

**\$250K FROM THE RAE NEP COASTAL
WATERSHED GRANT PROGRAM**

GROUNDWATER REFUGIA FOR EELGRASS RESTORATION

Resource managers in the Peconics are faced with the reality that increasing water temperatures are the leading driver of restoration effort failure over the last two decades.



Why this work is critical for New York:

- Eelgrass (or seagrass) is primary habitat for juvenile fish, Peconic Bay Scallops, provide natural coastal resiliency, and have the potential to sequester carbon in older, established beds.
- Eelgrass population have declined in the Peconic's by over 85%
- Rising water temperatures are making seagrass restoration nearly impossible in traditional locations.
- This study investigates if groundwater discharge into the estuary is regulating water temperatures and is a key contributor to eelgrass survival.

What we are doing:

1. Identify groundwater seepage where groundwater enters the Peconic's
2. This project uses thermal mapping and radon sampling to identify these areas.
3. Carry out pilot eelgrass restoration in these targeted areas
4. Demonstrate an approach that has the potential to transform this type of eelgrass restoration. Doing so will make such projects more predictable and effective, allowing for larger-scale efforts in estuaries impacted by groundwater discharge.

PEP has committed to 5 years of eelgrass monitoring following this study.



Project Partners

PECONIC ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP, DR BRADLEY
PETERSON (STONY BROOK), DR JOE
TAMBORSKI (OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY)

