

# Accomack-Northampton PDC Technical Assistance Program & Coastal Resiliency Planning

*Final Product Report*

*VCZMP FY21 Task 41, Grant #NA21NOS4190152*



*Photo Credit: Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission*

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## I. Coastal Management & Technical Assistance

The A-NPDC staff continues to provide four (4) training events relevant to the goals outlined in the scope of work: resiliency, navigability and working waterfronts, coastal resources, and coastal community development. Coastal Management efforts involved collaboration with Chambers of Commerce, Eastern Shore of Virginia Ground Water Committee (GWC), Eastern Shore Regional Navigable Waterways Committee (ESRNWC), Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC), Virginia Tech AREC, Eastern Shore Soil & Water Conservation District (ESSWCD), Eastern Shore Community College (ESCC) and Workforce Development, and local stakeholders for identifying local needs and seeking input on public issues such as prioritizing of creeks for dredging, access to clean drinking water, and promoting the coastal industries (aquaculture, working waterfronts, etc.)

A Workforce Development Forum was held on February 10, 2022 with 42 people in attendance. The purpose of this forum was to engage working waterfronts – NASA/Wallops and Coastal Precast – in the development and enhancement of the regional workforce. Technical assistance was provided to host and facilitate this forum and provide input on the importance of coastal businesses and working waterfronts across industries. This involved coordination with local government and collaboration with working waterfront industries, the ESCC, and local residents to address community development. Participants walked away with an increased knowledge of environmental factors on the Eastern Shore that influence (both positively and negatively) workforce development and economic growth.

A public engagement event was hosted on February 14, 2022 with 5 attendees. The purpose of this training was to review the Virginia Outdoor Plan (VOP) – Eastern Shore chapter and seek stakeholder input for the update. This involved coordinating and engaging with local government regarding public access and outdoor recreation. Stakeholders were provided information on the updates to the VOP and given the opportunity to share updates regarding progress since the previous edition. Participants walked away having had their voices heard and knowing the discussion was guided by local residents and stakeholders.

A training event, hosted by DCR's Master Gardeners program, was held on February 16, 2022 with 18 attendees. The purpose of this training was to collaborate with DCR to provide one of many trainings on a topic of regional importance to the Master Gardeners. Each year, the A-NPDC provides the training *Groundwater 101*. This involved coordination with a state agency (and local chapter), and incorporated elements of coastal habitat, coastal hazards, and coastal dependent uses through a groundwater lens. Participants walked away with a comprehensive understanding of groundwater as a natural resource and specifically the critical asset that the Eastern Shore has in its sole source aquifer. Participants learned the history of the sole source aquifer, where groundwater comes from and how it passes through various confining units, the risk of saltwater intrusion and over-pumping, and were provided resources for further self-learning.

A training event, hosted by the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC), was held on April 1, 2022 with 23 people in attendance. This involved coordination with the LGAC, and identifying coastal dependent uses and coastal water quality themes that aligned with the theme of the LGAC tour, which was *"next generation agriculture for a resilient rural*

*economy.*” The purpose of this training was to speak with local government officials from across the state and increase their understanding of technical assistance services provided by the A-NPDC to the region. Participants walked away with an enhanced knowledge of how the PDC assists local and state government plan and implement resilience initiatives.

Links:

Summary of [A-NPDC Coastal Region Technical Assistance FY21](#)

[Groundwater 101 Training Presentation for Master Gardeners 2022](#)

## **II. Eastern Shore of Virginia Ground Water Committee (GWC)**

The Eastern Shore of Virginia Ground Water Committee (GWC) is the only region in coastal Virginia whose public water supply has been designated by the EPA to be derived from a Sole Source Aquifer. Since the region is solely reliant on groundwater for its public water supply, A-NPDC staff has worked with the GWC to facilitate and host educational programs in accordance with GWC goals.

The GWC has continued to review relevant public notices, permit requests, environmental reviews and water quality/usage reports. A-NPDC staff familiarized the Committee on the following over the course of this grant: Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional Certification Program; 2021 Drinking Water Quality Report: Cape Charles Waterwork; Hampton Roads Sewer District expanding to Accomack and then to New Church; USGS chloride monitoring; and Captain’s Cove Water Use analysis. A-NPDC staff also coordinated with state partners at DEQ to finalize and adopt the GWC Statement of Principle.

