

**FY23 WORKPLAN AND
BUDGET EPA Grant #:
CE-99200221**



**Applicant:
Suffolk County Department of Health Services**

**Submitted by:
PEP Management Conference**

**Approved by Policy Committee May 12th, 2023 for
formal submission.**

**Start Date of Grant
October 1, 2023**

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Peconic Estuary Partnership

FY23 Workplan & Budget

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I. INTRODUCTION

Peconic Estuary Partnership

The Peconic Estuary is one of 28 estuaries in the country designated by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as an “estuary of national significance” under Section 320 of the Federal Clean Water Act. The National Estuary Program (NEP) was established to protect and restore nationally significant estuaries threatened or impaired by air pollution, development, and overuse. The Peconic Estuary was formally accepted as part of the NEP in 1992. Officially commenced in 1993, the Peconic Estuary Program includes numerous stakeholders, representing citizen and environmental groups, businesses and industries, academic institutions, and local, county, state and federal governments. The EPA, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and the Suffolk County Department of Health Services (SCDHS) are the sponsoring government agencies for the program. Stony Brook University is the host entity and this grant commences October 1, 2023.

The PEP 2020 Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) guides the priorities of the organization and as such all projects and plans detailed in this workplan relate directly to the actions established to achieve our four goals: strong partnerships and engagement, clean waters, resilient communities prepared for climate change, and a healthy ecosystem with abundant, diverse wildlife.

Overall Funding Sources

The core FY23 budget reflects the following sources of funding:

EPA FY23 Base Funding:	\$850,000.00*
Non-Federal Match:	\$850,000.00**
Total:	\$1,700,000.00

Resources Requested

The total Section 320 funds requested in this NEP grant to Suffolk County is \$170,000 which will be matched at the required 1:1 rate, making the full budget of the Suffolk County award \$340,000

*EPA FY23 Base funding will be provided to Stony Brook University in the amount of \$680,000 which will be matched at the required 1:1 rate, making the full budget of the Stony Brook award \$1,700,000. This award is submitted as a separate application.

**The non-Federal match is provided by NYSDEC, The Town of Southampton, and SCDHS. New York State, Suffolk County, and other partners are expected to provide significant support above and beyond the committed match in the budget table in support of Peconic Estuary Partnership goals and objectives.

II. SUMMARY OF FY22 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Operational Accomplishments

PEP hired a new Natural Resource Program Manager who started in September 2022 which will assist the program office in project management as a result of increased funding and workloads. This role is based at the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation in Kings Park, NY. The Program Support Specialist has undergone a roles and responsibilities review and has changed title to Coastal Resiliency and Community Coordinator – with updated roles that are more suited to daily activities and the growing work related to the Shoreline Adaptation Initiative and partnership building. The status of other operational activities:

- *PEP Finance Plan submitted to Management Committee*
- *PEP Monitoring Plan submitted to Management Committee*
- *Completed the Tracking System - <https://portal.qss.stonybrook.edu/ccmp/>*

Local Planning and Policy

PEP continues to play an active role in regional planning for key issues. PEP holds a seat on the NYS Ocean Acidification Task Force, the Building Eelgrass Resiliency Regional Workshop, the Suffolk County Coastal Resilience and Sea Level Rise Task Force, the Suffolk County Pollinator Pathway Taskforce, and the New York Marine Shellfish Restoration Plan Workgroup – a Pew Charitable Trust and Nature Conservancy initiative to create a roadmap for shellfish restoration in New York. PEP is also coordinating with other National Estuary Programs, the National Parks Service, and EPA on a regional effort to protect and restore seagrass.

Monitoring and Implementation

Water Quality

The engineering design for the stormwater management wetland at **Meetinghouse Creek** been submitted to NYS Department of Environmental Conservation for permitting. Meetinghouse Creek is listed as an impaired waterbody on the NYSDEC Priority Waterbodies List. The wetland vegetation at this site is dominated by *Phragmites*, when the leaves shed, it can choke out life in the water, clogging pathways - lowering biodiversity and in some places each fall. This project has been prioritized for funding under the IJA FY22.

