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The ideal setting for a successful spawn is a stream that drains from a small lake or impoundment that the adult alewives can access. Big Fresh Pond in Montauk, and Big Fresh Pond in Southampton offer two such opportunities.

Alewives are found from Nova Scotia to the Carolinas, with landlocked populations in the Great Lakes and in other areas along the East Coast. The Alewife runs in Maine are some of the best along the East Coast. Alewife numbers have decreased during the last half of the 1800's and much of the past century due to pollution, harvest and dam construction. During the past couple of decades a considerable amount of effort has been directed to rebuilding the depleted Alewife populations through dam removal, fish passage construction, fishing restrictions, and habitat improvements. Several examples of that can be found right here on Long Island. The fish passage project on the Peconic River in Riverhead, the installation of a fish ladder on the Carman's River and at Massapequa Lake.

Everyone loves the alewife: fish predators like the striped bass, bluefish, tuna, sharks; mammal predators such on shore including raccoon, mink, otter; ocean mammals including seals and some whales; avian predators like the osprey, gulls; and of course humans. The species is used for lobster bait, fish bait, and food. Unfortunately, all of these mortality affects and the impact to the alewives habitat caused by dams, pollution, stream degradation have caused the alewife population to decline coast-wide. Efforts underway in a number of coastal states are aimed at improving habitat, controlling harvest and rebuilding the stocks of this important link in the food web. The efforts right here in the Peconic Estuary and around Long Island are part of that process to support is little harbinger of spring. ~ Byron Young, retired NYSDEC Fisheries Biologist

Restoration Spotlight: Reel Point Preserve

Reel Point Preserve, is an eight acre preserve owned and maintained by the Peconic Land Trust (PLT) and was listed in the 2000 Habitat Restoration Plan for the Peconic Estuary. Located on a peninsula on Ram Island at the entrance of Coecles Harbor, the Preserve was threatened by erosion and vehicle traffic. PLT coordinated efforts with the Town of Shelter Island to minimize the effects of public access, installed snow fencing, and conducted volunteer beach grass plantings to restore this critical dune habitat. ~Laura Stephenson, NYSDEC/PEP

Calendar of Events

April 21st, 2010 - Citizen's Advisory Committee Meeting (6:30 pm-9:30 pm), Hampton Bays Community Center, Hampton Bays, NY.

May 13th, 2010 - PEP Natural Resources Subcommittee (9:30am - Noon), CCE Extension Education Center, First (1st) Floor Conference Room 432 Griffing Avenue, Suite 100, Riverhead, NY 11901-3071.

May 8th, 2010 - Peconic Family Fun Day, held at the Childrens Museum of the East End, Bridgehampton, 10am - Noon. For more information please contact: Jennifer Skilbred at (631) 765-6450 x212 or jskilbred@eastendenvironment.org.

May 21st and 22nd, 2010 - State of the Bays Conference 2010 Friday's events will be held at the Duke Lecture Hall at SUNY Stony Brook Southampton, followed by a short reception. Saturday will be a day of field trips and hands-on service projects throughout the watershed. Registration is necessary as seats are limited. Please contact Jennifer Skilbred at (631) 765-6450 x212

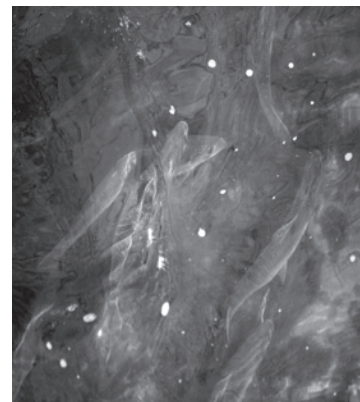
For more information visit: www.peconicestuary.org/calendar.html

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Species Snapshot: Alewives

Everyone looks for the first harbingers of spring after a long winter. Most folks think of the first Robin but in reality there is another early arrival that enters our local streams toward the end of February or early March each year. The Alewife (*Alosa pseudoharengus*), which spends most of its life in the ocean returns as an adult to spawn in freshwater. A number of our local eastern Long Island streams support alewife spawning runs. The Peconic Estuary supports several very strong runs.



