

Peconic Estuary Protection Committee
Meeting Summary – September 6, 2017

Cornell Cooperative Extension
423 Griffing Avenue, Riverhead, NY
10:00am- 12:00pm

ATTENDEES

Committee Member Representatives

Town of Brookhaven | Veronica King (Committee Vice-Chair)
Town of East Hampton | Mark Abramson (by phone)
Town of Riverhead | Drew Dillingham (Committee Chair)
Town of Shelter Island | Laury Dowd
Suffolk County | Jay Elyse (by phone)

Additional Participants

Peconic Estuary Protection Committee Coordinator | Rachel Gruzen
Cornell Cooperative Extension Marine Program | Scott Curatolo-Wagemann
NYS DEC & Peconic Estuary Program | Elizabeth Hornstein

Committee Member Representatives Not Present

Town of Southampton | Christine Fetten
Town of Southold | Michael Collins
Village of Greenport | George Hubbard, Paul Pallas
Village of North Haven | Dianne Skilbred
Village of Sag Harbor | Robert Stein
New York State Department of Transportation | Gregg Williams

I. Discussion and Approval of July 12th Meeting Summary

The Peconic Estuary Protection Committee (Committee) members approved the July 12th Meeting Summary.

II. Committee Dues

2018 dues have been committed in approved town budgets for: Riverhead and Southampton (2/11 members). Committee dues have been proposed in the town budgets and are pending approval for: Brookhaven, East Hampton, Southold, Shelter Island, Suffolk County and Department of Transportation (6/11 members). The three villages have budget approvals in six months (3/11 members).

III. Committee Meeting Frequency

The Committee discussed a proposal to reduce Committee meeting frequency to bi-monthly (every other month) to increase attendance and ensure efficient use of member time. The Coordinator will review the Committee by-laws regarding frequency and conduct a member vote by email given there was not a quorum.

[Update as of September 11th: Six members voted in favor, and five no response, on reducing the frequency of Committee meetings to every other month. This is consistent with the Committee by-laws which state, "Committee meetings will be conducted monthly or at a frequency deemed appropriate by the Committee." The next meeting will be Wednesday, November 1st, at Cornell Cooperative Extension in Riverhead. Subsequent meetings will occur every other month on the first Wednesday of the month at Cornell Cooperative Extension in Riverhead, unless otherwise noted.]

ACTION ITEM:

- **Committee meetings will occur at a bi-monthly frequency (every other month). The next meeting will be November 1st at Cornell Cooperative Extension.**

IV. "Quality Assurance Project Plan Services for a Supplemental Water Quality Sediment Data Collection Project"

Elizabeth Hornstein of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and Peconic Estuary Program (PEP) reported on behalf of the PEP that a consultant has been selected to develop the "Quality Assurance Project Plan Services for a Supplemental Water Quality Sediment Data Collection Project" (QAPP) for the Committee. A Suffolk County Review Committee evaluated six contractor proposals and selected Tetra-Tech on August 30th. The contract development process is now under way. Members estimated that the Suffolk County contract process will be complete in spring 2018. The project timeline with the contractor was estimated at 18-24 months, therefore the water quality monitoring program would likely commence upon QAPP approval in late 2019 or early 2020.

Vice Chair Veronica King of Brookhaven noted that Committee member representatives should reflect on whether they wish to participate in the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for the QAPP. The TAC would benefit from members with technical expertise in water quality monitoring to work directly with the consultant under the orchestration of the Coordinator.

ACTION ITEM:

- **Coordinator to survey Committee member representatives on interest in participating in a Technical Advisory Committee on the development of the Quality Assurance Program Plan for Supplemental Water Quality Sediment Data Collection.**

V. Water Quality Sampling in Conditional Waterbodies with the NYSDEC

The Coordinator will reach out to the NYSDEC to offer municipal staff assistance to the Shellfish Sanitation Program in collecting water quality samples in Conditionally Certified water bodies. Conditional waterbodies are those that require regular monitoring by NYSDEC and are temporarily closed under certain conditions due to anticipated poor water quality.

Municipal staff, bay constables, trustees and other municipal affiliates can be trained in NYSDEC Division of Marine Resources protocols for the collection of samples at fixed sampling stations, and transport samples to the NYSDEC FDA-approved microbiology laboratory in East Setauket. The NYSDEC provides the training and the collection equipment.

Municipal assistance to the NYSDEC would help to increase the amount of baseline data available on water quality conditions in pathogen-impaired waterbodies and may reduce the amount of time they are closed to shellfishing; one of the early goals of the Committee. It is also a starting point for relationship-building with NYSDEC and may assist with future sampling in 303(d) List waterbodies.