We continued our **Homeowner Rewards Program** and **monofilament recycling program**; two long standing programs that serve to not only positively impact the water quality of our watershed but engage multiple communities to educate them about stormwater management and marine plastic pollution.

Monitoring results can be found here:

- SCDHS Surface WQ data: <https://gisportal.suffolkcountyny.gov/gis/home/item.html?id=8107f192ffac406380b6d61d3d3dbf7d>
- SCDHS Beach monitoring data: <https://gisportal.suffolkcountyny.gov/gis/home/item.html?id=025cb4dadb57413980bd7e760b94da8>
- USGS Monitoring stations

- Riverhead: <https://waterdata.usgs.gov/monitoring-location/01304562/#parameterCode=00003&period=P7D>
- Shelter Island: <https://waterdata.usgs.gov/monitoring-location/01304650/#parameterCode=00010&period=P7D>
- Orient Harbor: <https://waterdata.usgs.gov/monitoring-location/01304200/#parameterCode=00003&period=P7D>
- NADP results
 - <https://nadp.slh.wisc.edu/>, <https://nadp.slh.wisc.edu/pubs/Annual-Data-Summaries/>

The PEP Annual Water Quality Report tracks whether we are meeting our identified water quality targets to achieve our goals for Peconic Estuary waters. Clean water supports fish, shellfish, and wildlife ecosystem health, provides for safe recreation in and on the water, and seafood that is safe for consumption. The Peconic Estuary Water Quality Report enables PEP to track progress on meeting our CCMP goals for Resilient Communities Prepared for Climate Change, Clean Waters for Ecosystem Health and Safe Recreation, and Healthy Ecosystem with Abundant, Diverse Wildlife over the next decade. (<https://www.peconicestuary.org/peconic-estuary-water-quality-report/>)

Eelgrass

A comprehensive **aerial survey of eelgrass in the Peconic Estuary** is to be carried out in June 2023. PEP began working with eelgrass experts from across the North East to develop a regional approach to eelgrass protection. The Technical Advisory Committee agreed to change the method of annual survey and the QAPP is developed during this reporting period.

Aquatic Connectivity Milestones Achieved

The **Woodhull Fish Passage** was completed in 2022 and opened up 2 miles of river and 95 acres of river herring (Alewife) spawning and maturation habitat on Little River, a tributary to the Peconic River. Funding partners for Woodhull Fish Passage included Suffolk County, NYSDEC, Town of Southampton, USFWS and PEP. Alewife are a critical part of the ecosystem, as food for commercial and recreational fished species. The Woodhull Fish Passage is a combination Denil pass and step pool fish passage with an eel passage, through the dam bypassing the existing culvert. It has a permanent video monitoring system to evaluate diadromous fish activity, and this year is the first year of video analysis at Woodhull. The completion of this passage is of significant ecological importance in years prior a majority of the alewife population that uses the Grangebel fishway, 50,000-80,000 fish, ends up at Woodhull Dam on Little River, spawning below the dam each year in a stalled effort to reach upstream habitat.

PEP worked with our local Suffolk County legislators to formally rename the fish pass: **The Byron Young Fish Passage**, a proclamation to name the site after Byron Young, retired NYSDEC fish biologist of 33 years, in dedication of his hard work and championing of the fish passages in the Peconic River over the years.

The **Forge Road Dam Fish Passage** was completed in January 2023 and led by our partners at the Town of Brookhaven. Forge Road Dam Fish Passage opened up 2 miles of river and 115 acres of diadromous spawning and maturation habitat on the main stem of the Peconic River. Only one barrier remains on the main stem of the Peconic River at **Upper Mills Dam**. Engineering designs are complete and permits have been issued for this site and PEP is facilitating a land-use agreement to allow for the construction of the fish pass at this site.