Alewives
Photo by: Byron Young, retired NYSDEC Fisheries Biologist

Alewives are rather nondescript, light in color, grayish/silver on top and white on their under side. One key distinguishing factor of the alewife is that they have relatively large eyes. Alewives generally average about 12 inches in length, with the females being the larger than the males. The adults congregate in Block Island Sound during the late winter and then as the water temperature warms they begin to move into local spawning streams and rivers. The adults spawn in the quiet waters of the stream or in any impoundment they can access. The adults then return to sea. The young alewives remain in or near their natal stream for a few months and then move out into the Atlantic Ocean. They spend the next 3 to 5 years at sea, eating plankton and smaller fish.

Alewives begin to migrate into local streams as early as late February, but more typically in March and continue through May. They spawn in the ponds and slow moving waters of our coastal streams.

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PEP Talk

The Newsletter of the Peconic Estuary Program

Volume 5, Issue 4..... Winter 2009

Permanently Restored Diadromous Fish Passage at Grangebel Park

After nearly a decade of planning and \$1 million in the making, the Town of Riverhead has completed the rock ramp installation at Grangebel Park.

Diadromous fish passage at Grangebel is not a new concept. Every spring since 2000, an Alaskan steep pass fish ladder had been installed in Grangebel Park's North Spillway, allowing alewife to migrate from the tidal Peconic River up the spillway to the freshwater portion of the River to spawn. However, the ladder was very costly to maintain and install seasonally, was less than optimal for safety purposes. A more natural looking and functioning rock ramp in the South Spillway is more visually appealing, and will allow for more natural, permanent passage.



Photo by: Byron Young, retired NYSDEC Fisheries Biologist

"More than 10 years of hard work is coming to fruition with the installation of a rock ramp at Grangebel Park", says James Miller, a founding member of the Peconic River Fish Restoration Commission, a large community group of concerned citizens who strive to help fish return to their native habitat. Those past 10 years have been filled with challenges of obtaining permits and contracts, looming grant deadlines, funding shortfalls and escalating costs.

Dedicated project coordinators and partners overcame many obstacles and construction began in October 2009. The first phase of the project, extensive repairs to the structural integrity of the Grangebel North Spillway, was completed in late December 2009. The second phase of the project, installing a rock ramp in the South Spillway to create resting pools for migrating alewife, commenced shortly thereafter. The rock ramp, is in and expected to be fully functioning in time for the Spring 2010 migration. The passageway will allow alewife and



Photo by: Byron Young, retired NYSDEC Fisheries Biologist

American eels to permanently regain access to 24 acres and 1.5 miles of prime, critical habitat and spawning grounds in the Peconic River. "This project has been a long term collaborative effort between PEP, the Town of Riverhead, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and many involved individuals and nongovernmental organizations," noted Chart Guthrie, NYSDEC's Regional Fisheries Manager.

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Spring Planting around the Peconics

The cold winter months are a great time to start planning for some spring restoration projects, which is exactly what Group for the East End is doing right now. For the past 27 years, the Group has annually held a Spring Planting program with a major focus on restoration projects within the Peconic Estuary watershed. This program brings school groups, community groups, and other volunteers together to take part in a hands-on habitat restoration project in their neighborhood, while learning about the natural environment. Spring plantings help to develop a stewardship ethic, and provide a unique educational experience to students and volunteers.



Photo by: Jennifer Skilbred
Havens Beach in Sag Harbor, NY

In previous years, beach grass and other sand-loving native vegetation, have been planted at Havens Beach in Sag Harbor, Circle Beach in Noyac, the New Suffolk Waterfront in Southold, Accabonac Harbor in East Hampton, and Wades Beach in Shelter Island, just to name a few. Last year, we also introduced our first planting aimed specifically at reducing stormwater runoff, which took place in Greenport.

