for one year as that is the length of time for this initiative.

Peconic Land Trust, "Peconic West Living Climate Resiliency Demo Site Concept Design" Project discussion:

Al Krupski asked if public access will be included in plans.

Joyce Novak responded that this is an intention for the Land Trust.

Cathy Haas voiced concern that if the land is in the works to be transferred to the state, it will likely be managed by Lands and Forests. Perhaps we wait on this project as we do not know if these plans will be agreeable with the state's vision.

Joyce Novak added the project intention with the Land Trust is to work closely with DEC in developing these plans. Before moving forward, PEP will hold appropriate meetings with DEC and Land Trust before creating a work plan.

Cathy Haas wanted to caution on plans not aligning with DEC plans.

Joyce responded that we are looking to see if this site is amenable to the Nature Base solutions that we are looking to demonstrate to the public.

Cathy Haas asked If it is not doable by DEC, if this pot of money can be returned.

Joyce Novak responded that we are hopeful to use funds to create conceptual design. Joyce reiterated that this is not final approval, this is earmarking these projects for further exploration.

Kevin McDonald added that this assessment, characterizing the conditions on the ground, will be useful no matter what direction the future land owners wish to go forward with

Peter Scully reiterates that Cathy's role at the DEC will need to guide and lead the end use of this property and will need to sign onto whatever future possibilities are considered. This will allow it to be an informed process.

Cathy Haas reiterates that plausible/allowable plans may be very limited.

Joyce Novak reiterates that the acquisition of a 100 acre waterfront site is very special and we are excited to facilitate a conversation with stakeholders on what end use could look like moving forward.

Holly Sanford (PLT) adds that the Land Trust went out on a limb with the hope that DEC will reimburse their lines of credit for this property acquisition. Also, we all recognize this is a unique situation with an opportunity for future educational use. The Land Trust is in touch with DEC to keep this process on track and she will share all information with their DEC contact in efforts to have a cohesive force to motivate the DEC to move forward.

Javier Laureano reiterates that you can amend these work plans if needed.

Corey Humphrey asked for a timeline on issuing an RFP for this. Joyce Novak responded that we wait until formal approval in early next year, with an RFP in 2023 and a prospective plan return time of around 18 months.

Peconic East Living Climate Blue Carbon Project Discussion:

Al Krupski asked for clarification on a conservation mooring and it was explained that it is a boat mooring that does not harm/scour the circle around where they are anchored and therefore do not harm local eelgrass bed and that they are widely used around the Northeast.

Kevin McDonald asked who the approving entity is for moorings. Al Krupski adds that he does not believe there is one entity. The conclusion was made that this project looks at Town Moorings.

Al Krupski adds that this information should be shared with towns. Joyce Novak added her hope for this outreach to towns to be built into this project.

Scott Russel asked if these conservation moorings are available and effective for creeks and tidal water bodies as that characterizes town jurisdiction.

Joyce Novak responded that they are widely used in RI & CT and we can get that info to him.

Jim Colligan noted the lessons learned from Coecles Harbor, dealing directly with the town is vital. Shelter Island Town tried to accomplish this 3-4 years and the community response was, "if it's not broken don't fix it" as the eelgrass beds within the harbor were thriving at this time. Shellfishermen were resistant as the differences of the mooring were not well understood. Also, the installer that successfully installed these moorings in other areas of New England was not chosen to be responsible for installing them in our harbor. This created concern with who was installing. Community was not connected to the project from the beginning.

Jim Colligan continued in the suggestion of trying these moorings in a small area of Coecles Harbor and has no problem supporting this and introducing the idea to the town board to Shelter Island . Not a huge commitment, 6-8 moorings has the potential of great success.

Joyce Novak agreed and noted the importance of having the buy-in from town supervisors as well as noted the future TAC meeting in which this would be discussed more fully.

Theresa Masin added that in East and Southampton towns, the trustees will regulate these moorings. She suggested scheduling a meeting with them to talk about this. She does not anticipate push back if the moorings work and have been used for over a decade in similar scenarios. She suggested an invitation to trustees to be involved with the TAC, scheduling a private meeting , or come before them at their regular meeting. Suggested that trustees can make them part of their regular permitting process. Joyce Novak is hopeful to engage communities, local town boards, trustees and marinas in this outreach.

John Bouvier added that waterway jurisdictions, such as in artificial canals, have crossover between town control and trustees and this needs to be taken into consideration. He voiced support for the idea but buy-in is needed sooner than later. Some moorings need DEC or other agency approval so this is important to know.

