



Summary Peconic Estuary Program Policy Committee Meeting

May 22, 2014

2:00 PM

NYSDEC Bureau of Marine Resources

205 N. Belle Meade Rd, E. Setauket, NY

Attendees:

See sign-in sheet, attached.

- 1) The meeting opened with welcomes and introductions (*Joan Leary Matthews*, USEPA, Policy Committee Chairperson).
- 2) The summary of the May 6, 2013 Peconic Estuary Program Policy Committee was accepted as presented (*Joan Leary Matthews*).
- 3) Presentation of Proposed Budget for FFY2014 (*Alison Branco*, SCDHS, PEP Program Director)
 - a. See materials/handouts
 - b. Budget includes funding staff, monitoring and outreach. No funds for implementation were included from NEP grant this year. Education and outreach has been pro-rated due to contract delays and was funded at \$48K instead of the past annual amount of \$100K. USGS continuous monitoring for nitrates was cut to fit into the current budget of \$537,800.
 - c. Discretionary implementation funds were competitively awarded to PEP for 2 small projects: Climate Vulnerability Assessment and Subwatershed Management Plan Implementation
 - d. Approved.
- 4) Sustainable Program Funding Discussion (*Sheri Jewhurst*, USEPA, PEP EPA Coordinator)
 - a. Provided a summary of other program designs and options like using another host agency with the ability to fundraise (Harbor Estuary Program example).
 - b. *Fred Thiele*, NYS Assemblyman, presented potential funding options for PEP.

- i. Watershed Improvement District: One time tax levy (up to \$10 per household) to update CCMP and create action plan. It could also be a consistent source of funds in the future, if needed.
 - ii. Community Preservation Fund (CPF): Proposal for towns to petition the state to extend this legislation from 2030 to 2050. In addition, towns can request that approximately ten percent of these funds be used for PEP implementation projects – based on an updated CCMP. These details must be drafted very tightly. Subject to permissible referendum. Vote could occur in 2015.
 - iii. Should look at State Environmental Protection Fund for this year until a sustainable funding plan is in place.
- c. *Peter Scully*, NYSDEC Regional Director, states that this program needs resources, not a new host entity. Began a general discussion – Tax levy versus CPF (pros and cons including community support). Other options include “right-sizing” the program. May undervalue the program with a new tax.
- d. *Tom Melito*, Suffolk County Executive Office, states that he intends to raise the profile of the PEP within the Executive’s Office, starting with a presentation to Steve Bellone by PEP Program Director.
- e. *Joan Leary Matthews* requested that the state and the county consider funding the staff positions so National Estuary Program funds can be used for implementation (cites examples NYS funding LISS staff, Suffolk County funding monitoring in other estuaries). States that *Sheri Jewhurst* and *Alison Branco* will work up options and create a smaller workgroup to follow up with this issue.
- f. *Jodi Giglio*, Town of Riverhead Council Member, suggested strengthening the Suffolk County Fertilizer Law to include a tax on fertilizer.
- g. *Larry Cantwell*, Town of East Hampton Supervisor, suggested asking the five east end towns to fund the PEP in the interim until sustainable funding is in place. Must reconnect with the public and create a short and long term action plan. *Sheri Jewhurst* and *Alison Branco* will also work with a small group to follow up on these action plans.
- h. *Anna Throne-Holst*, Town of Southampton Supervisor, states that the costs of fixing water quality problems in the future will be much higher than addressing it today. If PEP issues are framed in the correct way, a funding plan will be more palatable to the public. It is important to remember that “community preservation” includes more than just purchasing available land and extends to preserving the environmental resources that the community relies on. Suggests that it would be a good idea for the CPF to be extended indefinitely.
- i. *Bill Wise*, Director of NY SeaGrant, suggests considering merging PEP with the South Shore Estuary Reserve.

