

**Peconic Estuary Partnership
Management Committee
Meeting**

**April 15, 2026
10am – 12:30pm**

LOCATION: *Note change*

Riverhead Town Hall: Board Room
[4 W 2nd St, Riverhead, NY 11901](#)

Agenda:

10:00 Welcome & Introductions: *Michele Golden, DEC Division of Water*

See the attendance at the end of this document for attendees.

10:05 Review of January 14, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Action: MC approval of meeting minutes from January 14, 2026

Motion made by Chris Clapp, seconded by Corey Humphrey. All remaining members voted in favor. None opposed. Motion approved.

10:10 PEP new staff introductions- Joyce Novak, PhD, PEP Executive Director

10:10 *Agenda addition* Ocean Action Plan NYSDOS & introduction of Jayme Breschard

Jayme Breschard (NYSDOS) introduced herself, and noted Ocean Action Plan update, which is being developed on a 10-year framework. The update focuses on advancing resilience and community capacity by integrating multiple state planning programs, including Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs and Bond Act funding.

Discussion emphasized the importance of supporting implementation-ready projects and helping municipalities navigate available funding tools. The June 8, 2026 State of the Science forum was highlighted as a key opportunity for engagement, with multiple sessions available for public participation.

10:15 National Estuary Program Federal Updates: Joyce Novak, PhD, Executive Director

Joyce Novak provided updates on federal activities, including the reauthorization of the National Estuary Program and related legislation. The program is anticipated to be extended through 2031, with continued advocacy for funding potential at \$1 million per program annually.

Discussion addressed current funding stability for FY26 and uncertainty in future federal timelines. Updates were also provided on the Coastal Watershed Grant (CWG) program funding

January 2026, MC [Minutes](#)

Draft FY26 SBU & SC [Budget Table](#)
& [Budget Narrative](#)

PEP [Final Communications Strategy](#)

Briefing Materials Package:
[Link to Google Briefing Materials Folder](#)
or [DataHub Materials](#)

source. The group noted the 2024 and 2025 success in that grant program through the SBU eelgrass work and the salt marsh restoration planning in partnership with The Nature Conservancy.

Additional discussion highlighted expansion of the CHANGES project, including site suitability assessments and implementation of nature-based shoreline approaches across multiple municipalities. A future meeting will be scheduled to review this project in greater detail.

10:25 PEP Financial updates: Joyce Novak, PhD, Executive Director
Joyce Novak presented financial updates across federal, state, and local funding sources.

Discussion included:

- *Status of EPA Section 320 funding and IIJA funds*
- *State funding timelines and delays in disbursement cycles*
- *Suffolk County funding allocations, including capital investments and water quality monitoring*
- *Ongoing and planned projects such as intertidal wetland concept designs and septic system support programs*

Clarification was provided that no Management Committee action was required for no-cost time extensions, as no changes to funding amounts or project scopes were proposed.

10:35 FY26 Workplans Review and Discussion

Suffolk County Workplan Amendments (FY24 & FY25)

Discussion focused on the proposed oyster farm recovery microgrant program to support aquaculture operations impacted by recent environmental conditions, including significant winter losses.

Key discussion points included:

- Program limited to replacement of lost gear and spat, not expansion of operations
- Need for a clear process to verify losses and identify impacted growers, with Suffolk County leading implementation
- Consideration of best management practices (BMPs) and whether participation in the program should include resilience measures for future events, such as gear identification, sinking capacity, and improved durability
- Alignment with existing USDA and New York State programs, including the Environmental Management Program and Soil and Water Conservation District efforts
- Discussion of inspection capacity and staffing limitations, and the role of county and state partners in administering and verifying the program
- Recognition that aquaculture losses may have multi-year impacts, with estimates that 40–48% of production may be affected, resulting in delayed economic impacts over the next 2–3 years

- Consideration of reestablishing a shellfish-focused working group and engaging aquaculture specialists to support long-term resilience planning
- Interest in developing metrics tied to public funding, including ecological and economic indicators such as shellfish production, survival rates, and environmental conditions (e.g., anchor ice impacts)
- Discussion of how collected data could support CCMP actions, State of the Bay reporting, and communications efforts
- Balancing the need to deploy funds quickly with minimizing administrative burden on growers, including consideration of streamlined application requirements or advisory input on program design

Action: Management Committee recommends Suffolk County FY24 & FY25 amendments to Policy Committee

Corey Humphrey made a motion, seconded by Chris Clapp.