The GWC meets monthly on the third Tuesday at 10:00AM, with the exception of June and December. GWC agendas, minutes, publications, and announcements can be found on the A-NPDC webpages dedicated to the Eastern Shore of Virginia Ground Water Committee.

Links:

[Ground Water Committee Meeting Packets & Minutes](#)

[Ground Water Committee Projects & Programs](#)

[Ground Water Committee Publications & Resources](#)

## **III. Marine Debris Awareness & Shore Beautification**

A-NPDC staff intended to plan and design a mesh marine debris collecting “LOVE” sign to increase awareness and public education for residents and tourists alike on prevention measures and the impacts of marine debris. Although the beginning of this grant period was spent engaging with community leaders to identify a host site for the statue, unfortunately, this initiative was ultimately deemed not possible at this time. Rather, the funds were used to register A-NPDC staff in a formal ESRI GIS training to increase staff capacity for in-house mapping and providing mapping technical assistance to localities in need. Remaining funds were used to purchase public engagement supplies to increase staff

capacity for facilitating, hosting, and developing engaging and interactive trainings and public meetings.

This initiative would have been overseen and advised by the GreenWorks Committee and associated Keep America Beautiful affiliate – both of which suffered during the pandemic to sustain membership, and throughout recovery from the pandemic, member numbers did not grow. The GreenWorks Committee dissolved unanimously by the voting members. As a result, the intended responsible party for outreach and statue maintenance was no longer viable. Despite this obstacle, A-NPDC staff was successful in working with the Waste Watchers prior to the dissolution of the GreenWorks Committee to compile the 2022 Litter Survey.

The Annual Litter Survey is completed each spring by a volunteer team of Waste Watchers. The survey takes two days; while volunteers ride the established route, they score each survey segment. The scores are then compiled and averaged for the final resulting score. As the survey will show, there has been a great improvement in Northampton County, most likely due to increased litter pick-up events and local initiatives. The nationwide average falls at 1.65, with Northampton County falling below that average – in a goody way! – at 1.1. This shows a significant decrease from just before the pandemic, scoring 2.1, and over four years, decreasing litter 25%. While Accomack County has improved their score from pre-pandemic 2.2 to current 1.75, they remain above the nationwide average.

Links:

[Waste Watchers Annual Litter Survey \(2022\)](#)

#### **IV. Benefits Accrued**

A-NPDC staff identified measurable benefits accrued from previous grant products that have served as a foundation for additional projects. These benefits build on existing CZM-funded initiatives and emphasize the importance of the work being done, and highlights the amount of outreach and collaboration that was implemented. Furthermore, the benefits accrued provide insight to the continued positive impacts CZM-funded projects have on the Eastern Shore.

Through initial and ongoing funding for coastal management, the Climate Adaptation Working Group (CAWG) is able to continue addressing resilience efforts in the region. The CAWG Summer Workshop 2022 highlighted current resilience efforts A-NPDC staff are engaged in (i.e., Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Planning; collaborating with localities to identify resilience needs/projects), featured coastal policy updates from Elizabeth Andrews with the Virginia Coastal Policy Center at William & Mary Law School, and a presentation from Carol Considine with ODU's Institute for Coastal Adaptation & Resilience on launching a coastal resilience and adaptation economy; there were lightning presentations on coastal bay restoration by Richard Snyder, Director VIMS Eastern Shore Lab, and Susan Bates, Coastal Science Program Manager with TNC-VCR.

Through a grant to a local partner, the *Explore Our Seaside* rack card (along with website and other materials) were developed. Through continued technical assistance funding, A-

NPDC staff has been able to further promote, educate, and raise awareness about the region's Barrier Islands using the *Explore Our Seaside* materials. These materials are also being distributed by DCR's Natural Heritage Regional Steward.

Through FY17-FY22 CZM Task 72 funds in the focal area of ecotourism and resiliency, the Virginia Certified Ecotour Guide (VCEG) course is offered. After successful certification, There will be ten (10) new certified ecotour guides.

Through the same funding and course, in 2021 Laura Scharle was certified as a Virginia Ecotour Guide. Laura has gone on to build a recreational consultant business and was awarded the bid for Virginia Water Trails marketing and media services! As a result of her efforts, the Virginia Water Trails platforms have seen a significant increase in traffic and engagement.

