

*to be approved August 6th, 2025

**Peconic Estuary Partnership
Management Committee Meeting**

May 14, 2025

10:00am – 12:30pm

LOCATION:

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

Montaukett Learning Resource Center- Library (MLRC)

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

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

February, MC [Minutes](#)

Agenda:

10:00 Welcome

Management Committee Roll Call: *Sue Van Patten, Management Committee Chair*

The meeting was called to order with a roll call. Michael Iasilli, new Chair of the PEP Local Government Committee, introduced himself. The minutes from the February 26, 2025 meeting were approved.

Action: MC approve meeting minutes from February 26, 2025

All in favor, no members abstained, none opposed- Motion Approved

10:05 National Estuary Program Federal Updates with EPA: Joyce Novak, PhD Executive Director

Joyce Novak reported on federal funding, noting the FFY25 budget is under a continuing resolution and a significant 54.5% reduction is anticipated for FFY26. EPA updates from Elizabeth Butler included budget uncertainties for Year 5 and recent staffing changes due to retirements, including that of Bob Nyman. PEP's FFY25 application is under review, and the program continues to align its work with core statutory duties.

10:35 PEP Financial update: Joyce Novak, PhD Executive Director

Joyce Novak detailed significant delays in receiving approved FY25 funding from local municipal partners and New York State. Specifically with NYS, heavy delays and a new requirement for single-source approval that are affecting sub-awards and funds contracting. The FY25 state budget is set at \$750k, which is accounted for in the workplan, with one project to be determined by the TAC. Regarding county capital funds, Ken Zegel noted that retirements and administration changes have caused hold-ups. The discussion also covered concerns about sourcing seagrass shoots and seeds from existing beds for restoration. Future plans include new seagrass monitoring sites in 2026, in-house SAV monitoring led by Marissa Valasquez, and a potential SAV monitoring partnership with DEC at Orient Point. The SAV taskforce is expected to reconvene in the Fall.

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11:10 Where are we now? Larger PEP initiatives:

- Seagrass
- Aquaculture
- CLPS/ Geospatial Center

11:30 PEP Updates

PEP Committee Updates

- Local Government Committee, **Valerie Virgona, PEP Communication & Outreach Manager**
- Citizens Advisory Committee, **Chris Clapp, CAC Co-Chair**
- Technical Advisory Committee, **Matt Sclafani PhD. Chair**
- Peconic Bay Scallop Technical Review Committee, **Marissa Valasquez, Co-Chair**

PEP Active Project Updates, **Program Office**

Committee updates included a review of the communications strategy and a call for estuary-wide participation. The Technical Advisory Committee reported progress on integrating project data into a public GIS dashboard and developing a shoreline management model with VIMs. A key action item arose from this discussion: Michael Iasilli proposed, and will help create, a subcommittee to formally link PEP with town CPF programs to better coordinate on land acquisition priorities. Updates were also shared on the scallop symposium, agricultural outreach, and the upcoming Shoreline Summit.

As always, the invitation is extended to attend the PEP Albany Trip planned each year!

11:35 PEP Management Committee Member Updates

Members shared updates from their respective agencies. Highlights included the LI Action agenda moving toward public comment (NYSDEC), upcoming WQPRP application openings (Suffolk County & NYSDEC), ongoing Bond Act funding opportunities with applications due June 6th (NYSDEC), proposed sanitary code changes for PRBs (SCDHS), expansion of the AEM program to include aquaculturists (SCSWCD), and new working waterfront legislation in development (Suffolk County Legislator's Office)

Chair: Sue Van Patten, NYSDEC, Division of Water

- *The LI Action Agenda has been in development for the past year and will soon be open for public comment.*

Vice-Chair: Lisa Broughton, Suffolk County Dept of Economic Development and Planning

- *Applications for the Water Quality Protection, Restoration, and Preservation Program (WQPRP) will be opening soon.*

Cassie Bauer, NYSDEC, Division of Marine Resources

- *DEC will be announcing the WQPRP.*

Jeremy Campbell, NYS Department of State

- *Bond Act programs (from LWRP and Inland Waterways, Coastal Resilience and Rehabilitation grants) have ongoing funding for at least the next five years.*

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- DOS has hired a new **resilience director**, to oversee projects statewide.
- The first round of Bond Act applications was due June 6th, with awards expected by year-end.
- Additional programs may emerge through other parts of the Bond Act, which is also integrating into existing programs and creating new ones like the DEC watershed grant program.
- All information on opportunities is available on the **Bond Act website:**
environmentalbondact.ny.gov/pages/projects.