All members voted in favor. None opposed. Motion approved. EPA conditionally approves, pending revised workplan(s) submission to Region 2.

Stony Brook University FY26 Workplan

Discussion included program priorities, budget allocations, and alignment with CCMP actions across clean water, healthy ecosystems, and strong partnerships.

Discussion topics included:

- *Continued investment in monitoring programs that support priority embayments and harmful algal bloom tracking*
- *Updates to public-facing tools, including a refreshed clean water website and expanded communication of monitoring results*
- *Expansion of habitat monitoring, including eelgrass and shellfish-related efforts*
- *New and ongoing partnerships supporting outreach, education, and community engagement*
- *Clarification of indirect costs associated with Stony Brook University administration and program support*
- *Interest in additional budget clarity over time, including year-to-year comparisons of line items*

Action: Management Committee recommends approval of Stony Brook University FY26 Workplan to Policy Committee

Joseph Sanzano made a motion, seconded by Cassie Bauer. All members voted in favor. None opposed. Motion approved. EPA conditionally approves, pending workplan submission to

Region 2 and grants office review

Suffolk County FY26 Workplan

Discussion included funding allocations for program office operations, clean water initiatives, habitat monitoring, and partnership programs.

Discussion topics included:

- *Ongoing monitoring of priority embayments and recent harmful algal bloom conditions*
- *Updates to clean water initiatives and coordination with partners such as Group for the East End*
- *Continued investment in habitat restoration and monitoring programs, including shellfish and eelgrass efforts*
- *Implementation of new tools and projects, including litter and stormwater-related initiatives*
- *Expansion of outreach and education programs, including partnerships with local organizations and institutions*
- *Questions regarding organizational affiliations and participation in training programs associated with outreach initiatives*

Action: Management Committee recommends approval of Suffolk County FY26 Workplan to Policy Committee

Joseph Sanzano made a motion, seconded by Chris Clapp. All members voted in favor. None opposed. Motion approved. EPA conditionally approves, pending workplan submission to Region 2 and grants office review

11:20 PEP CCMP 5-Year review

- Minor changes to CCMP & Vulnerability Assessment.

In accordance with the EPA CCMP five-year review, it was determined that the CCMP remains current and appropriate. Minor revisions were identified, and changes will be further incorporated into the next scheduled CCMP update.

- PEP Finance Plan: Awaiting EPA Concurrence
- PEP Communications Strategy: Finalized

Action: Management Committee recommends approval of PEP Communications Strategy to Policy Committee

Jeremy Campbell made a motion, seconded by Joseph Sanzano.

All members voted in favor. None opposed. Motion approved. EPA conditionally approves,



pending submission to Region 2, and concurrence with EPA HQs.

11:30 PEP Updates

PEP Committee Updates

- Local Government Committee, **Michael Iasilli, Chair**
 - Update provided on continued municipal engagement, including confirmation that a Town Board approved the PEP budget. Ongoing coordination with municipalities to support implementation of PEP priorities.
- Citizens Advisory Committee, **Chris Clapp, Chair**
 - Update included recent Albany Education Day efforts and continued engagement supporting state funding advocacy. The finalized Communications Strategy is expected to guide future CAC outreach and education efforts.
- Technical Advisory Committee, **Matt Scialfani, PhD. Chair**
 - Updates included progress toward establishing a shellfish-focused workgroup and recent technical presentations. Discussion referenced microplastics research nearing completion, with final reporting underway, and ongoing HAB coordination with New York State. Plans include incorporating embayment-level analysis into annual water quality reporting and expanding communication around these findings.

