

Final Report
FY 2020 Task 1.02
Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program –
Virginia Department of Environmental Quality

Virginia CZM Program Outreach & Social Marketing



Report submitted by Virginia Witmer, Virginia CZM Program Outreach Coordinator



Virginia Coastal Zone
MANAGEMENT PROGRAM



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FY 2020 Task 1.02

Virginia Coastal Program Outreach and Social Marketing Final Report

October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021
(with extensions through September 30, 2023)

The FY20 NOAA CZM grant enabled the Outreach Coordinator to engage with partners in the following activities, and to produce or assist in producing the following products:

General Virginia CZM Program Outreach ---

- 2021 Virginia Coastal Partners Workshop – *Virginia's Coastal and Ocean Future: A Turning Point for Collaborating to Address Complex Challenges*: Worked with Virginia CZM staff and partners including Virginia CBNERRS staff to plan the biennial Virginia Coastal Partners Workshop, conducted virtually on November 16 - 18, 2021. The recordings of all presentations, as well as [links to many relevant resources](#), are available to view on Padlet at <https://padlet.com/ctpcordinatorcbnerr/CZMpartners>. (Organized by day; scroll through the speaker bios to the presentations). Summary of breakout session discussion:
 - [Coastal Resilience](#)
 - [Land Conservation and Ocean Planning](#)
 - [Coastal Communities and Economy](#)
- *Media outreach efforts resulted in acknowledgement and positive press for the program, including:*
 - Plant Virginia Natives initiative mentioned in an April 2021 Washington Post article highlighting Doug Tallamy's book "The Nature of Oaks" - <https://wapo.st/2YT8ReQl>
 - Interviewed for a local NBC 12 weather story on the resiliency of native plants during the heat of Richmond summers, which aired twice in August 2021.
 - Articles on the program's efforts on balloon and marine debris reduction and native plant marketing in Virginia Master Naturalist newsletters – e.g., <https://bit.ly/3AHUpnw>.
 - An article about the Outreach Coordinator in the Virginia Native Plant Society newsletter, *Sempervirens*, in February 2021 highlights Virginia CZM's leadership and funding of the Plant Virginia Natives Initiative - <https://bit.ly/3x8f9nL>.



- *In-person events were limited in spring and summer 2021, but the Outreach Coordinator participated in the following events:*
 - Exhibit by invitation at the Virginia Historic Garden Week event at the Executive Mansion in April, where the coordinator was filmed for a video shared in a May letter from the Governor about Public Service Week (<https://bit.ly/3p8p4lj>).
 - Exhibit at the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden 2021 Spring PlantFest (two-day exhibit in April/May 2021, with nearly non-stop visitors, resulting in over 250 pledges).
 - Exhibit at Pollinator Festival in collaboration with the Virginia Native Plant Society and Master Gardeners, with a steady stream of visitors (June 2021).
 - VDOT Pollinator Week event with First Lady of Virginia Pamela Northam, who mentioned the Plant RVA Natives campaign in her remarks in the context of partners collaborating on increasing native plant use (June 2021).
 - Presented to Virginia Tech Community Design Assistance Center class on native plant marketing. Students had great questions about collaboration and leadership. The professor and class assisted in producing the new regional native plant guide for the Plant Southwest Virginia Natives campaign (Feb 2021).

- *Section C – Success Story Report to NOAA:*

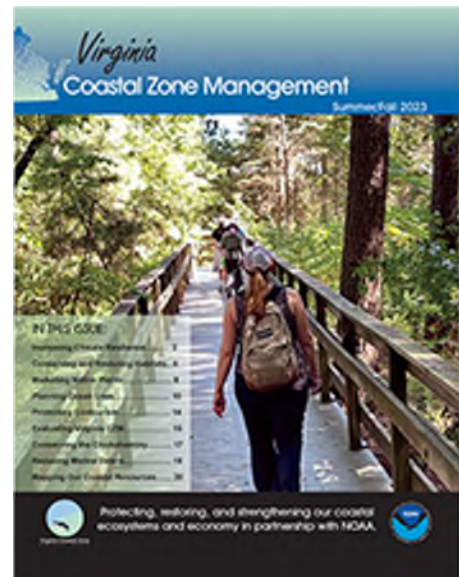
Report submitted in April 2021 highlighting the impact and results of the program’s native plant marketing efforts -

<https://www.deq.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/8694/637560011936370000>.