Ken Zegel, PE, Suffolk County Dept of Health

- Changes to the **sanitary code** will require **Permeable Reactive Barriers (PRBs)** targeting nitrogen removal to be registered with the county, including basic design and monitoring. This will create a central repository of information.
- Implementation is hopeful by **January 2026**.

Corey Humphrey, SC Soil and Water Conservation District

- Working with Ag & Markets for a carve-out in the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) line for **cover crop cost-share**.
- An **Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM)** contract is in progress to include **aquaculture farmers** in the protections previously only given to land-based farmers in NY. This is a significant change; reach out if you have aquaculture farmers.
- Discussion raised about including **seaweed** in this, and Mr. Humphrey suggested connecting with Sue Van Patten for further discussion.

Catherine Stark, Office Representative (Suffolk County Legislators, Districts 1 and 2)

- **Working waterfront legislation** is in development.
- Expressed support for PEP's involvement in developing thoughtful language to protect these communities.
- Looking to preserve the last portion of **Sawmill wetland through Bond Act funding**.

Chris Clapp, Vice-Chair, Citizens Advisory Committee

- The South Shore Estuary Reserve (SSER) has a contract to fund the **Garden Rewards Program**.
- Starting a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for **bay scallop work** with Bassem Allam's lab.

Elizabeth Butler, EPA

- Thanked program office for submitting **workplans early**, noting that EPA Region 1 is experiencing delays due to new federal processes.

12:15 Public Portion / Additional Comments

During the public comment period, Legislator Ann Welker requested a follow-up call with the PEP team. A need for coordination between NRCS and the Suffolk County Department of Health regarding PRBs on agricultural parcels was identified. Outreach efforts for the HRP and septic systems were reviewed, and Councilman Iasilli asked to be kept informed of outreach in Southampton. Future meeting dates were confirmed.

2025 Management Committee Meeting Dates:

- ~~— Wednesday, February 26, 2025~~
- ~~— Wednesday, May 14, 2025~~
- Wednesday, August 6, 2025- Southold, CAST Visit
- Wednesday, October 29, 2025* Joint MC-PC

Important Dates:

May 28th, 2025: DEC Aquaculture Presentation

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June 5th, 2025: Save the Date PEP Biennial: Shoreline Summit

July 16th, 2025: PEP Scallop Symposium

Attendance MC Member: *zoom

Chair: Sue Van Patten, Watershed Section B, Section Chief; NYS LINAP Coordinator (NYSDEC, Division of Water)

Vice-Chair Lisa Broughton, Water Quality and Energy Director (Suffolk County Dept of Economic Development and Planning)

Cassie Bauer, Bureau Chief, Marine Habitat (NYSDEC, Division of Marine Resources)

Jeremy Campbell, South Shore Estuary Reserve Director (NYS Department of State)

***Ken Zegel**, PE, Chief - Office of Ecology (Suffolk County Dept of Health)

***Corey Humphrey**, District Manager (SC Soil and Water Conservation District)

Catherine Stark Office Representative & Ann Welker(in person), (Suffolk County Legislators, Districts 1 and 2)

***Michael Iasilli** (Chair of PEP Local Government Committee)

***Matt Sclafani**, PhD, Cornell Cooperative Extension (Chair, Technical Advisory Committee)

Chris Clapp, (Vice-Chair, Citizens Advisory Committee)

~~**Paul Shepson** Dean SoMAS, Stony Brook University (Host representative)~~

~~**Shavonne Smith**, Environmental Director, Shinnecock Environmental Department (Shinnecock Indian Nation Representative)~~

***Cate Rogers**, East Hampton(Local Government Representative)

Elizabeth Butler, Watershed and Estuary Protection Section Supervisor (EPA)

The following members were not in attendance: Shavonne Smith, Paul ShepsonCate Rogers, Matt Sclafani, and Ann Welker Joined late to joined the meeting.

Additional Attendees: Joyce Novak (PEP), Jade Blennau (PEP); Rachel Friedman (PEP); Christopher Gobler (SBU); Lauren McGrath (NYFB); Corey Humphrey (SCSWD); (Phone Participant); Jill Moretto (PEP) ; Valerie Virgona (PEP); Mike Jensen (SC Health Dept); Josh Halsey (Peconic Land Trust); Michael Flood (EPA) ; Shauna Kammath (NYDEC)