

Peconic Estuary Partnership Management Committee Meeting Minutes

July 12, 2023, 10am-12:30 pm

LOCATION:

Suffolk County Community College, [121 Speonk-Riverhead Road](#), Riverhead, NY 11901

Montaukett Learning Resource Center Library (MLRC)

Links to: [College Map](#); [Google Map](#)

[Link to Briefing Materials Folder](#)



Agenda:

10:05 Welcome & Roll Call – Bob Nyman, EPA – Management Committee Chair

*indicates attended in-person

Committee Organizations	Individual
US EPA Region 2 (Chair)	*Bob Nyman
DEC Division of Marine Resources	*Cassie Bauer
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 Landsdale ; vote proxied to Lisa Broughton
Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District	*Corey Humphrey
Suffolk County Legislator District 1 & 2	*Al Krupski & Bridget Flemming
Local Government Rep to the MC	Councilman John Bouvier
PEP Chair Local Government Committee	Councilman Jim Colligan

***approved at the October 11th, 2023 joint meeting**

PEP Chair Technical Advisory Committee	Matt Solafani, PhD
PEP Chair Citizens Advisory Committee	*Kevin McDonald
Stony Brook University (SBU)	Paul Shepson, PhD

Additional Attendees:

Zoom: Matthew Swain (PLT); Gwynn Schroeder (Legislator Krupski's Office); John Bouvier (Town of Southampton), Legislator Bridget Fleming (SC); Ken Zegel - SCDHS; Derek Stein (Legislator Al Krupski's office)

In-person: Barry Volson (PEP), Joyce Novak (PEP), Valerie Virgona (PEP), Jade Blennau (PEP), Rebecca Shuford (New York Sea Grant); Kathleen Fallon (New York Sea Grant), Aimee Boucher (Program Evaluation Team, EPA Region 2), T. Bradley Keith, (EPA Program Evaluation Team/ Ex-Officio NEP Director); Mary Ann Eddy (Sag Harbor Marina Association), Noemi Mercado (Program Evaluation Team Leader, EPA Headquarters NEP Coordinator, EPA Headquarters); Eileen Keenan (PEPC), Lisa Broughten (SC Health), Gavin Cohen (Shinnecock Nation, Department of Natural Resources), Kathleen Fallon (NY Sea Grant), Shauna Kamath (NYDEC Marine), Rebecca Shuford (NY Sea Grant)

10:10 Special Welcome to our visiting PEP Program Evaluation Team!

T. Bradley Keith, Ex-Officio NEP Director, Director, Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program

Noemi Mercado, Program Evaluation Team Leader, EPA Headquarters NEP Coordinator, EPA Headquarters

Aimee Boucher, Regional NEP Coordinator, Peconic Estuary Partnership Coordinator, EPA Region 2

10:15 Review of Minutes from the April 19th, 2023 meeting – Bob Nyman, EPA – Management Committee Chair **ACTION: Management Committee approved April 19th, 2023 Minutes**

10:20 PEP Program Evaluation Team Presentation -**Noemi Mercado**, Program Evaluation Team Leader, EPA Headquarters NEP Coordinator, EPA Headquarters & **T. Bradley Keith**, Ex-Officio NEP Director, Director, Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, **Aimee Boucher**, Regional NEP Coordinator, Peconic Estuary Partnership Coordinator, EPA Region 2.

The Evaluation Team noted they were very impressed with PEP's Partner's involvement and passion. The purpose of the evaluation is to look into the results of the program and understand how to further success.

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ACTION: Discussion of the Program Evaluation Team's findings and recommendations.

Areas of improvement included...

- 1) The need to relieve administrative burdens within the program
- 2) Agricultural Stewardship focus on nutrient reduction
- 3) Organizational Structure and Governance Procedure- implementing By-Laws and committee Chair rotations

The next review period will be in four years for this program to be moved back into the regular review period cycle.

Legislator Krupski noted that on the agricultural front, there is lots of collaboration across partners from the SC Department of Soil and Water, Suffolk County CCE, and NYS. He noted that the MS4 program, as an unfunded mandate, is a distraction to municipalities for assessing & directing outfalls. Krupski notes that the result is the thought to eliminate the outfalls to avoid the MS4 reporting because of the intense administrative burden as well as redirect stormwater to ground in order to recharge the aquifer and prevent stormwater from adding issues to estuarine surface waters.

Kevin McDonald added that MS4 issues are in need of a special meeting in order for the process and paperwork to be assessed. We must highlight how it can work well and avoid paperwork that distracts from its mission.

Joyce Novak notes that the PEP does not have the capacity or ability to sway the state of NY on this issue.

Legislator Bridget Fleming expressed her support for the EPA's support of this program and echoed the need, success, and ability of the program to leverage dollars efficiently within its mission.

Corey Humphreys noted that the administrative coordination roadblocks are largely regulatory. There is a need for EPA and USDA representatives to relieve & sort out these larger regulatory roadblocks. Noemi Mercado adds that although there is not currently a meeting in the books, there is some communication and relationship building from USDA to EPA.

Bob Nyman noted that he would like to talk to Corey in order to possibly connect him with representatives to continue this conversion.

Jeremy Campbell noted the program's growth on the local level, such as engaging with county, state, and local government funding but asks for opportunities from the federal side to increase funding in order to accomplish these goals as the resources are needed.

Noemi Mercado responded that unfortunately their hands are tied to the budget that Congress approves. The BIL Funds put the NEP's in a beneficial position. EPA delivers information to the NEP's about possible funding to be acquired, but they must be applied for locally. She noted that EPA Headquarters operates under limited funds.

T Bradley notes that there are competitive funds within the NEP program but there are also large revolving funds for clean water/ sewage for these communities. He stresses it is vital to know and track the amount of money that is available to communities across your partnerships

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Joyce responded that most people are unaware of the State Revolving funds, she notes that the origins include the NEP's although in NY, only, municipalities can apply for funds- PEP is not able to directly apply. This means we must partner with municipalities to direct carve-outs of senate members.

Kevin McDonald suggests adding this to his special meeting agenda.

Joyce Novak noted that the pot of money is available for direct carve out by congressional and senate members. Ten requests like this can be made per representative per funding cycle. Joyce notes PEP is putting together a package of ten million dollars for congressional carve-out, but full support from partners is needed. This is with the caveat that the administrative burden be relieved. Suggests this East End supervisor meetings for a letter of recommendation for this endeavor and then move upward. It was noted that we are in need of full buy-in of these federal funds from the state and local government

T. Bradley Keith notes that the administrative burden is enormous and this is frustrating. These requests will come from municipalities and PEP is in the role to facilitate this process. Joyce Novak has spoken with staffers of Congressional reps and they are looking for local support through letters of support and facilitation.

Noemi Mercado acknowledges that it is hard to access these funds as they are loans. It was noted that there is precedent of estuary programs using State Revolving Funds
It was noted that the state revolving fund (SRF) functions as a no-interest loan with the ability for it to be forgiven. A ten-million-dollar congressional request is before the money comes to the state. The secondary piece is working with the county, towns, or villages, where funds would be received as PEP, or our fiscal host of Stony Brook University, is not able to accept these funds

Joyce Novak stated that previous SRF funded projects in the watershed have not involved PEP although PEP can direct representatives & communities to apply for projects that are CCMP priorities.

Sue Van PattenPatton noted that the intended use plan by the EFC is the first pot of money that looks at the list of these are projects in play that are ready to receive money. PEP integrating with CCMP objectives with EFC is an endeavor that may work well. It was suggested for an EFC representative to present to the special meeting group to understand where they are in the process.

Jeremy Campbell noted that SRF is separated by drinking water objectives and clean water objectives. There is a process laid out that PEP can engage with and help to promote PEP priorities for this funding Green infrastructure program + WQIP and LWRP programs at DOS are available right now for municipalities to be focused on.

August 27- Governor Hochul will be in Suffolk County accepting suggestions for Bond Act projects and that will be key to getting these projects on their radar.