Program Office staff provided updates on ongoing and upcoming initiatives, including:

- Eelgrass monitoring expansion, including launch of SeagrassNet and associated citizen science efforts, along with installation of signage and mapping tools to reduce impacts from boating activities
- Alewife and American eel monitoring, including fish passage efforts such as the eel ladder installation and ongoing planning for additional infrastructure improvements
- Bond Act funding proposals, including Upper Mills fish passage and potential greenhouse infrastructure at Stony Brook University's Southampton campus
- Microplastics study nearing completion, with Suffolk County support for field operations
- HAB coordination efforts, including potential dedicated meetings with NYS DEC and integration into broader water quality strategy
- Outreach initiatives including Horseshoe Crab monitoring, monofilament line collection, mini-grants, septic improvement outreach, and upcoming public engagement events

12:00 Public Portion / Additional Comments



Committee members and partners shared additional updates and announcements:

- Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District noted that there are currently two open Environmental Planner positions, with additional hiring anticipated in 2027. The department has also added an arborist to staff and is planning upcoming volunteer engagement events.
- New York Sea Grant shared that a Research Coordinator position is currently posted to support program capacity, with applications open through early May.
- Suffolk County Department of Health Services indicated plans to conduct outreach to approximately 1,400 property owners regarding septic system upgrades and available programs.
- Association for Marine Industries noted the availability of a public voter resources and expressed interest in future coordination and presentations with PEP.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:02 PM.

Attendance

Management Committee Members: *via zoom

Committee Organizations	Individual
US EPA Region 2	Not present: Liz Butler vote was proxied to Michael Flood
DEC Division of Marine Resources	Cassie Bauer
DEC Division of Water (* Chair Oct 2025-27)	*Michelle Golden
New York State Department of State	Jeremy Campbell
Suffolk County Dept of Health, Office of Ecology	Mike Jensen
Suffolk County Dept. of Economic Development and Planning (* Vice-Chair Oct 2025-27)	*Joseph Sanzano
Suffolk County Soil and Water Conservation District	Corey Humphrey
Suffolk County Legislator District 1	Not present: Greg Doroski-



PROTECTING AND RESTORING LONG ISLAND'S PECONIC BAYS

Committee Organizations	Individual
& 2	representative Catherine Kent & Ann Welker
Local Government Rep to the MC	Not present: Councilwoman Cate Rogers
PEP Chair Local Government Committee: Southampton Rep	Not present: Council Member Michael Iasilli vote proxied to Tajea Anderson (Southampton Town)
PEP Chair Technical Advisory Committee	Matt Sclafani, PhD
PEP CAC Vice-Chair Citizens Advisory Committee	Chris Clapp, PhD
PEP Host (Stony Brook University)	Not present: Paul Shepson, PhD vote proxied to Christopher Gobler
Shinnecock Indian Nation	Not present: Shavonne Smith representative Gavin Cohn

Additional in-person attendees:

Bradi Gaer (NYSDOS), Bill Zalakar (LI Farm Bureau), Rebecca Shuford (NY Sea Grant), Jayme Breschard (DOS)

Zoom Attendees:

Valerie Virgona (Peconic Estuary Partnership), Tajea Anderson (Town of Southampton), Michele Golden (NYS Department of Environmental Conservation – Division of Water), Jill Moretto (Peconic Estuary Partnership), Jim Colligan (Shelter Island), Jessie McSwane (Peconic Land Trust), Irene Donohue (SC Legislative District 2 Office), Matthew Sclafani (Technical Advisory Committee), Emily Berkowitz (Cornell Cooperative Extension Suffolk County), Lynn Mendelman (Association of Marine Industries), Shauna Kamath (NYS Department of Environmental Conservation)