5) Nitrogen Priority Issue Updates

- a. Suffolk County (*Walter Dawydiak*)
 - i. Updated Comprehensive Water Resource Management Plan.
 - ii. Regional nitrogen strategy and wastewater plan.
 - iii. HAB Action Plan and Strategy project.
 - iv. IBM Smart Cities.
 - v. Alternative onsite septic pilot projects by end of 2015.
 - vi. State funding for sewerage.
 - vii. Suffolk County approval pending for funds for the Peconic Inter Municipal Agreement
 - viii. Septic Tour to gather information

- b. New York State (*Peter Scully*)
 - i. More progress in one year than in the last twenty.
 - ii. Rebuild Superstorm Sandy areas better.
 - iii. Connection of excess nitrogen with salt marsh loss.
 - iv. Work with Suffolk County on additional sewerage.
 - v. \$2,000,000 EPF grant match by \$3,000,000 Suffolk County funds for research, development, nitrogen and pathogen loading models and wastewater initiatives.
 - vi. Public Meetings

- c. Local Governments (*Anna Throne-Holst*)
 - i. Work on developing alternative septic systems.
 - ii. Need to determine acceptable levels of nitrogen for the health of the estuary.
 - iii. Must have collaborative efforts.
 - iv. Acknowledge, and take advantage of, the worldwide market for alternative septic systems.
 - v. Raise awareness of the need for these systems.

- d. EPA (Joan Leary Matthews)
 - i. EPA also participated in the Septic Tour.
 - ii. Looking into obtaining HUD funds and federal Superstorm Sandy funding.
 - iii. Crapshoot film contest (Suffolk County).

6) Annual Progress Report from Program Office (Alison Branco and Julie Nace, NYSDEC PEP Coordinator)

- a. Annual report available online.
- b. Additional activities since report:
 - i. Continued work on restoring river connectivity in the entirety of the Peconic River

- ii. Final stages of implementing the Peconic Inter-Municipal Agreement
- iii. New outreach efforts (A Day in the Life of the Peconic Estuary and World Fish Migration Day)
- iv. Continued search for implementation funding through grant applications:
 - 1. EPA funding secured that will fund a project within a PEP Subwatershed Management Plan and a Climate Ready Estuaries Vulnerability Assessment.
 - 2. Suffolk County ¼% funds Decentralized clustered wastewater systems, IMA, and HAB action plan.
 - 3. Suffolk County Capital funds fish passage engineering design
 - 4. Other grant applications in excess of \$400, 000 were submitted and we are awaiting results.
- v. PEP submitted many letters of support for our partners with projects that impact the Peconic Estuary.

7) PEP Committee Updates

- a. Citizens Advisory Committee (*Aaron Virgin*, GFEE, Outreach and Education Contract - Principal)
 - i. Overview of contract changes – to better complete contractual obligations, more staff is now participating with PEP initiatives.
 - ii. Spring Pond Stormwater Project (*Jenn Hartnagel*)
 - iii. Peconic Family Fun Day, Homeowner Rebate Program, Conservation Planting at Big Duck, A Day in the Life of the Peconic Estuary, STOP program, Bilingual pilot program (*Jen Skilbred*)
 - iv. Rebuilding of the CAC Leadership Council is still a work in progress.
- b. Technical Advisory Committee (*Alison Branco* for *Matt Sciafani*, TAC Chairperson)
 - i. Creating of Nitrogen Workgroup with successful Kick-off Meeting. This group will be assessing the modeling needs for the Peconic Estuary and providing guidance for the nitrogen reduction initiatives within PEP and making recommendation about updates to the N TMDL Implementation Plan.
 - ii. This effort will work in coordination with any similar efforts within Suffolk County and NYSDEC.
- c. Local Government Committee (*Alison Branco*) – Alison has been attending East End Supervisors and Mayors meetings, and other local municipal meetings, to reach elected officials and not create another

meeting for them to attend. Local Government participation has increased substantially over the last 2 years.

8) Meeting Adjourned.