

NYSG Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials: Leading Inter-Municipal Water Quality Restoration

Water quality protection initiatives are central to promoting community vitality, productive economies, and public health. Such efforts, however, often demand costly skills, equipment, and expertise. Inter-municipal agreements provide the framework for reducing such costs by leveraging local governments' resources.

Efforts to advance inter-municipal partnerships arise from the need to overcome the lack of resources, inefficiency, and duplication of effort caused by a much layered 'home rule' system of government on Long Island. With more than 100 municipalities, water resource protection often lacks funding, focus, and effectiveness.

For these reasons funding agencies increasingly require joint applications for grants. While watershed managers know that cross-jurisdictional cooperation and consistency are essential to acquiring funding and restoring water quality, such formalized agreements are difficult to achieve.

NYSG Responds in Peconic Estuary Area

In the Peconic Estuary, excessive levels of nitrogen and bacteria are a major challenge. As Co-Chair of the Peconic Estuary Program's Stormwater Workgroup, New York Sea Grant's Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) program has led efforts to establish an inter-municipal consortium to reduce water quality impairments through education, improved technology, and best management practices.

The Peconic Inter-Municipal Agreement (IMA) will provide for a Coordinator who will identify and help secure funding, ensure collaborative efforts, and provide leadership for municipalities with limited staff time and budgets.



Inter-municipal agreements ensure the effectiveness of natural resource protection, photo: NYSG NEMO/Eileen Keenan

Agreement Uniting Multiple Entities

Since 2011, an inter-municipal agreement (IMA) and a first-year work plan have been drafted, and in 2013 the majority of the 12 Peconic municipalities adopted resolutions signifying their intent to sign the IMA.

After signing the IMA, North Haven Mayor Jeff Sander said, *"Out here on the East End, we live and die by the bays, and I don't think we can spend enough to make sure that it is taken care of."*

The remaining municipalities have indicated positive intent to sign the agreement in 2014.

Partner: Peconic Estuary Program

The Sea Grant Focus Area for this project is Resilient New York Communities & Economies.

New York Sea Grant is a joint program of Cornell University, the State University of New York, and NOAA.

New York Sea Grant Extension

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