East Hampton and Southampton have expressed interest in the training. Shelter Island will consider it though their pathogen waterbodies are administratively closed indefinitely. East Hampton has assisted the NYSDEC with sampling conditional waterbodies in the past and the NYSDEC has requested re-training. Southold Trustees and Brookhaven have already participated in the training and have been working with NYSDEC to assist in sampling both Conditional and 303(d) List waterbodies. Riverhead and Shelter Island have pathogen-impaired TMDL waterbodies that are closed due to administrative closures, therefore water quality sampling will not result in any openings.

ACTION ITEM:

- **The Coordinator will reach out to the NYSDEC to offer municipal staff assistance to the Shellfish Sanitation Program in collecting water quality samples in Conditionally Certified water bodies.**

VI. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Section 303(d) List of Impaired Waters

The deadline for public comments on the 2018 NYS DEC Section 303(d) List of Impaired Waters is September 29, 2017. Further information can be found at: http://www.dec.ny.gov/enb/20170510_not0.html (scroll down to the second notice.) East Hampton, Southold and possibly Southampton will submit comments on the List.

ACTION ITEM:

- **Members to submit comments on the 2018 NYSDEC 303(d) List of Impaired Waters by September 29th.**

VII. Education and Outreach

The Coordinator reported on the Committee's summer education and outreach (E&O) activities, specifically fair activities, booth design and a children's installation. The Coordinator will produce a report on E&O activity for the period March 9-September 9, 2017 for semi-annual reporting to the NYSDEC documenting compliance with the General Permit for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4s) Minimum Control Measure 1: Public Education and Outreach. The Coordinator will deliver a draft report to members by early October. The Coordinator will continue education and outreach activities at municipal festivals and focus on school groups and homeowners associations.

Scott Curatalo-Wagemann of Cornell Cooperative Extension reported on the stormwater education and outreach activities it conducts on behalf of Suffolk County for the County's compliance with the General Permit for MS4s. CCE attends County fairs and events at County lands, goes to schools within the County to provide presentations, and helps schools to build raingardens. Mark Capalino is CCE's lead educator conducting these activities. The Coordinator will coordinate with Capalino on a schedule of school outreach to avoid redundancy.

VIII. Website

Elizabeth Hornstein on behalf of the Peconic Estuary Program (PEP) stated that the PEP website will launch in September. [Update as of September 18th: The website is live and the Committee has one page under PEP Local Government Committee. The Program staff and the Coordinator will collaborate on building additional pages for the site using text and other materials produced in spring 2017. Current website: [https://www.peconicestuary.org/protect-the-peconic/committees-and-advisory-groups/local-government-committee-peconic-estuary-protection-committee/.](https://www.peconicestuary.org/protect-the-peconic/committees-and-advisory-groups/local-government-committee-peconic-estuary-protection-committee/)]

ACTION ITEMS:

- **Coordinator to provide a Committee progress report to members by early October that includes activities during the MS4 semi-annual reporting timeframe of March 9-September 9, 2017.**
- **Coordinator to continue education and outreach at municipal festivals and focus in the fall on school groups and homeowners associations.**
- **Coordinator to reach out to Mark at the Cornell Cooperative Extension stormwater education program to collaborate and not be redundant.**
- **Coordinator to collaborate with the Peconic Estuary Program on building the Committee webpages under the Program's website.**

IX. Water Quality Improvement Projects

Members gave updates on ongoing water quality projects. East Hampton's Mark Abramson reported on projects being implemented by the Community Preservation Fund (CPF) Water Quality Technical Advisory Committee (WQTAC). The Town has recently initiated a septic system rebate program to encourage the installation of County-approved innovative/alternative onsite wastewater treatment systems. Eligible homeowners may receive a rebate for the costs associated with upgrades up to \$10,000 or \$16,000 if the property is located within the Water Protection District or qualifies for affordable housing. East Hampton just started accepting applications on September 1st through its Department of Natural Resources.

East Hampton's program complements Suffolk County's Septic Improvement Program, which provides a grant up to \$11,000 for costs associated with septic upgrades. The two financial incentives combined are estimated to cover the full cost of an install. Whereas the County program is a grant to finance the work in advance, the town's program is a rebate to the homeowner upon the provision of receipts and other documentation of completed work. The County's program opened July 1st and 610 applicants have registered online. 158 have submitted applications and 94 grant certificates have been issued by the County. After receiving a grant certificate, the applicant has 30 days to complete the grant agreement. There is funding for about 200 installs per year.

East Hampton's program accepts applications for both commercial and residential installations, whereas the County's program is for residential only. Further information on East Hampton's program can be found at: <http://ehamptonny.gov/584/Septic-Rebate-Program>. Further information on Suffolk County's program can be found at: www.ReclaimOurWater.info. Hornstein pointed out that this website provides information for both homeowners and industry professionals, updates on advanced/alternative on-site wastewater treatment technologies, new and proposed code changes, and other wastewater improvements being made throughout the County.