This year the Group is beginning to plan for the annual program, and

hoping to continue the tradition of habitat restoration within the Peconic Estuary watershed. As we are in the early stages of planning for this spring, we are looking for appropriate locations as well as volunteers (including students of all ages and community groups) to get involved in this meaningful program. For more information, or to get involved, please contact Jennifer Skilbred at (631) 765-6450 x212 or jskilbred@eastendenvironment.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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PEP 2009 Photo Contest Results!

The results of the Peconic Estuary Program's 2009 Photo Contest are in!

We accepted for entries for each of the following categories:

- Estuarine Landscapes (including coastal and upland areas)
- Outdoor Recreation
- Wildlife (including birds, insects, fish, etc.)
- Overall Best Picture

Thank you for all of the wonderful entries but there can only be one winner per category. The winner in each category will receive PEP gift packs and numerous entrants will have their photos featured in PEP publications and multimedia materials.

Listed below are the winners for each category, to view these in color please visit our website at www.peconicestuary.org/photos2009.html

Wildlife Winner and Overall Best Picture Winner



“Osprey Dance”

Photo by: Henry P. Doll
Photo taken in East Marion, NY

Estuarine Landscapes Winner



“Sunset on Peconic Lake”

Photo by: Christopher Paparo
Photo taken in Riverhead, NY

Outdoor Recreation Winner



“Family Outing”

Photo by: Candyee Paparo
Photo taken on Flanders Bay, NY

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“While the delays have been frustrating, I feel that the final result of needed repairs to the north spillway and a maintenance free rock ramp fish ladder will be worth the wait. This is just the first step in the long process of restoring alewife to the Peconic River, the Little River and Wildwood Lake.”

The Peconic Estuary Program, which has played a significant role in coordinating many of the projects elements, celebrates this achievement as this Grangebel project is one of 71 projects that appear in the PEP's Habitat Restoration Plan. ~Laura Stephenson, NYSDEC/PEP

For more information, contact Laura Stephenson at lbstephe@gw.dec.state.ny.us or 631.444.0871.

PEP Updates and Adopts New Habitat Restoration Plan

The Peconic Estuary Program (PEP) Natural Resources Subcommittee (NRS) unveiled a new Habitat Restoration Plan in late 2009. The NRS conducted an analysis of the status and remaining restoration needs at all 72 sites in the initial 2000 Habitat Restoration Plan while also soliciting nominations for new restoration sites. The updated Habitat Restoration Plan provides project descriptions for 71 restoration sites, representing 9 different estuarine habitat types. PEP staff also worked with the NRS to develop an Interactive Google Map which includes photos and project descriptions for each site. The new 2009 PEP Habitat Restoration Plan, Interactive Google Map, the ongoing and updated Completed Habitat Restoration Project Inventory, as well as the initial 2000 Habitat Restoration Plan is available at: <http://www.peconicestuary.org/HLR.html>

The PEP is funding several conceptual habitat restoration design plans in an effort to make headway in implementing the Plan which is estimated to cost \$51million to fully implement. ~Laura Stephenson, NYSDEC/PEP

For more information, contact Laura Stephenson at lbstephe@gw.dec.state.ny.us or 631.444.0871.

2010 State of the Bays Conference

Save the dates of Friday May 21, 2010 and Saturday May 22, 2010 for the Peconic Estuary Program's 2010 State of the Bays Conference. This two-day event will feature a distinguished keynote speaker, the unveiling of the new PEP video, and interactive panel discussions on the Peconic Estuary and potential solutions to the current management issues. Friday's events will be held at the Duke Lecture Hall at SUNY Stony Brook Southampton, followed by a short reception. Saturday will be a day of field trips and hands-on service projects throughout the watershed. Please join us at this exciting event to learn more about ongoing efforts to protect and restore the Peconic Estuary, and about what you can do to help these efforts. Registration is necessary as seats are limited. Please contact Jennifer Skilbred at (631) 765-6450 x212 or visit our website at www.PeconicEstuary.org to register, or for more information.

~ Jennifer Skilbred Group for the East End/PEP