Joyce Novak hopeful to work closely with DEC and their approval process.

Kevin mcdonald: Suggest inviting local government entities and agencies all together for a conservation mooring outreach explanation of why and what they are. As well as the possibilities of implementation from new moorings to the possibilities of buying out boat owners with current mooring and replacing them with conservation moorings. [Joyce Novak](#) asserted that after the TAC review we will move forward in this.

Southampton Riverside Wetland Restoration Project Discussion:

Al Krupski added that this site is adjacent to county land and is hopeful to see these areas linked together in some sort of Blue-Way connection. Joyce Novak added that water access is a main goal of this area and we are hoping for a conceptual plan to build in this possibility. AL Krupski noted the importance of parking for true water access.

Alternative Septic System Maintenance Project Discussion:

No discussion on this project.

Cathy Haas asked for more details on the approval process.

Joyce reiterated for clarity that the policy & management committees will be casting an official vote on an official work plan in the spring. Only projects that continue to be viable and everyone feels comfortable pursuing will be added to an official work plan that will have an official vote. If there are

projects that we feel need more time then it will not be included in this round of plans and another project will take its place. No RFP or contract will be signed for this pot of money until all parties agree to move forward, such as with Broad Cove.

Today's conversation is an informal permission to explore these projects for future work plans. Cathay Haas explained she is in support of this permission and continuation of the conversation but cannot comment on anything formal in an effort to not tie up the process of the Broad Cove- DEC purchase of the property.

Jodi Giglio noted her appreciation for Cathy's input. Shared her desire to set up a meeting with Pulumbo and Englebright. She added that she has toured the property with DEC and PLT staff and wants to assist in setting up Broad Cove for future funding. Noted to have her office contact stakeholders and set up with Englebright.

ACTION: Approval of BIL proposed projects for 2023

Peter Scully made an initial motion for approval to further explore these projects with a note that projects must hold all party approval.

Javier Laureano seconded motion.

11:10 PEP Tracking System Presentation - Sung-Gheel (Gil) Jang, PhD

- Under the FY21 Workplan, PEP initiated a CCMP Tracking System that would serve to collate PEP work products under relevant CCMP actions and create an on-line platform where our work can be tracked and CCMP progress followed by our committees and the public.

ACTION: Request reactions and comments to the proposed system.

Joyce Novak asked for finalizing approval for this Tracking System project:

Javier Laureano noted the difficulty of creating a tracking system and congratulated the team on this great effort and would love to see a demo of this and it has the possibility of replicability in other NEP's.

Joyce Novak added that she will set up a zoom with the EPA team. JavierLaureano also noted that he'd like to see this demo presentation on an agenda for the regional NEP directors meeting.

John Bouvier also added that he is very interested in a demonstration as well.

Corey Humphery asked if this is something that could be used by partners. Gheel responded that this is open source code that links a google sheet with a live website and anyone could use it.

Joyce Novak highlights the back end can be edited and updated with partner projects via a simple google sheet.

Cathay Haas asked if there will be an announcement when this is available outside of stony brook. Joyce Novak confirmed.

**11:30 Identification, Distribution, and Source Assessment of Microplastics in the Peconic Estuary
– Gordon Taylor, PhD and Luis Medina Faull, PhD**

- Microplastics (MPs) have become an omnipresent component of the man-made litter that pollutes aquatic environments. The proposed research will be the first attempt to understand the dynamics of microplastics in the Peconic Estuary and what factors (e.g., intensity of Peconic River discharge, touristic activity, etc.) affect the concentration of specific polymers, and their transport, and distribution within this coastal environment. (see attached Scope of Work for more information).

Camilo Salazar noted his interest in seeing this data in relation to nitrogen data for the same bodies of water and the link that this information may provide.

Javier expressed he would like for this proposal to be presented to Region 2's Laboratory Team, who work with Microplastics. Added a suggestion to look for additional support from NOAA.

Al Krupski asked for clarity on the sampling areas.

Joyce added that sampling accompanies Suffolk County water quality sampling sites to have parallel date and times of collection.

Al Krupski noted that anecdotally, there is not a lot of garbage in the water here, even during the height of the season. It was asked if sampling should be added near and around Gardiners Bay to see the effect of ocean influence.

Luis Medina confirmed that this is one hypothesis but another is the Peconic River being the source of plastic as literature suggests rivers are the main source of microplastics in many systems. These sampling locations will allow us to see this area's plastic source, distribution, and transport.