The **Alewife Creek – Noyac Road** culvert project to improve aquatic connectivity has completed survey, designs, and permits. The engineering design and construction of the Alewife Creek Habitat Enhancement project includes the right-sizing of the existing culvert under Noyac Road, reducing stormwater runoff and enhancing the ability of alewife to reach freshwater spawning habitat in Big Fresh Pond within the Town of Southampton. The Town of Southampton is securing implementation funds and expects construction to begin in Summer 2023.

Wetland Project Progress

PEP has continued its partnership with stakeholders of East Hampton Town's **Accabonac Harbor**. PEP is moving forward in contracting \$150,000 of Suffolk County Capital funding to work with representatives of SMARTeams (regional experts that have developed this emerging, minimally invasive wetland restoration technique)

The **Paul Stoutenburgh Habitat Restoration Project** is ongoing. AKRF Team has completed an assessment of the hydrology of the southwest portion of the Paul Stoutenburgh Preserve.

Shoreline Adaptation Initiative & Work Group: In partnership with New York Sea Grant (NYSG), PEP program office is co-chairing a collaborative initiative and workgroup devoted to moving Long Island forward in the realm of living shoreline implementation and nature based adaptations. Coordination of meetings and participation has begun for both groups.

2023 Marine Conservation Policy Fellowship After receiving many applications, PEP program staff scored applications, and awarded the 2023 MCP fellowship to a master's student with interest in policy and permitting surrounding coastal resilience. This student's graduate-level project is being focused under the mentorship of NY Sea Grant and PEP program office to create a document or tool to assist the Shoreline Adaptation Initiative and Shoreline Decision Workgroup.

PEP Mini Grant Program: The program staff has successfully advertised, received applications, formed a review committee, and scored applications for the 2023 Mini Grant Program. Winners are to be announced formally at the May 11th, PEP Biennial conference and four mini grants of \$24,000 will be awarded to top scoring applicants.

Outreach Accomplishments

Community Science Long Island Webinar Series

PEP has partnered with Long Island Sound Study, New York Sea Grant, South Shore Estuary Reserve, and the Seatuck Environmental Association to host the Community Science Webinar Series. Community Science Long Island is an outreach series aimed at raising awareness for citizen science opportunities on Long Island and the importance of those projects in supporting research and local environmental management efforts. PEP organized and hosted the Ospreys and Eagles Webinar on October 10, 2022. (<https://seatuck.org/community-science-webinars/>).

Winter Walk Series with Peconic Estuary Partnership and Peconic Baykeeper

The Peconic Estuary Partnership and Peconic Baykeeper hosted our first Winter Walk Series. Nature walks were held on the second Friday of the month, December 2022 through March 2023, at different parks throughout the watershed.

River Herring and Eel Survey

The annual Long Island Volunteer River Herring & Eel Survey is one of Long Island’s longest running community science projects. Started in 2006, the survey engages community volunteer scientists to monitor runs of migratory river herring and American eels in rivers and streams across Long Island. The survey, organized by PEP, Seatuck, the Long Island Sound Study, and South Shore Estuary Reserve – aims to find the waterways where “remnant” runs of river herring still exist and then to monitor the size and timing of those runs. This information is vital to improve access and restore local populations of these ecologically important fish. (<https://seatuck.org/volunteer-river-herring-survey/>).

Long Island Wildlife Monitoring Network

PEP continued the highly successful citizen science partnership between Seatuck Environmental and PEP, the *Long Island Wildlife Monitoring Network* (<https://wildlifemonitoringnetworkli.org/>). This initiative has held with training, workshops, and led citizen science with partners throughout the PEP watershed. PEP initiated the creation of the Long Island Wildlife Monitoring Network in 2020 to make it easier for partners to collaborate and avoid overlap, and for the public to become aware of all the efforts going on around Long Island and to get involved with multiple citizen science programs. With this brand and central website, citizen participation is increased, data collection centralized, and partner collaboration enhanced.