Lastly, in collaboration with the Eastern Shore Tourism Commission, the Virginia Water Trails Eastern Shore was featured in the *Eastern Shore Tourism Activity Guide 2022* print and digital.

Links:

[CAWG Summer Workshop 2022 Follow Up Newsletter](#)

[Explore Our Seaside](#)

[Wild Neighbors Nature Connection – Ecotour Guide Rich Hanlon](#)

[Scharle Outdoor Recreation – Ecotour Guide Laura Scharle](#)

[Eastern Shore Tourism Commission VWT Listing](#)

## **V. Resilience Planning**

Under this grant, the A-NPDC received funding for resilience planning. The A-NPDC plays a critical role in regional resiliency coordination, providing technical assistance and collaboration with local governments, while also serving as liaisons to the state and federal agencies in charge of developing new policies and regulations. The Climate Adaptation Working Group (CAWG) is a regional platform for resilience and climate impact awareness and initiatives. In 2012, the A-NPDC assumed the role of lead agency for the Eastern Shore of Virginia Climate Adaptation Working Group (CAWG). The CAWG coordinates efforts among local, state, and federal representatives of government, aquaculture, agriculture, and community organizations to better plan and mitigate risks associated with climate change and sea level rise. In response to the state's request for resilience project submissions, the CAWG began building a list of regional needs, projects, and priorities aligning with efforts made by Wetlands Watch/Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program to develop a coastal resilience database and with the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan Phase 1 publication. A-NPDC staff continue to remain abreast of database updates and changes during PDC quarterly meetings and engagement with the Coastal Policy Team. The list of submitted projects can be found on the Coastal Resilience Web



Explorer under the *Projects & Initiatives* tab, filter by *PDC/RC*, and select *Accomack-Northampton*; there are eighty-five (85) total submissions.

In continuing to build on this effort, the A-NPDC has developed and distributed project update/add new project forms to maintain a working list of regional resiliency needs. The A-NPDC continues to facilitate the CAWG, offering technical resilience assistance to localities as needed/able. Leveraging this working group as a base of stakeholders during planning and development of the region's resilience plan, funded by the Community Flood Preparedness Fund, will allow the CAWG to continue its engagement in providing education, outreach, and resources to the residents of the Eastern Shore in the face of various climate impacts.

In addition to these resilience efforts, the A-NPDC provided support in the development of state level resilience initiatives by participating on the Coastal Resilience Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and collaborating with Rear Admiral Ann Phillips and her team under the Northam Administration to provide information and answer requests throughout the development and publication of the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan Phase I. Lastly, to increase regional capacity and support locality project implementation, the A-NPDC submitted a grant application to the *Community Flood Preparedness Fund* to develop a community resilience and sustainability plan. The A-NPDC was awarded in the amount of \$375,000 with no match requirement. This plan will be developed over the next three years, engaging partners and local stakeholders to identify critical community needs and determine a path forward.

Links:

[Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan](#)

[VCRMP Coastal Resilience Web Explorer](#)

[ES Project Update Form – Planning & Capacity Building](#)

[ES Project Update Form – Flood Resilience Project](#)

[ESVA Regional Resilience Community Plan Development CFPF Application](#)

## **VI. Nassawadox Creek Maintenance & Beneficial Use Planning**

Moffatt & Nichol was procured to complete all survey, sediment sampling, planning, design, and community outreach activities for an area of Nassawadox Creek in Northampton County. Pre-implementation activities included the development of a dredge material management planning (DMMP) and community engagement, as supported by the Waterway Maintenance Fund managed by the Virginia Port Authority. A-NPDC staff worked with the contractor and the Eastern Shore Regional Navigable Waterways Committee (ESRNWC) to organize and facilitate at least three public meetings with the engineering contractor to review site design and beneficial use of the dredged material; these can be viewed at the link below. Additional meetings were facilitated by A-NPDC with project partners with updates presented at quarterly public ESRNWC meetings. The project included collaboration with the United States Army Corps of Engineers Norfolk

District, the VMRC, VIMS, and the Virginia Port Authority. Maintaining navigability of our waterways, particularly in an economically vital area such as this, is imperative to economic resiliency and benefits working waterfronts. Beneficial use of the material is meant to both enhance habitat for plants and wildlife and increase resiliency of properties near the project area.

Links:

[ESVA Waterways Project Overview & Public Engagement](#)

[Eastern Shore Regional Navigable Waterways Committee](#)