Al Krupski asked if benthic sediment sampling was included in this study as these plastics have the potential to settle out into sediment. Particular interest in the LI sound side was noted as Army Corps' recent decision to dump dredge spoils on the east end of LI.

Luis agreed that these plastics can be sampled in benthic sediments but at this time, this is beyond the scope of this project. The reality was noted that in order to take benthic sediment samples at

these will take more time than currently able to spend per sampling site but he would like to do more in the future.

Al Krupski asked if any researchers are currently working to understand bioaccumulation of microplastics in shellfish and/ or bivalves, as well as if microplastic availability is affected by environmental factors of waterbody salinity and temperature.

Luis Medina noted that this is the initial step to better understand the system and eventually look into these bioaccumulation topics. He added that in terms of his knowledge of how these bivalves feed, it is not likely to bioaccumulate microplastics.

Robert Nyman noted interest in research that identified if microplastics were from sources outside or within the watershed and therefore agrees that an extra sample collection from Gardiners Bay may be useful to understanding this study in relation to the larger ocean system.

Gordon Taylor agrees and added that the team is able to add a Gardiners Bay sample within this project's scope. He also noted that his research team is submitting a multi million dollar proposal in order to look at all LI waters.

John Bouvier added that if the project is trying to find the source of microplastics, he encouraged consideration for personal care products, he suggests sampling septic systems and sewage outflows to see if this is a source. He noted the potential to work with the county to see if there are areas that are creating seepage into the bay. He added that how different septic system contribution is to

Luis Medina answered that their research can differentiate between plastics particles such as industrial and secondary plastic particles. He noted that water sampling is based on

Gordon Taylor added that these sample sites include areas of submarine groundwater discharge and will show the prospective source of microplastic particles.

Camillo Salazar commented that the potential use of this research includes being able to compare microplastics movement through tidal cycles, and can also add to info on peconic flushing and residence times that can be extrapolated out to nutrients cycling.

11:55 PEP Program Updates – Joyce Novak, PhD (PEP Executive Director)

- Updates from Committee Chairs
 - o Matt Sclafani, Technical Advisory Committee

Noted that the microplastics project was presented at the previous TAC and is happy to see the response. In addition, the TAC spoke of the Ludwigia DEC plan and are currently looking for updates of the plan. TAC also had a presentation on horseshoe crab habitat presentation by Abigail Costigan, PEP's MCP fellow. The USGS Solute transport model group gave an update and has made lots of progress and will be tied into a regional model of groundwater seepage. Also noted that TAC had a presentation by "Project Vesta" on their Olivine project at North Sea, where Olivine was placed on the beach with intent to increase the capacity of the water body as a carbon sink. Noted the water quality collaborative also met and plans for any future eelgrass restoration projects be informed by known successful techniques.

o Kevin McDonald, Citizens Advisory Committee

Defers to Valerie

o Jim Colligan, Local Government Committee

Adds that the last meeting was canceled but will give updates once the meeting is back on schedule.

· Review of operational deliverables, timelines, and PEP status for items committed under the 2020 Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan. (Joyce Novak)

· Water Quality Updates (Sara Cernadas-Martin, PhD – PEP WQ Program Manager)

EJ Community Outreach Project:

Corey Humphrey suggested looking into lifetime licenses to youths for fishing access.

Kevin McDonald noted the polling done by TNC and suggested using this opportunity to get disadvantaged community's take on public health notices that close bodies of water as understanding this perspective is important for protecting public health.

· Outreach Updates (Valerie Virgona, PEP Outreach Coordinator)

Theresa Masin noted that Meschutt is in need of age-appropriate signage as one of the most family-friendly beaches.

· Habitat and Wildlife Updates – (Jade Blennau, Program Support Specialist and Barry Volson, PhD, PEP Natural Resources Program Manager)

· Other Program Office Updates – Joyce Novak

12:35 New Business and Public Input – Open to all meeting participants.

Theresa Masin added that about a year ago widening the scope of eelgrass restoration work to include wicking grass in restoration efforts to create climate resilience as this grass is known to exist in warmer waters and research is needed, especially with the threat of eelgrass extinction in the area.

Joyce Novak added that the SAV group will continue to pursue this as the habitat group gets back up and running under Barry's direction.

Holly Sanford asked for up-to-date contact information in regards to the county cyber attack.

Joyce shared that PEP staff contacts are now through stony brook and will be shared.

12:40 Adjourn (PEP Policy Committee Chair, Javier Laureano, PhD, USEPA)