PEP Biennial Conference – Resilient Communities Prepared for Climate Change

PEP will hold our Biennial Conference on May 11, 2023. We are celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Peconic Estuary’s National Estuary Program, and focusing on the CCMP Goal of Resilient Communities Prepared for Climate Change.

Long Island Estuary Program Coordination

In collaboration with the New York **Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan (LINAP)**, PEP has partnered on an island-wide estuary program collaborated outreach effort. This includes LINAP, the Long Island Sound Study, The New York State South Shore Estuary Reserve, and PEP. Aligned outreach messaging targeted to nitrogen reduction on Long Island has led to a greater understanding of this issue. Through this partnership we are working to replicate PEP’s long-running Homeowner Rewards Program (<https://www.peconicestuary.org/what-you-can-do/homeowner-rewards-program/>) into the other watersheds on Long Island. This partnership will continue through the next year as we move this initiative forward.

Two pilot projects for expanded **rain garden pilot projects** will take place in 2023, one at a school in Southold and one in partnership with the Center for Advocacy, Support, and Transformation (CAST). The installment of rain gardens at these locations will mitigate pollution from runoff, increase native plant habitat, and most importantly include students and communities to educate them on the estuary health and importance of such projects.

III. FY23 WORKPLAN

CCMP Goals

Strong Partnerships, Resilient Communities, Clean Water, and a Healthy Ecosystem are the four pillars of our foundation, The CCMP lays out 8 Objectives and 35 Actions that will guide PEP and our partners to address the challenges facing our watershed.

Budget and Staff Elements

Program Office Staff

All funding to be used for direct PEP Program Office staff time is covered under the SUNY Stony Brook Research Foundation portion of the NEP grant request. For information regarding staff funding of the Peconic Estuary Partnership staff in FY2023, please see the Stony Brook workplan. However, time from the following staff will be used toward managing the projects funded via the NEP grant awarded to the Suffolk County Department of Health Services since this award supports the PEP:

Executive Director: Joyce Novak, PhD

Location: Suffolk County Department of Health Services, 300 Center Drive, Room 250S, Riverhead, NY

Responsibilities: Provides overall leadership to the program office, management and administration to the Program on behalf of the Management Conference.

Outreach Assistant (Nutrient Reduction) – Part-time –Local Government Funds (\$57,103)-TBD

Location: Suffolk County Department of Health Services, 300 Center Drive, Room 250S, Riverhead, NY

Responsibilities: Assist the Outreach Coordinator with communication around nutrient reduction. Help to coordinate civic engagement about septic improvement and fertilizer use. Develop materials for distribution specifically focused on septic improvement and fertilizer reduction. Develop social media campaigns and update website regularly.

Coastal Resilience and Community Coordinator: Jade Blennau

Location: Suffolk County Department of Health Services, 300 Center Drive, Room 250S, Riverhead, NY

Responsibilities: Coordinates PEP watershed resilience initiatives including wetland restoration projects, and builds partnerships with the PEP local communities to foster a stronger understanding of the challenges we face related shoreline impacts and assist local governments in finding solutions.

Budget Summary

Table 1 outlines the Summary Budget for the FY23 EPA 320 spending covered under this grant request. Section IV, page 12 has details of this budget.

Table 1: PEP FY23 Budget Summary – Suffolk County Request

FY23 EPA §320 Budget	
Description	FY23 Cost
Water Quality Personnel (+fringe)	\$125,000
Other (Subawards)	
Support for continued maintenance installed I/A Systems	\$45,000
Indirect	\$0.00
Total Suffolk County Request	\$170,000.00
Total Match Suffolk County	\$170,000.00
TOTAL EPA Grant	\$340,000.00

3. New and On-Going Project Information – Suffolk County FY23 Workplan

Water quality monitoring programming projects are all on-going. The new initiative to support the maintenance of installed Innovative and Alternative Septic Systems (I/A Systems) is new and indicated on table 2. This project funding will compliment funds allocated under the PEP I/JA 23 for the same purpose for a total of \$95,000 to support households. Table 2 outlines the project type, Suffolk County FY23 funding request, and PEP role for each project in the workplan.

