

PEP TALK

The Newsletter of the Peconic Estuary Program

Volume 5, Issue 2.....Summer 2009

Maintaining Success:

Ludwigia Eradication Paddle, 2009!

On July 11th and August 8th, under bright blue sunny skies, volunteers paddled approximately 4 miles of the Peconic River on a quest to find and remove the floating invasive plant, *Ludwigia peploides*. As colleagues, friends, and families carefully searched the river, it quickly became apparent that the hard work was well in the past.



Educational signs installed along the Peconic River
Photo by: Laura Stephenson, NYSDEC/PEP

2009 marked the 4th successful year of the PEP's *Ludwigia* monitoring and eradication program. Participants at the two 2009 paddle events worked hard to even find the 4 cubic yards of *Ludwigia* that they removed. Quite an accomplishment when just a few years back, large sections of the river were being taken over by this fast reproducing invasive plant. Taking a look back, 6 cubic yards were removed in 2008, 60 cubic yards in 2007, and 60 cubic yards in 2006. It's clear that the project has proven to be a success story. Since 2006, the Peconic Estuary Program has held 13 removal events at which 438 volunteers spent 2360 hours removing a total of 130 cubic yards of *Ludwigia* from the Peconic River.

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Outreach & Education: Focus on Hashamomuck Pond and Reeves Bay

Over the course of the past few months, the Peconic Estuary Program has held a number of exciting educational events for residents in the Hashamomuck Pond and Reeves Bay watersheds. These two areas (in Southold and Southampton, respectively) are the pioneer sites for our sub-watershed stormwater runoff management projects. We are focusing efforts and resources on restoring these particular embayments of the Peconic Estuary through partnerships with the towns and by providing face-to-face educational opportunities to local community members. Pioneer programs have been launched in these particular watersheds because of the unfortunate, but common, shellfishing closures experienced due to water quality issues in these areas, which in part are related to stormwater management issues.

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Here is a quick summary of a few of our recent and upcoming community outreach programs in these locations:

- This spring, Group for the East End in partnership with North Fork Audubon carried out a stormwater management planting project at Inlet Pond County Park. A variety of native plants were planted in a large strip of lawn, right where the yard begins to slope towards the street. This helps to reduce the amount of lawn on the property, while slowing down and greatly reducing the amount of stormwater that runs off the property into the street and eventually to the bay. We invited all members of the Hashamomuck Pond watershed to help out with the planting and get some ideas for actions they can take to control stormwater runoff on their own properties as well. Feel free to stop by and check it out next time you are on Sound Avenue in Greenport (and a special thanks goes to Jean Schweibish for her donation of native plants!);



Discussing ways that homeowners can help restore and protect the Bays at Water's Edge Civic Association's community beach

Photo by: Laura Stephenson, NYSDEC/PEP

- We recently led a hike through beautiful Arshamomaque Preserve in Southold. A number of community members came out for this fun walk through the beautiful ecosystem surrounding Hashamomuck Pond, and discussed stormwater management projects in the local area as well as estuary protection/restoration efforts that homeowners are already taking part in;



Reeves Bay beach exploration at Water's Edge Civic Association's community beach

Photo by: Laura Stephenson, NYSDEC/PEP

- Our beach exploration program in Reeves Bay was also a great success! We met at the Water's Edge Civic Association's community beach, and walked along the shore exploring and learning a bit of natural history about the variety of plants animals that live in and around the Peconic Estuary. We also discussed ways that homeowners can help restore and protect the bays and discussed efforts already underway by the PEP, Southampton Town, and many homeowners in the area;

- And finally, we are currently planning the launch of our Reeves Bay Peconic Estuary-Friendly Yard of the Month award program. Start sending us emails (jskilbred@eastendenvironment.org) or give us a call (631-765-6450) and let us know about your bay-friendly yard practices today! Great prizes and certificates will be awarded to our environmentally responsible winners.

Thanks to everyone who took part in these exciting programs, and especially to those of you who have taken action around your home to help reduce stormwater runoff and pollution into the bay! Please spread the word to your neighbors and friends and encourage them to take part in bay-friendly practices as well. Keep an eye out for announcements about future programs in these and other areas around the Peconic Estuary at www.peconicestuary.org! ~ Jennifer Skilbred, Group for the East End/PEP

PEP Talk is published by the Peconic Estuary Program (PEP), a partnership of governments, environmental groups, businesses, industries, academic institutions, and citizens. The PEP's mission is to protect and restore the Peconic Estuary system. Learn more at www.peconicestuary.org. Edited by Emily A. Fogarty



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Peconic Estuary Program Photo Contest

Calling all those who have a passion for the Peconics – and a camera!

