

Controlling Pathogens in the Peconic Estuary Drainage Area

Pathogens are disease-causing viruses, algae, bacteria, and other organisms that can affect humans as well as wildlife. Pathogen discharges to Peconic Estuary waters are of concern due to the health risks associated with consumption of contaminated seafood or water contact and ingestion. Animal waste in storm-water runoff is a primary source of pathogen contamination. Significant economic losses have resulted from the need to close or restrict shellfish beds.

The New York Sea Grant Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials Program (NYSG NEMO) responded to these issues by delivering a Peconic Municipal Pathogen Control workshop. The aim of the workshop was to advance the capacity of local governments to mitigate the impacts of pathogen contamination in local embayments. Representatives from village, town, and county governments participated. During the workshop, NYSG NEMO identified pathogen sources and discussed best management practice recommendations, including those contained in the Peconic Estuary Program's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan.

NYSG NEMO also provided strategies for implementing multi-pronged programs with an integrated focus on pathogens. Specific practices discussed included



Pathogen contamination poses serious economic and human health concerns. This notice warns against harvesting shellfish from uncertified waters. NYSG NEMO is assisting municipalities in the Peconic Estuary drainage area in building on their efforts to implement pathogen controls. Photo: Eileen Keenan, NYSG NEMO

geese waste and pet waste control, local laws, post-construction site design, pollution prevention for municipal facilities and operations, and public education and involvement programs. In addition, NEMO explained the ways in which the tools and methodologies previously developed for four Peconic subwatershed management plans could be replicated to control pathogens in other Peconic drainage areas.

Post-workshop surveys reflect the intent by participants to initiate collaborative efforts with neighboring municipalities and to apply for funding for pathogen control projects. One town requested a NEMO pathogen control presentation for its Board. New York Sea Grant NEMO looks forward to continuing to facilitate effective pathogen control programs on the East End as well as throughout Long Island.

New York Sea Grant is a cooperative program of the State University of New York and Cornell University. Sea Grant Extension administration is located at 112 Rice Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853.

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