

Technical Advisory Committee Meeting May 18th, 2023 - Minutes

10:00 AM Welcome and Roll Call –*Matt Sclafani (CCE, TAC Co-Chair)*

Attending in person: Matt Sclafani, Brad Peterson, Robert Nyman, Pete Toppin, Peter Daniel, Byron Young, Shauna Kamath, Camilo Salazar, Mary Ann Eddie and PEP Program Office (Joyce, Sara, Barry and Valerie)

10:05 AM Presentation: PEP Nitrogen Reduction Cost Assessment Tool – *Beth Lamoureux (AnchorQEA)*

Re-introducing the approach (in attached ppt), walking through the website, and then discussing potential next steps.

This a project that started before covid and due to that and other logistical reasons its release has been delayed. The tool has undergone a thorough review process but we still welcome comments and suggestions once the online web tool is deployed

Next steps: Increase tool functionality, Estimate nitrogen load reductions to Peconic Bay and add more BMPs

Timeline? Once the program office is done with internal review it will be released. We will bring back to the TAC the possibility of carrying on with the potential next steps.

This tool will be great for homeowners and towns but it will need PR → CAC and partners will help with outreach and make sure the tool reaches the public

10:30 AM Presentation: Alewife run 2023, general overview – *Byron Young (NYSDEC, retired)*

The 2023 run slightly above average, good run. The run was truncated, first sight on March 17th (a little bit later than usual), with some peaks. It also started late and ended early. The weather, with heavy rains, affected the run. There are incidents of low run years which take place every four years. This year should have been lower if that pattern continued, but it doesn't seem to be that way. Probably the after effects of covid, when people stayed home, helped the fish recovery, due to lower sport fishing and poaching catches.

Having SCCC and Hofstra taking over is great, this also includes a collection of biological samples besides video monitoring and pit tagging.

The fish connectivity project will greatly help recover the population of Alewives. This project started and continued thanks to the collaboration of everyone, from towns to private citizens.

10:40 AM Presentation: Video and PIT-Tag Monitoring of River Herring Spawning Run in Peconic River – *Peter Daniel (Hofstra University)*

The tagging detections show that some fish tagged in the sound went around Orient Point and were detected within the watershed. One fish seems to have entered via the man-made Peconic canal from Shinnecock Bay. Could have gone all the way to Montauk but that's unlikely due to the speed required to make the trip from the first detection in Swan Lake to the return detection in the Peconic Bay.

We are seeing returns up to 2 years after tagging both in the North and South Shore. There seems to be some site fidelity.

Multiple detection happens quite often which shows that alewives move back and forth from their upstream and downstream habitats multiple times during the same run. On average they stay for ~20 days within the spawning habitat, with some specimens staying up to 2 months.

We assess the efficiency of the fish passage at Grangebel. Tagged fish were released downstream and 100% and 88% were detected upstream in 2021 and 2022, respectively.

Video monitoring abundance estimates will be corrected with the data from the tagging showing multiple crossings of the same specimens during the same season

Summary results:

- Overall decrease of alewife population from 2020 to 2021 of 72%, slight recovery with 2% increase from 2021 to 2022.
- Rock-ramp works well as a passage, we need to see if the fish ladder will be as good.
- Big drop in spawning run entering the PEconic, appears to be region wide
- We need to incorporate repeat counts to avoid population overestimations
- Multi passage rates vary among individuals and years, but on average you can assume that of all counts only 33% are unique fish counts (66% are repeats)
- Results for 2023:
 - 294 alewife captures tagged and released below spillway at Woodhull DS antenna
 - 232 (79%) were detected in the system (83% multiple detections, 1.5% detected with Woodhull US antenna, 54% were detected at Grangebel antennas).
- Results from fish tagged in 2021:
 - Check slides

Questions: Theresa Masin → Maybe weather or precipitation or even hurricanes played a role in the drop of the adult population? The 2021 season was higher on record.

Other regions are experiencing the same drop regardless of hurricanes. Could be a shift in fishing pressure from blueback to river herring within the Long Island Sound.

Enrico : Regarding the significant regional drop in river herring runs, I recommend that everyone watch Kevin Job's (CT DEEP) presentation from the recent LI Natural History Conference. Available here: <https://seatuck.org/2023-li-natural-history-conference/>

11:15 AM Presentation: Alewife Creek, Southampton: Current Issues and Opportunities to Improve Fish Passage and Reduce Stormwater Runoff at North Sea Rd. – *Pete Topping (Peconic Baykeeper)*

Alewife Creek background (see slides). This important creek is experiencing an issue with stormwater runoff, there are no catch basins or other mechanisms to help mitigate this issue.

The other issue is the low level of water in the culvert, used for the fish passage, which is impeding a proper migration upstream and many fish fall back. The pool of fish who can't migrate upstream is targeted by predators and poachers since they become an easy target.

Stormwater problem: Baykeeper met with Seatuck and found out that the county is planning to repave that stretch of the road. They plan to implement draining improvement for run-off but the plans do not include modifications to the culvert. The county is willing to discuss it but they want to keep their planned deadline (Final engineering spring 2023-2024, receive bids spring 24, begin construction Fall 24, complete construction Fall 25)

TAC members might want to get involved, but they might need guidance on how to proceed, specially since once the work is finished by the County they won't touch it → Enrico Nardone: the problem might be budget, the county has a limited budget but we might help by providing a project design to help with "outside" expertise.

Camilo Salazar: Our office deals with this WQ run-off and other conservation issues. You can submit an application (June 9th deadline). Reach out to the supervisor to escalate the issue and increase priority

Is the culvert tidally influenced? Not now, but with sea level rise predictions it will probably become influenced by tides.

It was discussed to maybe excavate the bottom just beneath the culvert to increase the pool flow, but it might become a structural issue so it needs to be assessed. The plans should include potential methods to reduce predation.

There is data showing that this creek is one the most important ones for the Alewife run, video analysis in the 90s showed 80K individuals and some other estimates are as high as 100K (most numerous in LI).

11:00 AM Group Discussion Alewife run 2023; results, monitoring efforts and plans for the future

Clearly we need some sort of monitoring program in Alewife Creek

- Assess the size of the run in this Creek
- Get data on the effectiveness of the culvert

All fish passages need to be monitored and assessed for efficiency. Structures installed in other watersheds and other states have shown that this fish passages are not always that efficient and might lead to pooling of fish and increased predation

In the Peconic, we are in the process of finishing the connectivity program. We are working with attorneys and trying to secure funding. We are trying to apply for funding to the federal level with Fish and Wildlife

Multitransit: Fish go upstream to spawning habitat and then go back down and go back and forth multiple times (seen in Carmans River). We find some potential spawning habitat downstream in the Peconics

Closing point from Enrico: We need to advocate to fix the culvert problem with Alewife Creek

Kevin Job has some suggestions on easy and low budget potential solutions and offered to help

11:50 AM Project Update: USGS Solute Transport Model – *Don Walter (USGS)*

Model is in the final stages and we will have a meeting on June 1st when we will have a more in-depth discussion on details and discuss some issues among the group of technical experts. The model has been divided into three sections (LI west, LI east and Peconic Estuary), the model can show results per segment or as a whole.

We will distribute a copy of this presentation for reviewing so TAC members can better prepare for the June 1st meeting

11:35 AM Program Updates – *Sara Cernadas-Martin (PEP)*

12:00 PM TAC Organizational Items - *Joyce Novak (PEP Executive Director)*

- **TAC Chair Oct 2023-September 2025 - As per the [PEP ByLaws](#), every 2 years the PEP Chair is reviewed. PEP Program Office is submitting the current Chair for renewal of position**
- **Addition of voting members: The Program Office is proposing to add the Trustees of Southold, Southampton, and East Hampton as voting members of the PEP TAC and Natural Resource Sub-Committee. At this time, we are making this proposal public and we will call a vote at the Joint TAC/Natural Resource Sub-Committee meeting 8/17/23.**

12:15 PM New Business / Public Comment

12:20 PM Adjourn