You are invited to participate in the Peconic Estuary Program's 2009 Photo Contest. We're seeking images that celebrate the beauty and life of the Peconics for use on our website and in other published materials. Submissions will be accepted for each of the following categories:

- Estuarine Landscapes (including coastal and upland areas)
- Outdoor Recreation
- Wildlife (including birds, insects, fish, etc.)
- Human Impacts on the Peconics

Winners will be selected for each category in the Adult Division (18+) and the Youth Division (Under 18). The winner and runner up in each category will receive PEP gift packs and numerous entrants will have their photos featured in PEP publications and multimedia materials.

You can submit your contest entry form and upload your photo from a link on our website at www.peconicestuary.org/PhotoForm.html. Entries must be submitted via the website by Monday November 2nd, 2009. If you have questions about the submittal process or the photo contest in general please email us at pep.photocontest@gmail.com.



*Previous PEP Photo Contest
Winner for the Wildlife Category*

"Fiddler Crab"

Photo taken by Alfred J. Spiro
(Scarsdale, NY) at beach on East Creek
in Cutchogue, NY (8/05)

Calendar of Events

October 1st & 2nd: Join the PEP at the Fourteenth Annual Pine Barrens Research Forum, Brookhaven National Laboratory, Berkner Hall, Upton, NY. For more information please call 631-224-2604.

October 21st: Citizen's Advisory Committee Meeting (6:30 pm - 9:30 pm) Hampton Bays Community Center, Hampton Bays NY.

October 27th: PEP Management Committee Meeting (9:30 am - 12:00 pm) Cornell Cooperative Extension Education Center's First Floor Conference Room-432 Griffing Avenue Riverhead, NY.

PEP Pump-Out Vessel Incentive Program Facts and Figures

In 2002 the entire Peconic Estuary was designated as a Vessel Waste No Discharge Zone (NDZ) in order to help protect our shellfish beds and keep our waters safe and clean for swimming and recreation. The Peconic NDZ includes all navigable waters of the Peconic Estuary, west of a line connecting Orient and Montauk Points, including all harbors, bays and tidal creeks.

In a No Discharge Zone, treated and untreated discharges from marine toilets are prohibited. Violation of the NDZ (NYS Navigation Law §33.e) may result in fines up to \$500 for a first offense and \$1000 for subsequent violations.

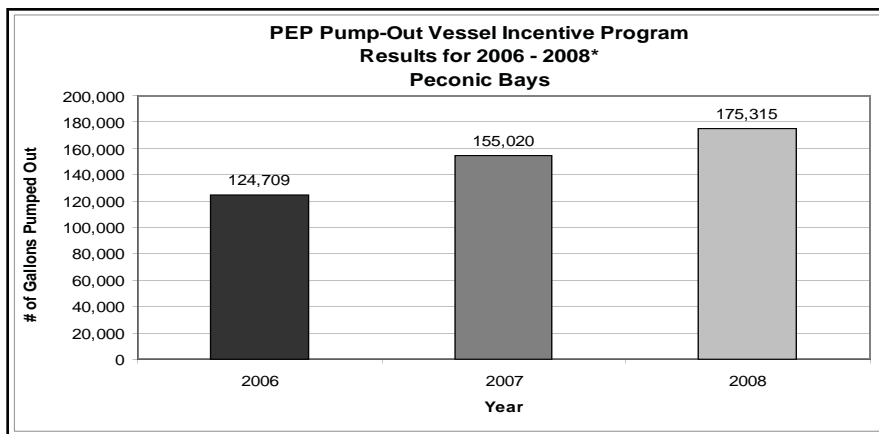


East Hampton pump-out boat
Photo By: Diane Hewitt, DCH
Graphics

Boaters who use their Type III MSD (holding tank) *must* use a pump-out boat or station to comply with the NDZ. To aid in the compliance of the NDZ rules, several municipalities offer free pump-out services, both via boat and land-based stations. Many private marinas also have onshore pump-out stations available for a fee.

Pump-out vessels offer convenience to the boating community by providing opportunities for boaters to pump out their holding tanks with ease, thereby increasing the likelihood of protecting water quality in the Peconic Bays. In order to encourage the purchase and use of these vessels, County, State and Federal agencies have provided funding to assist municipalities in the purchase of pump-out vessels.

Suffolk County offers a Pump-Out Vessel Incentive Program that is financed by Capital Program 8229. The program has assisted several East End municipalities by providing funding for their pump-out vessels. Each year, the participating municipalities report back the number of gallons collected by the pump-out vessels. In the last three years alone over 455,000 gallons have been collected from boaters in the Peconic Bays. The graph below represents the figures reported to Suffolk County by participating East End municipalities. As the graph indicates, there has been an increase in the amount of boat waste being managed responsibly in recent years; a reflection of the Program's success.



* Pump-out vessel figures reported to Suffolk County by participating East End municipalities.

