



Peconic Estuary Program Management Committee Meeting Minutes

March 8, 10:00-11:30
Cornell Cooperative Extension Building, 2nd Floor
423 Griffing Avenue, Riverhead, NY

1. Introductions (Seth Ausubel, US EPA, Chair)

2. Minutes from last meeting (Seth Ausubel)

Approved with the following change from Dawn McReynolds: #6, PEP should talk to SSER about contributing to Suffolk County's water quality monitoring program.

ACTION → PEP (Alison Branco and Julie Nace) will reach out to SSER (Fred Anders) to see if they can contribute to the monitoring program.

3. Program Office Update (Alison Branco, Program Director)

Program Evaluation Process: Evaluation was submitted on February 28th. EPA will attend June Management Committee Meeting and attend a field visit to a TBD site.

Discussion on Program Evaluation:

Kevin McDonald – Use this opportunity proactively to engage Suffolk County Executive office and local governments. Invite state and county legislators, town boards and county executive. Manage for the outcome that we want. Need to find a better location for meeting to showcase the estuary.

Seth Ausubel – Need results from evaluation.

Rick Balla – Explained how results are presented.

Dawn McReynolds – Should we have a way to track local government's progress to show success. Other NEP's track this progress and use as leverage.

ACTION → Kevin McDonald will lead effort to find meeting location.

ACTION → Program Office will share initial results from evaluation when available.

Announcement: Kim Shaw has accepted the position of Director of Natural Resources with the Town of East Hampton. Her last day with Suffolk County will be March 16th. Congratulations and best wishes to her. Thank you to Kim Shaw for her hard work and dedication. No decisions have been made on this soon to be vacant position.

ACTION → EPA/SC/DEC will have discussions about strategies for this vacant position.

Contracts: Moving well.

National NEP Meeting: Alison Branco and Julie Nace attending this meeting at EPA Headquarters in DC. They brought back ideas for fund raising (check-off item on taxes, license plates). They also made many contacts.

Indian Island Wetland Restoration Project: Moving forward.



4. Natural Resources & Stormwater Update (Julie Nace, State Coordinator)

Natural Resource Subcommittee Updates:

- Work on the “Conceptual Habitat Restoration Designs” contract has begun.
- Annual Report on Habitat Restoration Plan for 2011 is posted on website.
- Recent materials presented from Marine Conservation Planner contract with The Nature Conservancy (Coastal Resilience, Southern New England and New York Eelgrass Research and Restoration Initiative, Climate Change Chapter for PEP CCMP).

Stormwater Workgroup Updates:

- Inter-municipal Agreement – Needs assessment complete and results will be presented at Stormwater Workgroup Meeting on March 21.
- Subwatershed management plans are in draft form and being reviewed by towns. Will be discussed on March 21st meeting.

Discussion

Article 12 Amendment (sponsored by Sweeney, Lavallo and Thiele): give ability to towns and villages to create special districts for water quality improvement. Improvements would be funded by a tax.

<http://directory.nysenate.gov/legislation/bill/S4605-2011>

Glynis Berry – spoke about critical cluster systems, described methods to identify nitrogen in systems for mitigation, stated that we should claim funds from SC ¼% sewer tax stabilization fund, each year they aren't claimed, they disappear. She would like to be on the agenda for the next PEP TAC.

Alison Branco – at the next PEP TAC, SC will present on alternative onsite systems.

Dick Mendelman – asked about using the BNL system.

Rick Balla – asked about funding Article 12, addressed possible using BNL system outside of BNL.

Kevin McDonald – Described SC ¼% sewer tax stabilization fund (funding and incentives), suggested SC appropriate the money so it isn't lost each year. Have projects ready to go like a field study of Nitrix System at Mashomack, large volume users such as schools, or clustered areas like Three Mile Harbor to investigate incentives.

Alison Branco – summarized discussion and discussed PEP's role.

ACTION → Add Glynis Berry to PEP TAC Agenda for May meeting.

ACTION → All interested in being part of a subgroup (Article 12 and SC ¼% sewer tax stabilization fund) should contact Alison Branco (already interested are Glynis Berry, Rick Balla, Dick Mendelman and Kevin McDonald).

