



ON-THE-GROUND PROJECTS

Spotlight on Expanding Marine Meadow Habitat in the Peconic Estuary

Marine meadows play an important role in providing ecosystem services while serving as preferred or essential habitat for a wide array of native fish species. However, eelgrass populations have been declining globally in recent decades. In New York waters, it is estimated that over 80% of eelgrass habitat has been lost since the 1930's due to natural and anthropogenic causes. To address the need to re-establish submerged aquatic vegetation in the Peconic Estuary, the Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) used a multi-pronged approach to bringing back this important underwater habitat.

CCE staff conducted restoration planting at sites in the eastern portions of the estuary, where water quality conditions are suitable to eelgrass (*Zostera marina*). Additionally, they conducted pre- and post-monitoring to ensure restoration sites are suitable and to track the progress of the plantings.



Representative photo of assembled planting units for restoration.

The public had opportunities to take part in these restoration efforts through participation in two land-based workshops, during which they will have an opportunity to help assemble planting units, in addition to learning about the importance of marine habitat and what they can do to help preserve and restore local seagrass species.

The project creates important habitat for cunner, tautaug, winter and summer flounder, porgies, seahorses, squid (eggs), striped bass, black sea bass, bluefish, menhaden, hard clam and bay scallop.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership with conservation dollars to fund numerous components of the project, including staff support, boat time, and workshop materials. On-the-ground, local level efforts, such as the Expanding Marine Meadow Habitat in the Peconic Estuary project, helped to address regional habitat priorities and coastwide conservation objectives identified by the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership.

Project text and photo provided by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County.

For more information on the Partnership visit us at: www.atlanticfishhabitat.org

Project Partners

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County

Moore Charitable Trust

Suffolk County

Town of East Hampton

Peconic Estuary Program

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership

