



*Minutes to be accepted at next
TAC+ NRSC Meeting August 2025*

Peconic Estuary Partnership
Natural Resources Subcommittee Meeting Agenda
February 5th, 2025, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

In Person Location:
Suffolk County Community College- Eastern Campus
Montaukett Library
MLRC Room 107
121 Speonk Riverhead Rd
Riverhead, NY 11901

Recording: https://youtu.be/NZP_HLfZXdE

10:00 - Welcome and sign in

10:05 – Roll call : Marissa Velasquez-Rosante (Co-Chair, PEP)

10:20 - Committee discussion and vote to move NRSC elections to October 2025

Committee voted in favor of the motion to move NRSC co-Chair elections to October 2025, to align with elections of other committee groups. Committee agreed to submit nominations to the PEP Program Office (peconicestuary@stonybrook.edu) before the August 2025 meeting. Nominees to be discussed in the August 2025 meeting.

10:30 - 2020 Habitat Plans Update Discussion

2020 Habitat Plan (2024 Updates) was updated and finalized. Amendments to the plan will be incorporated later this year, with the addition of the acreage goals, as well as any individual project updates provided by the townships.

Measurable targets, as stated in the 2020 habitat plan, were reiterated and progress on those targets were highlighted: 105 acres/250 acres of tidal wetlands restored, as well as 203 acres out of 242 acres of diadromous fish habitat restored. Committee is actively working on the verification of the land acreage data in order to determine open space available within the estuary.

~61% of projects, as stated in the original habitat plan, have been completed (70 out of 120 projects). Fifty projects still remain active, and the committee will work on moving these projects forward. Project mapper tool (Google Earth) only showing eighteen projects entered with appropriate project status designation. Respective members need to enter projects into mapper. Alan Duckworth (Town of Brookhaven) mentioned issues entering projects into mapper. He will pass along information to PEP Staff to be entered into the mapping tool. Any further issues with the project mapper tool, please reach out to the PEP Program Office.

Acreage goal according to parcel type: PEP staff and the Geospatial Center at Stony Brook University are working to verify the available acreage by parcel type. 10,336 acres of agricultural land parcels have been verified by NYSDEC.



Motion for the NRSC to maintain and to preserve these agricultural parcels within the Peconic watershed? Motion passed.

PEP Habitat Plan is to be updated every 2 years.

Town of Southampton Updates: Theresa Masin

Iron Point Pier: Original plan was to cut a path to allow for better in-water flow for more tidal water fluctuation. The issue is currently taking care of itself due to sea-level rise. Assessment of the project is currently non-viable; will update at next NRSC meeting if the project will be removed from habitat plan.

Ligonee Brook Diadromous Fish Passage has not been initiated; not a real opportunity to construct a fish passage. The small culvert gets clogged up with garbage. Maintenance is required to clear out the culvert and that water is flowing through the culvert.

Peconic River Shoreline Restoration: amending the scope of work for this project, a former dredge spoil area, \$500,000 to conduct the site and soil assessment for this area, therefore editing the scope to provide additional water access to the community through the Riverside Maritime Park Trail. Support PEP's overarching goal of extending access to waterfront communities. This area is surrounding a disadvantaged community, providing access

Round Pond Shoreline Restoration: completed project

North Sea Diadromous Fish Passage: completed project; Ann Welker asked if completion of the project could be further explained. North Sea diadromous fish passage is the reconstruction and retrofit of the box culvert under Noyak Road. The second part of the fish passage project is the culvert under North Sea Road, but at this moment, that was not the major issue. The major issue was the culvert under Noyak Road, the outflow of it was about six inches above the high tide mark. However, that's been restored. The box culvert has been widened, so it's more, and the outflow is closer to the high tide mark so that there's a better flow and passage there, and recently completed in the fall.

