



2013 IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS REPORT: HABITAT RESTORATION PLAN



Volunteers removing invasive plant species from Lake Marion.

Submitted to:

Peconic Estuary Program Management Committee

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Prepared by:

Peconic Estuary Program Natural Resources Subcommittee

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INTRODUCTION

The updated and revised “Peconic Estuary Program Habitat Restoration Plan” was adopted and finalized in November 2009. This plan resulted from the Peconic Estuary Program Natural Resources Subcommittee’s intensive effort to fully assess the prior “Habitat Restoration Plan for the Peconic Estuary” (2000), and to identify new candidate restoration sites. In an effort to ensure the Peconic Estuary Program (PEP) and our partners undertake the necessary planning and implementation steps to enhance and restore the 71 sites outlined in the Plan, the PEP Natural Resources Subcommittee (NRS) has committed to track its implementation. The NRS will develop and submit annual Implementation Progress Reports (IPRs) to the PEP Management Committee. This will ensure proper accounting and tracking of implementation progress and will provide an adaptive and timely mechanism for notifying the Management Committee of new priorities, needs, and recommendations. What follows is a brief assessment of actions taken from November 2012 to November 2013. In summary, some restoration efforts have begun stemming from the five (5) conceptual habitat restoration designs that were completed in 2012. PEP has also coordinated closely with the local municipalities to re-prioritize habitat restoration projects within their regions. This is essential to ensure that future conceptual habitat restoration designs and implementation are compatible with the goals of both the PEP and the local municipalities, as well as the funding agencies.

2013 Status of the Peconic Estuary Program Habitat Restoration Plan (2009)

STATUS	NUMBER OF PROJECTS	PERCENTAGE
Not Initiated	32	43%
Planning	13*	18%
In-Progress	14	19%
Partially Completed	5	7%
Attempted	1	1%
Completed	9*	12%
Total	74*	100%

**While the 2009 Plan lists 71 projects 3 additional projects have commenced and warrant listing.*

It should also be noted here, that the PEP and its stakeholders are involved in numerous habitat restoration related efforts that are not described in this report and not included in the PEP Habitat Restoration Plan. These efforts include, but are not limited to: eelgrass management and monitoring efforts; invasive *Ludwigia* monitoring and maintenance control programs; various shellfish and aquaculture initiatives; wetland monitoring; and, land acquisition programs of town, county, and state governments and the private sector.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. CONCEPTUAL HABITAT RESTORATION DESIGN PLANS:

At the recommendation of the PEP NRS, the PEP Management Committee approved use of \$80,000 of Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2009 PEP National Estuary Program (NEP) funding to secure conceptual habitat restoration design plans for 5 sites in the Plan; one in each Town. Land Use Ecological Services was selected as the contractor for these projects. A contract was issued in the summer of 2011. Plans have been completed and were presented to the Natural Resource Subcommittee in 2013. These plans were provided to the municipalities to assist them in furthering their habitat restoration goals. The sites include:

- Silver Lake/Moore’s Drain Alewife Access, Southold

<http://www.peconicestuary.org/reports/e3c34d1461fa2b18014dc179e7d47e057a3aee3b.pdf>

- Ligonee Brook Diadromous Fish Passage Restoration, Southampton
<http://www.peconicestuary.org/reports/e3c34d1461fa2b18014dc179e7d47e057a3ace3b.pdf>
- Napeague Harbor Circulation Enhancement, East Hampton
<http://www.peconicestuary.org/reports/cd96936e6d7213eb35535a16b85dcbfc8055421b.pdf>
- Shell Beach Revegetation, Shelter Island
<http://www.peconicestuary.org/reports/83b4462acbce4721405d6acc03d51fef095780e3.pdf>
- Forge Road/Peconic Lake Diadromous Fish Passage Restoration (Peconic River, Phase III), Riverhead
<http://www.peconicestuary.org/reports/e3c34d1461fa2b18014dc179e7d47e057a3ace3b.pdf>

As reported last year, at the recommendation of the PEP NRS, the PEP Management Committee approved the use of \$100,000 of FFY 2010 PEP NEP funding to produce an additional round of conceptual habitat restoration design plans. An RFP for this round has not been released yet. As the five (5) towns have re-prioritized their sites, the PEP is now going to review the current list of potential sites and then propose a list of five (5) sites for this round of conceptual habitat designs.

2. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

A. Breakdown of Current Planning/Design Funds:

- **\$100,000 FFY2010 PEP NEP:** Sites To Be Determined
- **\$100,000 Suffolk County 1/4%:** Woodhulls Pond/Wildwood Lake Diadromous Fish Passage Restoration, Southampton. PEP is currently assisting Suffolk County with this project.
- **\$70,000 FFY08 PEP NEP:** Upper Mills Diadromous Fish Passage Restoration (Peconic River, Phase II), Phase 2 Final Design, Riverhead. PEP is actively working on this project.

B. Breakdown of Current Implementation Funds:

- **\$1,406,666 Mixed Sources:** Indian Island Tidal Wetland Restoration, Riverhead
 ~ \$1,050,666* Round 10 New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP)/Aquatic Habitat Restoration (AHR) (*includes \$788,000 from NYSDEC and \$262,666 matching from Suffolk County in-kind).
 ~ \$300,000 Suffolk County 1/4%
 ~ \$56,000 FY00 NYSDEC WQIP/AHR.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Evaluate and Prioritize Current List of Habitat Restoration Project** – This process has already commenced. PEP has received comprehensive input from all five East End towns on their priority projects for this plan. PEP is currently reviewing this information and will provide the Natural Resource Subcommittee with a summary to review. This will eventually lead to the next five (5) conceptual habitat designs and implementation.
2. **Evaluate the Success of Prior Completed Projects** – As suggested in prior reports, a more concerted effort must be made to fully assess the short and long term success of past projects. This will ultimately help us to adopt and modify restoration objectives and strategies. These projects may be found in the Completed

Habitat Restoration Project Inventory (see attached). This is consistent with a recommendation made at the 2010 Peconic Estuary Call to Action Conference.

3. **Increase Short and Long Term Monitoring of Initiated Projects:** As suggested in prior reports, many habitat restoration funding programs will not cover the costs of intensive pre and post project monitoring, and prioritize funding on-the-ground implementation. Monitoring is an essential step, which is often overlooked, and inhibits our ability to implement adaptive management and restoration techniques. This is consistent with a recommendation made at the 2010 Peconic Estuary Call to Action Conference.
4. **Use Peconic Community Preservation (CPF) Funds to Restore CPF Acquired Properties:** Set aside 1% of annual CPF generated revenue for habitat restoration/stewardship projects on CPF acquired sites. There are many potential candidate sites listed in the PEP Habitat Restoration Plan meeting this criterion. This is consistent with a recommendation made at the 2010 Peconic Estuary Call to Action Conference.
5. **Long-Term Local Sustainable Funding Source for Habitat Restoration:** Many municipalities do not have funds to undertake habitat restoration project, yet, most habitat restoration grant programs require anywhere from 25-50% of local match. Development of a new funding source must be investigated and discussed. This is consistent with a recommendation made at the 2010 Peconic Estuary Call to Action Conference.
6. **Citizen Education Efforts:** PEP must continue to provide information on the ecological dangers that invasive species present to terrestrial, freshwater and marine habitats. This should include efforts to encourage maintenance of areas of native vegetation, and the reduction of lawn areas and re-establishment with native species. Efforts should also be made to ensure compliance with local vegetation preservation requirements and the Suffolk County law that prohibits the sale, introduction and propagation of invasive plants.

<http://www.co.suffolk.ny.us/departments/EnvironmentandEnergy/DivisionofWaterQualityImprovement/WaterandLandInvasiveSpeciesAdvisoryBoard.aspx>

7. **Continued Support of Indian Island Wetland Restoration Project:** This project is in the final planning stages through a partnership of Suffolk County and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The scope and design of the project continually evolve as more information pertaining to the dredge material is obtained. The area of dredge material includes areas where vegetation has not re-colonized naturally. Some areas of the site provide little, if any ecological benefit, and do not provide the desirable ecological functions of a tidal wetland system, hence the desire to construct a valuable wetland ecosystem here. The site of the dredge material possibly wiped out a functioning wetland ecosystem. This project is planning on entering the permitting stage shortly.

ATTACHMENT A:

IMPLEMENTATION TRACKING TABLE

An Implementation Tracking Table can be found hereafter. It reports and details the status of each site currently listed in the 2009 Peconic Estuary Program Habitat Restoration Plan.

ATTACHMENT B:

UPDATED COMPLETED HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECT INVENTORY