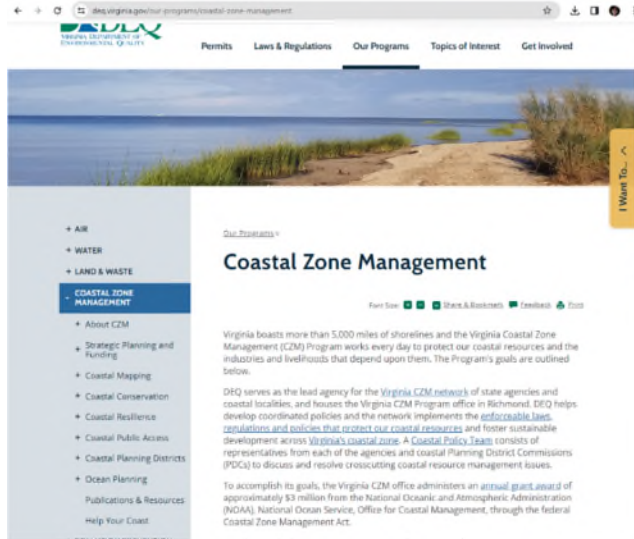
- *Virginia Coastal Zone Management Magazine:* Contractual funds remaining in this task during extension of this grant were used to print and distribute copies of the Summer/Fall 2023 issue of *Virginia Coastal Zone Management Magazine* (published in November 2023; production coordinated through FY22, Task 1.02 grant). Copies were mailed to state, local and regional officials, including all members of Virginia’s General Assembly, and hardcopies distributed during meetings, exhibits and events.

Downloadable from:

<https://www.deq.virginia.gov/our-programs/coastal-zone-management/publications-resources>



- **Virginia CZM Program Website:**
Served as primary administrator of the Virginia CZM Program's website. The focus during this grant period was implementation of an overhaul of the Virginia CZM website in conjunction with a redesign of the Virginia DEQ website. This entailed working with Virginia CZM and DEQ Communication Office staff to complete changes to navigation and to write and edit all content



- <https://www.deq.virginia.gov/our-programs/coastal-zone-management>

- **Adobe Creative Suite Cloud Software Acquisition:**
Coordinated with Virginia CZM and DEQ staff in purchase of software critical to production of printed media for Virginia CZM Program outreach (with funds remaining in this task during the extension of the grant).

Social Marketing to Reduce Marine Debris ---

One of the near-term actions identified in the Virginia Marine Debris Reduction Plan was design and implementation of a social marketing campaign targeting behaviors that will reduce balloon litter in the marine environment. Balloons were identified as one of the most harmful items to wildlife.

During the FY 20 Virginia CZM Program Outreach and Social Marketing grant, the Virginia CZM Outreach Coordinator served as a member of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean's (MARCO) Mid-Atlantic Marine Debris Work Group.

In December 2017, MARCO successfully applied for a FY18 NOAA Marine Debris Prevention Grant (\$145,607) to enable broad-scale implementation of the *Joyful Send-off* campaign in the other four mid-Atlantic states - Maryland, New York, New Jersey, and Delaware.

During the FY20 Virginia CZM Program Outreach grant, the Outreach Coordinator collaborated with the other state partners on the Work Group to prepare for the October 4, 2021, launch of the new Mid-Atlantic Prevent Balloon Litter Campaign in collaboration with the Virginia, New York, and National aquariums.

The campaign focuses on a one-to-many, social normative strategy emphasizing the use of balloon release alternatives during celebratory, memorial, and other events to honor

individuals and groups. The campaign reaches a variety of audiences well *before* they are involved in any type of events to “inoculate” the public against balloon releases.