Ann Welker stated And it was really well done, so thank you for that. However, and Pete, feel free to weigh in here, there are continuing concerns about the North Sea Road culvert. There was a study done by Suffolk County DPW in the spring of 2024, a lot of rain that season. So it was determined by the one season study that there was sufficient flow under North Sea Road. The discussion at this point from Suffolk County DPW is to not proceed with the restoration or replacement of that culvert. Sea Tuck and Peconic Baykeeper have been advocating for that replacement, but not much progress. Any support and advocacy for that would be appreciated, any ideas, or any former data.

Town of East Hampton: Brian Frank

Alewife Brook Fish Passage and Habitat Enhancement: the culvert underneath was replaced, but to make the culvert sufficient for fish passage would have required upsizing it and changing the contours of the road, this is why it wasn't resized.

Lake Montauk Fish Passage and Habitat Enhancement: Culvert was replaced as well at Big Reed Pond.



Even though a technically completed project. The town would still like to keep this in the habitat plan since there is still a question of the lack of biodiversity and overall degradation in this area.

Napeague Harbor Eelgrass Restoration: The dynamics of this study will be incorporated into the future eelgrass monitoring plan and strategy.

Napeague Harbor Hydrodynamics and Water Circulation Study: Ambitious plan but gauges a lot of interest. PEP was involved in a circulation study that was done about eight years ago. It was determined that the harbor didn't have adequate tidal prism to support two inlets, and that it's really naturally going to be one inlet.

The Western Inlet has been the navigational channel for about the last 15 years. And there is some concern that that is the more unnatural channel. And that the continued maintenance of that channel is contributing to a shoaling within the harbor. Shallow water depths can potentially increase erosion too. Moving the navigational inlet to the east side is a large-scale project. It would involve a lot of government agencies. But if there is an anthropomorphic cause of the degradation in the harbor, then I think we sort of have an obligation to try to identify that.

Pussy's Pond Phragmites Control and Shoreline Restoration: The west and north side of the Pond has had the Phragmites removed, CCE has installed a PRB on the west side to filter stormwater infiltrating into the Pond and plantings done. The bridge is in the process of being repaired and the north-east side will be planted in the Spring.

Restoring Natural Hydrology in Accabonac Harbor: The OWMM project done in the early 2010s seems to have closed off a few of the vector control ditches and created a more productive marsh and better filtration in certain areas, other areas had too much head pressure to allow for the ditches to close.

Town of Riverhead: Matt Charters

East Creek Phragmites Control - **not initiated**

Indian Island Tidal Wetland Restoration - **completed!**

Meetinghouse Creek Wetland/Construction Restoration - **in progress;** entirely funded by grant money, Peconic River Invasive Species Control - **not initiated**

Upper Mills Diadromous Fish Passage Restoration (Phase 2) - **in progress;** county is taking the lead. PEP is working closely to work on land use negotiations for all involved parties. Looking at other funding sources to move this project forward.

Town of Southold: N/A

Alexa Fournier, NYSDEC, gave an update on Narrow River Phragmites Control and Wetland Restoration work. They did recently get an access permit to do some preliminary survey work on the site. They're doing some water logger to check tide heights and they were going to go in and do I think some checks to get really specific elevation data so that they can begin to design the restoration plan for that project.



Town of Brookhaven: Alan Duckworth

Forge River/Diadromous Fish Passage: completed several years ago. The highway department is fixing the bridge that goes over the Fish Passage and fixing up some of the stormwater systems. I'm not sure if that's finished yet. If it hasn't been, it'll be finished very soon.

Town of Shelter Island: N/A

Shelter Island Wetland Assessment and Concept Plan- this is a tier 1 project from the habitat plan and will be funded with PEP's FY24 funds from the NY State Budget. Awaiting the funding and to allocate a contractor for the project.

Estuary Wide Habitat Projects:

River Otter Monitoring: active and in progress

Horseshoe Crab/Diamondback Terrapin: in progress, looking to compile the data these tags acquired over the season. Will be tagging horseshoe crabs this coming spring 2025.

