

Moving Forward: Action Items from the Peconic Estuary Program Strategic Planning Meeting

December 8 - 9, 2008, Mashomack Preserve, Shelter Island, NY

In September of 2008, the Peconic Estuary Program (PEP) Policy Committee recommended that the PEP convene a strategic planning meeting to guide future implementation of the PEP Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). The PEP Strategic Planning Meeting took place on December 8 - 9, 2008 at The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Mashomack Preserve, Shelter Island, NY.

At the Strategic Planning Meeting, four (4) topics were identified as necessary focus areas for advancing environmental protection in the Peconic Estuary System. The four focus areas topics, along with a statement on their current status and remaining implementation needs, are presented below.

- 1) Restore & Protect Habitats: Existing land acquisition programs should continue. Additional effort is needed to identify and restore/enhance degraded habitats, protect and conserve vegetated buffers, and combat issues associated with shoreline hardening.
- 2) Secure Funding: There are significant funding needs going unmet. PEP stakeholders need to fully take advantage of existing funding opportunities. New funding sources should be secured to fill gaps.
- 3) Improve Land Use Decisionmaking: The quality of the land and water resources of the Peconic System is tied to the cumulative impact of individual decisions local governments make on a daily basis. Improvements and innovations are needed so these decisions are protective of the Peconic Estuary System, consistent across jurisdictions, and able to withstand scrutiny and challenges that weaken them.
- 4) Educate and Engage Stakeholders: The visibility of the PEP needs to be restored. The public and government at all levels needs to be educated, engaged and enlisted to support and implement the PEP CCMP. This includes developing a new "Case Statement" highlighting recent program successes and holding a "State of the Bays" conference.

Addressing the above focus area topics will require additional commitments and investments by PEP stakeholders.

Peconic Estuary Program Strategic Planning Meeting

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Background

In September of 2008, the Peconic Estuary Program (PEP) Policy Committee recommended that the PEP convene a strategic planning meeting to guide future implementation of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). The PEP Strategic Planning Meeting took place on December 8 - 9, 2008 at The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Mashomack Preserve, Shelter Island, NY.

Approach

Prior to the strategic planning meeting, invited management conference and stakeholder participants were asked to provide responses, in advance of the meeting, to the two (2) questions listed below:

(1) Based on your personal or your organizational role/interest in the PEP, what are the top 1 or 2 topics/programs/priorities that the Program needs to address (or address better) to achieve our goals for the Peconic Estuary?

(2) What are the 1 or 2 greatest overall needs/topics/priorities that the PEP needs to address (or address better)?

Program staff, in reviewing those responses, identified three main themes that emerged: habitat restoration; funding; and local land use decisions. These themes and other responses were presented to the participants during the first day of the meeting for discussion. The participants agreed that these were the three most significant topics that the Peconic Estuary Program needed to delve into to advance implementation of the PEP CCMP. The following day, participants were divided into three breakout groups. Each breakout group spent time exploring each of the three topics, with the assistance of a facilitator/note taker.

The breakout sessions were structured such that the assigned groups rotated through the three breakout stations. Building upon the previous group's work, each group explored the following during their sessions with respect to each topic:

1. What should we be doing differently/What else should we be doing to address this priority issue?
2. How can we address and overcome various political, regulatory, administrative, knowledge and funding gaps and challenges?

The entire group then reconvened in order to produce the final consensus product presented below.

Details from the Breakout Group Discussions

Listed below are the key resulting needs for each of the breakout group topics, and other topics and action items from the Peconic Strategic Planning Meeting.

Topic 1: Habitat Restoration/Protection

- Update Peconic Estuary Program (PEP) Habitat Restoration Plan.
- Re-invigorate (Federal, State, County and Town) interest in habitat restoration/preservation.
- Standardize buffer requirements.
- Update/assess the PEP's Critical Lands Protection Plan and Strategy.
- Conduct a natural resources inventory of the Peconic Estuary.
- Identify and mitigate shoreline hardening and associated issues.

