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Concerned Citizens of Montauk, Group for the East End, Citizens Campaign for the Environment Awarded \$112,000 Under Suffolk County Water Quality Protection and Restoration Program

Partners will Implement Suffolk County Septic and Nitrogen Awareness Outreach Campaign

Montauk – Concerned Citizens of Montauk, Group for the East End, and Citizens Campaign for the Environment today unveiled their new partnership to help raise public awareness about the need for innovative alternative septic systems and the various funding opportunities available for system upgrades as part of the Suffolk County Septic and Nitrogen Awareness Outreach Campaign. Funding is being provided by the Suffolk County Water Quality Protection and Restoration Program, which is administered by the Suffolk County Department of Economic Development and Planning.

Funding from Suffolk County will allow the partnering organizations to design and implement a regional septic awareness outreach program, raising public and governmental awareness about the degradation of the County's ground and surface waters, the need for innovative alternative septic systems, and the various funding opportunities available for upgrading and installing new, innovative systems, which have additional nitrogen removal capabilities.

Pollution found in our ground and surface waters from septic systems is causing fish kills, various brown, rust, red, and mahogany tides, and cyanobacteria blooms throughout Suffolk County and Long Island. In response to this problem, State, County and Town efforts are underway to address this contamination source. This new grant from Suffolk County will allow the region's principle environmental organizations to expand current efforts to educate homeowners about upgrading to vastly less polluting onsite septic systems.

Laura Tooman, President of Concerned Citizens of Montauk (CCOM), noted, "Our aging, antiquated and inefficient septic systems are posing an environmental and public health crisis not only in Montauk, but all across Long Island. A highly targeted, consistent regional campaign is needed to educate and engage home and business owners to become part of the remedy."

According to Bob DeLuca, President of Group for the East End, "The replacement of outdated and poorly functioning East End septic systems is critical to the future protection of our region's drinking water and the health of our local bays and harbors. Given the size of this challenge, we are thankful for the County's support and thrilled to be working in collaboration with such dedicated partners to educate the public about the many options that can help residents pay for the transition to new clean water technology".

Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment, said, "We are thrilled to be working with Suffolk County and our environmental partners to conduct a comprehensive Septic Education and Awareness Program. Public education and support for reducing nitrogen is a critical component to winning the battle to save our drinking and coastal waters. Solutions to address the daunting challenge of excessive nitrogen which is causing toxic tides in our lakes, bays and estuaries requires public engagement. Upgrading antiquated septic systems will help and now many homeowners are eligible for grant funds to help offset the costs of a new system. This program is good for the public and good for our water."

Suffolk County Legislator Bridget Fleming said, "I am proud to be able to support this important new partnership. The partnership promises to advance the goal of reducing the nitrogen pollution that is impacting our bays, creeks and harbors, through critically important outreach and education. The three organizations involved are well known champions of the natural resources of our region, and their joint participation in the effort will ensure that the goal of nitrogen reduction will be met in a timely and effective way."

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