Newly Adopted Habitat Projects & Updates:

Chatfield's Hole Preserve, Two Holes of Water Road, East Hampton NY: Brian Frank; Chatfield's Hole is really a tremendous coastal plain pond. It's entirely freshwater. It doesn't really have any connection to any surface waters or tributaries to the Peconic Estuary. There has been concern over the years about stormwater runoff and its impact on the pond. A lot of anecdotal information about changes in the water levels in the pond and how that might affect both the habitat assemblage, the flora in the pond, as well as species of concern.

Burgland Preserve, North Sea, Southampton NY: Jade Blennau; the Burgland Preserve is a Peconic Land Trust. Josh is here to comment, it is around a 45-acre tidal wetland, with 228 mosaic areas of wetlands around it. Great area to focus on larger scale resilience and coastal resilience and salt marsh restoration.

Coastal plain ponds in the Peconic Estuary Watershed, NY: Jade Blennau; surveys to discuss the best form of management. Previous surveys were completed and, it's a matter of figuring out what is the available information, how to define the coastal plains. Time and energy is needed in the planning stages before a management plan is decided.

Cases Creek, Aquebogue, NY: Pete Topping; Cases Creek has been hardened on either side, and it used to be navigable. Upland, there's extensive tidal wetlands. And for whatever reason, everything's been at a standstill with the actual management of that channel. So what's happening is it's continuously filling with sand and restricting tidal flow. Requires a management plan because the town of Riverhead and Suffolk County DPW haven't really seemed to be able to coordinate the maintenance of that channel as a result of the restricted tidal flow, it imperils all the upland habitat.



Eelgrass Monitoring Strategy & PEP Habitat Plan: Marissa Velasquez-Rosante

All eelgrass related projects incorporated into the habitat plan will become part of PEP's expansive eelgrass monitoring endeavor; partnered with NYSDEC, UMCES, Geospatial Center to implement similar criteria used as the SeagrassNET Monitoring Plan. PEP is looking to acquire criteria from experts to develop a monitoring plan and maintenance strategy for existing eelgrass habitat in the Peconic Estuary. The program office is working on the development of criteria with partners; maps and raw data are active and accessible of PEP's Central Data Hub & PEP's GIS Data Hub

Jade and Marissa thank everyone who has reached out so far to participate in the CLPS review team. There have been recent developments and therefore more criteria to discuss, reach out if you are interested to the program office or Jade directly.

11:20- PEP Program Office Updates

PEP Program Office shared upcoming dates for outreach events, including the Winter Watershed Walk series, Citizen Science Walks, and a documentary screening. Please check the PEP website or social media for details on any of these events.

Reminder that nomination for TAC & NRSC Chairs will be due in October of 2025. Please submit nominations to the PEP Program Office for consideration. Looking to have nominees finalized by the August 2025 TAC/NRSC Meeting.

Please remember to update the Project Mapper with the current status of habitat projects. A guide to using the mapper has been circulated to the committee within the briefing materials.

11:45 - Public Comment

Nicole Maher asks the meaning behind voting to preserve agricultural land. It was mentioned that the agreement of the committee to preserve agricultural land meant maintaining the land as is and preserving agricultural purpose.

Maureen Dunn also mentioned that the next Diadromous Fish Workgroup was February 10th from 2-3pm.

12:00 - Adjourn

*****NEXT NRSC MEETING IS AUGUST 20 2025 *****

Attendees:

In Person: Ann Welker, Mary Ann Eddy, Jade Blennau, Rachel Friedman, Marissa Velasquez-Rosante

Virtual: Brian Frank, Theresa Masin, Nicole Maher, Pete Topping, Allan Duckworth, Matt Charters, Alexa Fournier, Matt Sclafani, Diana Lynch, Maureen Dunn, Shauna Kamath, Jen Yeltkein, Jim Feaga, Josh Halsey, Damon Oscars, Jill Moretto, Kiera Healy, Sam Apgar, Brad Peterson, James Duryea, John Aldred, Lynn Mendelman, Nicole Maher



www.PeconicEstuary.org