Over one million gallons of boat sewage has been collected for proper disposal throughout Suffolk County as a result of the Pump-Out Vessel Incentive Program. Funding is still available for municipalities interested in attaining new or additional pump-out vessels, so interested parties should contact the PEP Program Office at 631-852-5750 to request an application.

Additional information on pump-out vessel regulations may be found at <http://www.peconicestuary.org/NDZ.html>, and a map of municipal pump-out locations can be accessed via www.peconicestuary.org/NDZ.Map.html. Remember, don't dump it, pump it! ~Emily A. Fogarty, SCDHS/PEP

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This year, the PEP also worked closely with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation to install 5 educational interpretive signs at Peconic River access sites to educate fishermen, boaters and the general public about the *Ludwigia* eradication effort, the threat this invasive species poses, and the importance of maintaining the project's success.

Without the efforts of the volunteers *Ludwigia* would have continued to take over large portions of the Peconic River. Now only minor maintenance and monitoring will be necessary to continue this eradication initiative. The PEP thanks its project partners and the hundreds of dedicated volunteers that have assisted in this effort through the years; it wouldn't have been possible without them!

For more on the *Ludwigia* eradication project, please visit the PEP *Ludwigia* webpage at: www.peconicestuary.org/InvLudwigia.html
~Laura Stephenson, NYSDEC/PEP



Volunteers sport their PEP "Paddle the River" event T-shirts for a group photo
Photo by: Laura Stephenson, NYSDEC/PEP

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In the Peconics, both native *Phragmites* (*Phragmites australis* ssp. *americanus*) and introduced subspecies are found. Often *Phragmites* is found in marsh areas that have been disturbed by freshwater inputs or by dredge material placement. *Phragmites* (*Phragmites australis*) form dense stands which include both live stems and standing dead stems from the previous year's growth. Leaves are elongated and typically 1-1.5 inches wide at their widest point. Flowers form bushy panicles (a pyramidal loosely branched flower cluster) in late July and August and are usually purple or golden in color. Below ground, *Phragmites* forms a dense network of roots which can be several feet in depth. The plant also spreads horizontally by sending out rhizome (horizontal stems) runners which can grow 10 or more feet in a single growing season if conditions are optimal.

Phragmites can spread both by seed dispersal and by vegetative spread via fragments of rhizomes that break off and are transported elsewhere. Once introduced, *Phragmites* invade a site quickly and can take over a marsh community, crowding out native plants, changing marsh hydrology, altering wildlife habitat, as well as increasing fire potential. Its high biomass blocks light to other plants and occupies all the growing space below ground so plant communities can turn into a *Phragmites* monoculture very quickly.

Management options for *Phragmites* are limited. *Phragmites* is intolerant of salt water with a salinity above 18 parts per thousand, therefore in some situations improved tidal flow to increase water salinity is the best technique where restriction of tidal flow or impoundment has caused the problem. Herbicide application is often needed where that is not feasible. Other control options include mowing, dredging, flooding, draining, burning, and grazing. At present, there is no long-term species specific control measure.

Phragmites control almost always requires a government issued permit to remove. So please do not try to remove it yourself, instead contact your local Town representative to discuss removal options. To learn more about *Phragmites* and other invasive species please visit our website at: www.peconicestuary.org/Invasives.html.~Emily A. Fogarty, SCDHS/PEP

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Species Snapshot: *Phragmites australis*

Look around the edges of most any marsh or waterway in the Peconics and you are sure to see the tall, invasive grass *Phragmites*. *Phragmites australis*, the common reed, is a tall perennial grass found in wetlands throughout temperate and tropical regions of the world. Even though native forms of *Phragmites* exist in the United States, an invasive, more-aggressive European strain has replaced most of our native reed. *Phragmites* threatens wetland ecosystems by crowding out all other native wetland plants. Thick stands of *Phragmites* have little value to wildlife and reduce the ecosystem's natural diversity of life.



Stand of *Phragmites australis* located in Meetinghouse Creek Aquebogue, NY
Photo by: Lorian Peterson, SCDHS

Non-native or invasive species are plants and/or animals that have been introduced by humans or human activity in locations outside their natural range. In North America, plants and animals are considered not native or invasive if they were introduced after European settlement (i.e., after the mid-1500s). Common traits of invasive species include: fast growth, high reproductive rates, and high dispersal ability. In addition to disrupting natural ecosystems, invasive species can affect humans by disrupting recreational activities and clogging important waterways.

Phragmites is thought to have arrived in North America accidentally, most likely in ballast material in the late 18th or early 19th centuries. It established itself along the Atlantic coast and, over the course of the 20th century, spread across the continent. The species is invasive particularly in the eastern states along the Atlantic Coast and increasingly across much of the Midwest and in parts of the Pacific Northwest.

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