Topic 2: Funding

- Use existing resources more effectively (increase collaboration).
- Develop "Ready to Go" project list (for Federal stimulus package funds) for stormwater infrastructure and other needs.
- Explore all potential funding sources and develop new partnerships.
- Generate local and political support for (and put into action) large scale/revenue based funding sources for baseline research funding and land protection purposes.
 - Update the PEP economic valuation report (and include ecosystem services).
- Ensure that there is sufficient funding for: critical lands protection, agricultural stewardship, storm water remediation, sewage treatment plant upgrades, and habitat and shellfish restoration.

Topic 3: Local Land Use Improvement and Innovations

- Develop new watershed wide policy guidelines ("model code") on selected topics, enshrined in state law and implemented at the Town/Village level. Topics to be addressed in the guidelines include: vegetative buffers, vegetation preservation, wildlife habitat, invasive species, impervious surface, drainage, sea level rise, post storm recovery, erosion control, turf care, lawn area specifications, fertilizer use, irrigation practices, eelgrass protection, and mooring.
- Additional topics that could be addressed include: zoning/density; nuisance species, horse farms, discrete sewerage, acquisition, pesticide use, and bay use planning (analogous to land use planning on the water side, addressing topics such as: marine protected areas, navigation, energy).

Other Topics

- The PEP should prepare a "case statement" documenting the successes of the program to date and the benefits of governments and the public working together to implement the PEP CCMP.
- The PEP needs to approach the East End Supervisors & Mayors Association to establish point contacts.
- The importance of continued Suffolk County monitoring of surface and ground water within the Peconic Estuary System.
- The need to hold a dredging summit.
- Pressing needs regarding stormwater management.
- Conducting basic scientific research within the Peconic System.
- Establishing a local research consortium.
- Analyzing and highlighting past efforts and successes in a more effective way.
- Re-engaging local government and the public at large.

Meeting Outcome and Action Items

Though not all issues and topics can be solved in one meeting, many important topics were addressed at the Strategic Planning Meeting. The participants agreed on the need to emphasize the three topics that were investigated through the breakout group process along with a renewed effort to engage and involve stakeholders (including the public and government at all levels). These four focus area topics, along with a statement on their current status and remaining implementation needs, are presented below.

Restore & Protect Habitats: Existing land acquisition programs should continue. Additional effort is needed to identify and restore/enhance degraded habitats, protect and conserve vegetated buffers, and combat issues associated with shoreline hardening.

Secure Funding: There are significant funding needs going unmet. PEP stakeholders need to fully take advantage of existing funding opportunities. New funding sources should be secured to fill gaps.

Improve Land Use Decisionmaking: The quality of the land and water resources of the Peconic System is tied to the cumulative impact of individual decisions local governments make on a daily basis. Improvements and innovations are needed so these decisions are protective of the Peconic Estuary System, consistent across jurisdictions, and able to withstand scrutiny and challenges that weaken them.

Educate and Engage Stakeholders: The visibility of the PEP needs to be restored. The public and government at all levels needs to be educated, engaged and enlisted to support and implement the PEP CCMP. This includes developing a new “Case Statement” highlighting recent program successes and holding a “State of the Bays” conference.

Addressing the above focus area topics will require additional commitments and investments by PEP stakeholders.

Agenda
Peconic Estuary Program
Strategic Planning Meeting

Monday December 8th, 2008

- 1:00pm-1:30pm **Welcome and Introductions**
Vito Minei, Director, Peconic Estuary Program
- Strategic Planning Meeting Process, Overview & Ground rules**
Kevin McDonald, Chair, PEP CAC
- 1:30pm-2:00pm **Update Status of PEP Environmental Indicators**
Rick Balla, USEPA PEP Coordinator
- 2:00pm-2:30pm **Current PEP Initiatives and Projects**
Kim Paulsen, SCDHS PEP Coordinator
Laura Stephenson, NYSDEC PEP Coordinator
- 2:30pm-3:30pm **Report Back on Stakeholder Identified Priorities & Discussion**
Emily Fogarty, PEP Technical Outreach Specialist
- 3:30pm-4:00pm **Wrap Up and Next Steps**
- 4:00pm-6:00pm **Continuing Informal Discussion and Networking**
- 6:00pm **Dinner** (All participants are welcome join us- must RSVP)