Table 2: PEP Projects in the Suffolk County FY23 Workplan

CCMP Action	Description	Project Type	Funding requested from FY23 §320 award:	PEP Role
Action 16	Water Quality Monitoring	Ongoing	\$125,000	Supporting partner
Action 16	I/A Maintenance support	New	\$45,000	Supporting Partner

CCMP GOAL: CLEAN WATERS

Objective D: Protect areas with clean water from degradation.

Action 16: Identify areas of clean water quality and deliver information that local governments and others can use to protect those areas.

Action 17: Plan science based for monitoring and reducing nutrient pollution

Performance Measure: Annual review of water quality data and water quality monitoring programs with assessment and recommendations regarding changes to water quality data collection in order to adequately monitor all waterbodies in the Estuary.

Performance Measure: Annual water quality data reports that support partner's efforts to increase local and regional stewardship of areas of clean water quality.

Water Quality Monitoring (Ongoing)

- a. **Estimated Budget:** \$125,000 §320 funds Request in FY23 budget (+\$15,450 ULO) for a total of \$140,450
- b. **Partners and their roles:** Suffolk County Department of Health Services (SCDHS), Office of Ecology (Lead Partner), PEP (Supporting Partner).
- c. **Description and Objectives:** SCDHS monitors water quality of surface and marine waters within the Peconic Estuary. The water quality monitoring program conducted by the SCDHS Office of Ecology includes monthly monitoring at approx. 40 Peconic surface water quality stations throughout the year, periodic monitoring of approx. 30-point source and stream stations, and weekly monitoring at the NADP rain and atmospheric deposition gauge. Task funds will be used to support 2 Suffolk County personnel monitoring water quality of surface and marine waters within the Peconic Estuary as part of the Suffolk County Department of Health Services (SCHDS) Surface Water Quality Monitoring Program. The SCDHS Surface Water Quality Monitoring Program data will be analyzed by SCDHS Office of Ecology as part of the PEP Water Quality Monitoring Collaborative; a water quality monitoring report will be produced for the Peconic Estuary Partnership. FY23 funds will be used to support personnel time allocated to this task.
- d. **Outputs and Deliverables:** Routine monitoring conducted in the Peconic Estuary makes it possible for the PEP to have accurate, up-to-date information regarding water quality conditions throughout the Estuary. All Suffolk County Department of Health Services Water Quality Data and Information is available upon request. And presented in the annual report.
- e. **Estimated Milestones:** Annual water quality summary report.
- f. **Long Term Outcomes:** Water quality data will be used to assess environmental conditions in the Peconic Estuary and refine management programs as necessary. Based on water quality data, priority projects and research initiatives can be identified and the PEP can continue its success in efforts to protect and restore the Estuary. Data collected by these monitoring efforts inform periodic reporting and adaptive management.
- g. **Clean Water Act Core Programs:** Identifying Polluted Waters and Developing Plans to Restore Them (TMDLs): Assessment of progress toward TMDL goals; refinement of implementation plan and TMDL goals for land-based loads; Elements of this project prevent or mitigate the impacts of nutrient pollution.

Suffolk County I/A Septic Replacement System Maintenance (new)

In 2017 Suffolk County initiated their septic replacement program. This allowed households with existing cesspools and septic systems to apply for a grant to install new low nitrogen systems. The existing grant program includes maintenance for three years of these new systems. These funds will be passed to Suffolk County so they can administer these funds through their existing program to support continued maintenance of I/A systems for an additional 2-3 years for households that qualify as Low/Median and median households under the existing Suffolk County program.