The Coordinator updated the Committee that on August 8, 2017 The East Hampton Town Board also adopted nitrogen reduction requirements. According to a press release from the Supervisor, the legislation "requires all new home construction and new commercial development to use Suffolk County's new low-nitrogen waste systems. Effective January 1, 2018, new construction and substantial expansion of existing residential and commercial buildings will be required to install the new onsite waste treatment systems. East Hampton has adopted the strictest requirements of any community in Suffolk County." Source: <http://www.ehamptonny.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/2414>.

Post-meeting East Hampton also reported that it is using the CPF to design and install four stormwater management retrofits in Accabonac Harbor. The conceptual designs for the retrofits come from the Accabonac Harbor Subwatershed Management Plan prepared for The Peconic Estuary Program and the Town of East Hampton by Horsley Witten Group in June 2013. <https://www.peconicestuary.org/accabonac-harbor-subwatershed-management-plan/>

One such project is at Parson's Place at the headwaters of the Harbor. The Town is installing four new storm drains and interconnected piping, re-grading the road and installing a raingarden. Anticipated additional stormwater projects include raingardens, bio swales and permeable pavement to be installed at Three Mile Harbor and Montauk Lake.

Post-meeting East Hampton reported that it is using the CPF to design and install a permeable reactive barrier (PRB) at Hog Creek. Nitrogen groundwater monitoring will commence in early 2018 to identify high-flux nitrogen inputs and identify the best location for the PRB(s). Based on lessons learned at Hog Creek, PRBs will subsequently be installed at Three Mile Harbor, Accabonac and the southern reach of Lake Montauk.

Also under the CPF, East Hampton town awarded Cornell Cooperative Extension funding for a pilot macroalgae bioextraction project in Accabonac Harbor to commence in spring 2018. Seaweed will be grown, harvested and tested to measure the level of contaminants absorbed by the macroalgae.

John Parker of Sag Harbor reported that the Village's Harbor Committee will present three water quality improvement project proposals to East Hampton's WQTAC in coming weeks. The projects are EH 7A, 8 and 10 within the Sag Harbor Water Quality Improvement Plan (WQIP) prepared by Nelson, Pope & Voorhis for the Village of Sag Harbor Board of Trustees, Town of Southampton Town Board and Town of East Hampton Town Board. According to John Parker, the three "initial projects involve the area near Havens Beach and are designed to reduce the amount of stormwater running into the bay, both through the drainage ditch and an outflow pipe next to the Azurest swimming area at the west end of Terry Drive." The projects were recommended by Nelson, Pope and Voorhees as first projects, while a second round of proposed stormwater projects to "likely be on Bay Street to address water running into the harbor near and over the launch ramp". Further information: <http://sagharborny.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/sagharbor-water-quality-improvement-project-plan-lr.pdf>.

Shelter Island reported that its Water Quality Improvement Project Committee is working with the Town Board to develop a septic improvement program. Southampton was not present to report on its Water Quality Technical Advisory Committee and projects.

Drew Dillingham of Riverhead reported that the town submitted a grant application to Suffolk County for the upgrade of bathhouses under the Suffolk County Water Quality Protection and Restoration Program Funding for Municipal Parks. The grant funds wastewater treatment improvements at municipal parks (i.e. innovative alternative nitrogen reducing technologies, composting toilets, wastewater reuse). The original call went out November 2016 and is still in effect with a rolling deadline for all who attended the original proposer's conference in December 2016.

X. New Business

Scott Curatalo-Wagemann shared on Cornell Cooperative Extension's Fresh Indigenous Sustainable Healthy (F.I.S.H.) Program. Its mission is to encourage people to eat more locally caught fish by educating consumers on responsible seafood choices and partnering with the local seafood shops, including measures such as giving them greater web presence. Currently 90% of purchased fish is imported. Funding for the F.I.S.H. Program came from New York Farm Viability Institute. The Program website is: www.LocalFish.org

Hornstein reminded members to stay abreast of developments with Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan (LINAP) by signing up for the monthly newsletter at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/103654.html> Hornstein reported that the launch of the County's Subwatershed Plan, originally scheduled for late 2017, has been pushed off to an unknown date.

[Post-Meeting Update: On September 6th Governor Cuomo issued a press release announcing: "A \$10.4 million effort to improve Long Island's water quality and bolster the economies and resiliency of coastal communities by restoring native shellfish populations to coastal waters. To restore shellfish, New York State is establishing five new sanctuary sites in Suffolk and Nassau counties to transplant seeded clams and oysters and expanding public shellfish hatcheries in the two counties through a dedicated grant program... New York State is establishing five shellfish sanctuary sites at strategic locations, where shellfish will both improve water quality and thrive... The sites will be managed by SUNY Stony Brook and Cornell Cooperative Extension in partnership with municipalities and volunteer organizations. Suffolk County sanctuary sites include Bellport Bay, Shinnecock Bay, and Huntington Harbor. Nassau County sites include Hempstead and South Oyster bays." Press release: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-104-million-effort-improve-long-island-water-quality-restore-shellfish>

Kindly note the next and final 2017 meeting date will be: November 6th.