Tuesday December 9th, 2008

- 8:30am **Arrive, Welcome and Introductions**
Vito Minei, Director, Peconic Estuary Program
- 9:00am-9:15am **Summary/Re-cap of Previous Day**
Mark Tedesco, Director, Long Island Sound Study (Meeting Facilitator)
- 9:15am-9:30am **Presentation of Priority Focus Issues and Description of Breakout Session Process**
Kevin McDonald, Chair, PEP CAC
- 9:30am-12:30pm **Breakout Session Discussions**
Assigned groups will rotate to Issue Breakout Stations. During each Session, each Group will explore the following, building upon previous Group(s) work:
1. What should we be doing differently/What else should we be doing to address this priority issue? (1/2 hour)
 2. How can we accomplish this and get to where we should/need to be? Address challenges we face (political, regulatory, administrative, knowledge, funding, etc.) and overcoming them. (1/2 hour)
- 9:30am-10:30am: Rotated Breakout Session #1
10:30am-11:30am: Rotated Breakout Session #2
11:30am- 12:30pm: Rotated Breakout Session #3
- 12:30pm-1:00pm **Lunch**
- 1:00pm-1:30pm **Presentation of Breakout Group Findings**
Rick Balla, USEPA PEP Coordinator
Kim Paulsen, SCDHS PEP Coordinator
Laura Stephenson, NYSDEC PEP Coordinator
- 1:30pm- 3:30pm **Facilitated Discussion:**
Identifying Short and Long Term Steps for Each Priority Issue & Follow-up Tasks
*Facilitated/Moderated by Mark Tedesco, Director, Long Island Sound Study
- 3:30pm-4:00pm **Meeting Summary, Wrap up, and Next Steps**
Kevin McDonald, Chair, PEP CAC

List of Participants

Affiliation

Alex Gregor	CAC
Becky Wiseman	CCE Agricultural Stewardship
Brian Frank	East Hampton Planning Department
Camilo Salazar	Suffolk County Department of Energy & Environment
Clete Galasso	Larry's Lighthouse Marina
Edward Romaine	Suffolk County - Legislator
Fred Thiele	NYS Assembly
Gregg Rivara	CCE Marine Program
Heather Lanza	Southold Town Planning
J Dougherty	Supervisor-Shelter Island
Jay Schneiderman	Suffolk County - Legislator
Jennifer Skilbred	Group for the East End
Karen Chytalo	NYSDEC
Kevin MacAllister	Peconic Bay Keeper
Kevin McDonald	CAC
Kim Paulsen	Suffolk County Department of Health Services
Laura Stephenson	NYSDEC
Lauretta Fischer	Suffolk County Department of Planning
Lynn Mendelman	Seacoast Enterprises Associates, Inc.
Marci Bortman	TNC
Marguerite Wolffsohn	Town of East Hampton
Mark Tedesco	Long Island Sound Study
Mark Terry	Town of Southold
Martin Trent	Suffolk County Department of Health Services
Marty Shea	Town of Southampton
Mike Mule	Suffolk County Department of Planning
Richard Mendelman	Seacoast Enterprises Associates, Inc.
Richard Krupski	Town of Southold
Rick Balla	USEPA - Region II
Seth Ausubel	USEPA
Stephen Tettelbach	LIU
Susan Filipowich	Suffolk County Department of Planning
Tom Halavik	USFWS
Tony Leung	NYSDEC
Vito Minei	Suffolk County Department of Health Services
Wayne Grothe	TNC