- a. **Estimated Budget:** \$50,000-EPA 320
- b. **Partners and their roles:** Suffolk County (lead and execute project), PEP (partner)
- c. **Description:** Suffolk County has been successfully administering the Reclaim Our Waters Initiative since 2017 (<https://suffolkcountyny.gov/SIP.html>) which provides grants to homeowners to upgrade their existing cesspools and septic systems with new alternative low nitrogen systems. Nitrogen pollution in the grounds and surface waters of the Peconic watershed has been identified as a leading cause of pollution and HABs. The existing Suffolk County Program allows

for additional grant funding for households. Suffolk County makes this determination and has successfully administered this program and identified these households. The existing program allows for three years of maintenance to new innovative septic systems. As we move into the future, the current three year, grant funded maintenance is coming to a close. With combined funding from the PEP IIA23 award, for a total of \$95,000, PEP will fund an additional 2-3 years of maintenance of these systems for the households that qualify as low/median and median households under the existing program and continue to support communities in need and provide continuing equitable access to nitrogen reducing septic systems in our estuary watershed.

- d. **Objectives:** The overarching objective of this project is to reduce nitrogen pollution in the watershed and provide additional and equitable support to households to enable them to achieve increased water quality.
- e. **Outputs and Deliverables:** Annual reporting of number of households and maps of areas that have been serviced by these funds.
- f. **Estimated Milestones:** Annual reporting.
- g. **Long Term Outcomes:** Increased reduction of nitrogen
- h. **Clean Water Act Core Programs:** Supporting water quality protection and restoration; Developing and implementing nutrient reduction strategies; Developing and implementing strategies to increase opportunities for disadvantaged communities to access, enjoy, and benefit from surface waters and waterways, participate in ecosystem restoration, and engage in capacity- building or educational activities.
- i.
- j. BUDGET DETAILS
- k.
- l. Resources Requested
- m. The total 320 funds requested in this PEP grant to Suffolk County Department of Health Services is **\$170,000.**
- n. This grant will be complimented by a request for PEP support to SUNY Stony Brook Research Foundation for
- o. \$680,000 and together these two components make up the full Peconic Estuary Partnership FFY2023 workplan for a total \$320 request of \$850,000 with a local match of \$850,000 for a total grant of \$1,700,000. Details of expenditures can be found in Table 3.
- p.
- q. No trips are anticipated under this grant request and no travel funds are requested here.
- r.

Table 3: Detailed budget and spending FY23 Suffolk County request

BUDGET DETAIL 2023 Workplan	Total Requested from EPA	Total Match Provided by Applicant	Total ULO used	Total
Personnel and Fringe				
Water Quality Monitoring				
<i>Ongoing Personnel</i>				
Monitoring Personnel: Chemist	\$39,473.00	\$39,473.00	\$15,450.00	\$94,396.00
Monitoring Personnel: Boat Operator	\$35,341.00	\$35,341.00	-	\$70,682.00
<i>Fringe</i>				
Monitoring Personnel: Chemist	\$27,703.00	\$27,703.00	-	\$55,406.00
Monitoring Personnel: Boat Operator	\$22,483.00	\$22,483.00	-	\$44,966.00
SUB-TOTAL	\$125,000.00	\$125,000.00	\$15,450.00	\$265,450.00
Other				
Maintenance of Installed I/A systems	\$45,000.00	\$0	\$0.00	\$45,000.00
Suffolk County Projects	\$0.00	\$45,000.00	\$0.00	\$45,000.00
SUB- TOTAL	\$45,000.00	\$45,000.00	\$0.00	\$90,000.00
TOTAL	\$170,000.00	\$170,000.00	\$15,450.00	\$355,450.00

1. Non-Federal Contribution

(a) Suffolk County Match

Suffolk County Department of Health Services will provide the required 1:1 for this grant application totaling \$170,000 as detailed in the previous table. Suffolk County’s expenditures to fund water quality monitoring and water quality protection and restoration through the Suffolk County General Budget and Suffolk County Capital Budget funding are approved to be allocated as the required 1:1 local match for Suffolk County’s USEPA National Estuary Program Peconic Estuary Partnership Support grant.

