

## ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAMS



based on a photo by Ralph

Peconic Estuary Program • 631.853.3082 • [www.co.suffolk.ny.us/health/pep](http://www.co.suffolk.ny.us/health/pep) • March 2001

### PECONIC BAY

*The Peconic Estuary lies on the tip of Long Island Sound and is made up of a series of shallow, inter-connecting bays fed by groundwater, creeks, and rivers. The Peconic Estuary and its 340 miles of coastline support a variety of marine life, birds, and wildlife, and are also a vital economic, recreational, and scenic resource for Long Island. The Peconic Estuary was designated by The Nature Conservancy as one of the "Last Great Places" in the Western Hemisphere.*

#### FACTS ABOUT THE ESTUARY

- The Peconic Estuary features numerous rare ecosystems that are home to many plants and animals, including 111 endangered, threatened, rare, or special concern species.
- The population of the area's five eastern towns is 106,000, but it triples in the summer.
- Nearly 3.3 million swimming, boating, fishing or shellfishing outings and 5.2 million beach, bird watching, wildlife viewing, or hunting trips were taken in the watershed in 1995.
- Ten percent of the watershed is farmed and 25 percent remains in open space.
- Estuarine dependant businesses employ more than 7,300 people (20 percent of the area's employment) and account for gross revenues of over \$465 million.
- Peconic Estuary bay scallop catches once accounted for 28 percent of the United States total. In 1982 bay scallops and other commercial fishery landings were worth \$7.3 million.

## HEALTH OF THE ESTUARY

- Brown tide blooms were first noted in 1985 and though they have reappeared unpredictably since, they have still virtually eradicated the scallop population and adversely impacted eelgrass beds.
- Overall the estuary generally has “excellent” water quality with respect to nutrients and dissolved oxygen, with less than three percent of the estuary exceeding the recommended total nitrogen guideline for dissolved oxygen attainment.
- Nitrogen loadings have grown more than 200 percent since the 1950's due to increasing residential land use and a more pervasive use of fertilizers.
- Almost 40 percent of the watershed remains subject to development which poses a substantial threat to nutrient loadings, habitat and water quality.
- Fourteen percent of the lands available to shellfish harvesting have failed to meet water quality standards.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE ESTUARY PROGRAM

- Implemented a point source nitrogen freeze for the western estuary and a water quality preservation policy for the eastern estuary.
- The agricultural community and other stakeholders were brought together for the first time and developed a strategy to lower nutrient and pesticide inputs.
- A Regional Stormwater Runoff Management Plan is being developed for implementation in 2001.
- Marshaled over \$11 million in federal and state funds to 55 priority demonstration and implementation projects for stormwater runoff control, bay scallop seeding, and wetland and eelgrass restoration.
- Developed non-federal support from the Community Preservation Fund, the Suffolk County general 1/4 percent sales tax, town and county open space programs, and the New York State Bond Act.

### *Peconic Bay Scallops*

Shuck fresh Peconic Bay Scallops. Save 1/4 cup of the scallop liquor/juice. In a fry pan on low heat, add stick of butter, 2 squeezed lemons, a dash of white wine and 1/4 cup scallop liquor. Stir while butter melts. Toss in fresh scallops and gently saute for 5 minutes.

Serve with organic brown rice and the steamed green vegetable of your choice asparagus and string beans are our favorites.

### *Clams Casino Peconic*

Bake quahogs/chowder clams till they open just enough for easy opening. Dice and mix clams and fresh clam liquor with freshly mashed (with milk and butter) Long Island potatoes, diced onion, diced green peppers, oregano, and pepper. Stuff the empty clamshells with the mixture. Add a small piece of bacon on top of each for flavor. Bake in oven at 400 degrees for 15 to 20 minutes.

Serve with salad and possibly homemade Manhattan clam chowder.