John Bouvier noted that the sole-source aquifer makes the Estuary's needs very

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special as activities inside and outside of the boundary contribute directly to the health or demise of the Peconic estuary system. There is unprecedented access to federal infrastructure funds for the county and state to work together to fund a sewage project. He notes that smaller communities do not have the infrastructure to write these types of grants although they have an impact on the Peconic estuary system. This is a challenge that needs to be recognized.

Sue Van Patten noted that the LISS has outreach community staffers to target communities and give them resources. It was suggested that perhaps part of these funds is to create a similar role to assist the municipalities in providing resources for grant writing and access to grant information.

Kevin McDonald spoke on the concept of concierge grant service as PEP grant writer may be a significant money multiplier. Although it creates a grant management administrative burden for these small municipalities. Executing and following through on this grant is the hard part.

Joyce notes that although those resources are great, each municipality is in need of a champion to make that project move is needed. A pep me

Eileen Keenan coordinator for PEPC, notes her MS4 work experience. It was noted that getting the grant funding can be the easy part, but getting the warm bodies to successfully & efficiently implement as well as carry out the successful reporting on the grant is very hard to find. An outreach office staffed with people who can provide technical and administrative support for these grants is needed.

Lisa Broughten administers approx three million dollars per year through WQPRP grants, and although there are applicants, there are administrative county forms that are not returned from grantees. It is extremely difficult to get them through the administrative process to get them to contract. It was noted that Camilo Salazar will be leaving his position at the county.

The phenomenon of not being able to carry out grant funding administration leads to money being returned unused with failed projects was discussed. This is more common than is acceptable. The administrative burden of carrying out grants & projects is overwhelming on the ground.

Rebecca Shuford noted that this is a ubiquitous problem across Long Island in conversations she has had with partners. Some of these issues are known are the processes of being able to hire staff to administer these grants. Highlights the need for collaborations such as through the LISS working group that has created 5-year plan to unravel and host collective discussions across stakeholders and state agencies on these hurdles.

Sue Van Patten suggested attending the Bond Act listening tour with the governor. The

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Bond Act is capital funding, this cannot be used for staffing. NYSDEC hosted a webinar on ways in which these municipalities have been able to successfully carry out grants and projects and suggested everyone check it out. Although a town champion is needed.

<https://meetny.webex.com/recordingservice/sites/meetny/recording/dfe9fad99a88103b-bf2f00505681b5a0/playback>

Joyce Novak noted that our east-end towns have these champions within them. But we need this champion as well as the town administration to carry out these grants.

Corey Humphreys noted that the agricultural environmental management program (AEM) has a pot of money for districts to be compensated on an hourly basis at a set rate for the administrative role. This is helpful to use a model to simplify the process of hiring within municipalities. Suggests to put foresight into the grant process and begin these conversations now.

Elizabeth Butler noted that from the EPA side, they have been working toward the nationwide technical assistance center. Our local NY/NJ is aimed at capacity building for the municipalities, these are nationwide as well as regionally. NEPs will be brought in to find the best coordination to maximize benefit.

Noemi Mercado glad to hear this conversation, recognize the layers of hurdles but these conversations push solutions forward. Headquarters on July 18th will have a conference call with regional NEP coordinators on SRF stormwater funding and how to disperse this funding.

Joyce Novak commented that when the EPA has meetings about the SRF Funding (and such similar funding mechanisms) she requests that they discuss with each individual state agency lessons learned and advice on how to best disperse the funds as this is where something is currently getting missed with this funding

11:45 PEP Program Updates – PEP Program Office

- Update: BIL 2023 funds moving

Jeremy Campbell noted that DOS is very interested in participating and assisting in the Shoreline Adaptation Initiative.

12:20 Public Portion / Additional Comments

- Next Management Committee meeting Joint Policy & Management meeting October 11, 2023.

12:30 Adjourn- Bob Nyman, EPA – Management Committee Chair

*The **Management & Policy Committee will review & discuss** the recommendation of the PEP Natural Resources Monitoring Plan needed for final CCMP approval by EPA via email



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THANK YOU!

The next meeting will be a JOINT Policy & Management Committee Meeting on October 11th, 2023 - More details to TBA