Announcements: Alewife migration has begun, temperature loggers are in near the new fish passage at Grangebel, video still needs to go in.

5. Public Education and Outreach Strategy

Updates from Jennifer Skillbred:

- May 5th will be Family Fun Day at CMEE
- June 2nd will be PEP 20th Anniversary event in Riverhead at the LI Science Center
- Two bay-friendly makeovers are in progress
- Mike Bottini is working on the Blueways Trail
- CAC meetings going well (group suggested reconvening eelgrass experts and Chris Gobler will speak at next meeting).

Updates from Kevin McDonald:

- Summarized \$0.05 water bottle refund: there is a push to fund the EPF, instead of the general fund, with this refund. This could lead to funds for habitat restoration .



Outreach and Education Contract (Alison Branco): Described current contract and summarized talks about next steps for continuing work. PEP seems to be leaning towards using NEIWPCC to issuing an RFP for services because they can provide autonomy for outreach and can efficiently move funds.

Discussion:

Seth Ausubel – Should we solicit proposals that require match?

Matt Sclafani – Is this RFP for services or for a staff member? Answer – services.

Dawn McReynolds – Budget many have too much money for core staff.

EPA can amend the grant for \$100,000 for this contract. NEIWPCC and CAC will draft RFP together with provision that it will be evaluated after one year for effectiveness. It will need 1:1 match. Current contract ends in June, all parties want a NCTE until December.

ACTION → PEP Program Office will pursue NCTE for current contract

ACTION → PEP needs to make final decision about Outreach and Education Contract.

6. FFY 2012 Proposed Budget

Eelgrass Effort (Alison Branco): PEP Program Office is proposing to fund a bio-optical model for eelgrass survival using a collaborative effort between Chris Pickerell (CCE) and Brad Peterson (Stony Brook).

Discussion:

Kevin McDonald – How will funding this work lead to management options? We need to identify estuary wide measurements. When do we stop studying and start managing for the problem? We need to more aggressive deal with Nitrogen and herbicide effects. Need to quantify factors. Need real life management options. Eelgrass strategy should be based on what we need, not on limited funds.

Seth Ausubel – We need a series of criteria that would support eelgrass – would this project start this process? Need to articulate the need for funding this project and outcomes for the Policy Committee.

Glynis Berry – Use nitrogen levels for marine life. Could use a map showing % impervious surface in the watershed. This base number may direct stormwater mitigation and temperature issues.

Rick Balla – Need to look at fate and effects of nitrogen, not concentration. USGS has a map of impervious surfaces.

Sarah Osborne – Need to look at sediment deposition amounts/rates.

Dawn McReynolds – Next step is to define a clearer path.

ACTION → Julie Nace and Alison Branco will revisit this project to ensure it provides outputs that contribute to identifying criteria that need to be managed, with management options, to work towards eelgrass survival and recovery.

ACTION → Policy Committee needs a compelling case that \$83,800 for projects in FY12 budget achieves goals of CCMP. As well as all past projects and sphere of influence projects (PEP Program Office)

Other Budget:

- Suffolk County is asking for \$20,000 to cover more expense from the water quality monitoring program.

Discussion:

Seth Ausubel: Sees no problem giving monitoring program more money as long as other budget items do not lose money (zero sum gain). We need more planning for Policy Committee that includes more detailed budget explaining how it achieves the goals of the CCMP, presenting initial results from EPA Program Evaluation of PEP, and presenting initial results from annual report that is due in fall 2012.



Kevin McDonald: Suggested that Seth Ausubel and Judith Enck send a letter to the Suffolk County Executive in order to draw attention to the need for a representative for PEP, and other financial issues. Kevin will help.

Dawn McReynolds: The budget numbers presented today differ from previous talks. Please provide an updated color chart to explain. Also follow the workplan and strategy when presenting preliminary results from an annual report to the Policy Committee.

ACTION → Schedule another Management Committee in about 3 weeks to prepare for Policy Committee.

7. New Business
None

8. **Next Meeting**
Tentative Date, March 29, 2012

Future Meetings (Please mark your calendars and notify program office of any conflicts):

June 14, 2012 (including Program Evaluation team visit)

September 13, 2012

December 13, 2012

March 14, 2013