Based on previous experience with CBSM and design and implementation of the *Joyful Sendoff* campaign, the Virginia CZM Program Outreach Coordinator had a lead role in identifying and acquiring imagery and drafting and assisting the marketing contractor, OpinionWorks, in testing campaign messages. The coordinator also drafted the campaign strategy – and produced corresponding multi-media – which applies CBSM tools and techniques proven to change behavior when they are implemented in concert with one another: 1) Persuasive Messaging, including posters which display balloon impacts and alternatives to be displayed by partners in publicly visible areas (as described and shown below); 2) Visible Public Commitment, including pledge collection and a series of pledge decals as a reminder and prompt to follow through (as shown below); and, 3) Social Diffusion/Social Norming, including a social media plan (described below), and later, pro-bono ads in publications.

Versions of Prevent Balloon Litter Logo Used on Prevent BalloonLitter.org and by Mid-Atlantic Campaign



Campaign Posters for Display in Aquariums



Set of seven 11"x17" or 17" x 11" impact and alternative posters (with versions of each of the 7 posters for the 3 aquariums participating in the campaign launch in October 2021).





Pilot Phase Pledge Decal



Given to aquarium visitors who sign pledge as a reminder of their commitment.

Social Media Plan

Tool to implement the one-to-many social normative approach, and includes posts, graphics, hashtags etc., and a list of existing, related sites, including Prevent Balloon Litter and Joyful Sendoff. Encourage pledging visitors to share Images of alternatives used on social media, tagging campaign and aquariums.

[Link Social Media Plan and Graphics](#)

The FY20 NOAA CZM grant also enabled the Outreach Coordinator to work with Virginia and Mid-Atlantic marine debris partners on the following projects and to produce the following marine debris reduction products:

- Virginia Plastic Pollution Prevent Network** – represented Virginia CZM on the Virginia Plastic Pollution Prevention Network, participating in monthly calls - <https://www.facebook.com/VirginiaPPPN/> and <http://www.vaplasticpollutionpreventionnetwork.org/>.
- Virginia Marine Debris Reduction Plan Revision, 2021-2025** – served on the Virginia Marine Debris Leadership Team and participated in stakeholder meetings to revise the Virginia Marine Debris Reduction Plan. Worked with Clean Virginia Waterways to design and layout the updated plan - <https://www.deq.virginia.gov/our-programs/coastal-zone-management/coastal-conservation/marine-debris> or <https://www.deq.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/12647/63772749473700000>.
- Marine Debris Issue Report: Balloons and Plastic Ribbons: Deadly Litter on Virginia's Remote Beaches** - edited and designed a January 2021 Clean Virginia Waterways Marine Litter Report focused on Virginia balloon litter impacts, data and projects targeted at decision-makers - https://www.longwood.edu/cleanva/images/REPORT_balloon%20litter%20in%20VA%2015-21%20FINAL.pdf
- Mid-Atlantic Marine Debris Reduction Plan** - reviewed draft 2021-2026 Mid-Atlantic Marine Debris Action Plan and participated in stakeholder meetings on consumer debris.
- 2021 Mid Atlantic Marine Debris Summit** – served on the planning team and presented at the July 2021 Mid-Atlantic Marine Debris Summit. Produced and distributed advertising for the event.
- Prevent Balloon Litter Website** - served as the primary administrator of www.PreventBalloonLitter.org, which is being leveraged by the Mid-Atlantic Prevent Balloon Litter Campaign. The site is framed on positive messaging of



Registration and agenda available in late spring at midatlanticocean.org

Sponsored by:

NOAA Office for Coastal Management
 MARCO Mid-Atlantic Marine Debris Group
 Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program at Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
 Clean Virginia Waterways of Longwood University

Logos for NOAA, MARCO, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, and Clean Virginia Waterways are included.

Questions? info@midatlanticocean.org

alternatives to releases. Imagery, messaging, and language used on the site is informed by findings of research on balloon release in Virginia, design of the Joyful Send-off CBSM campaign pilot and additional research conducted in the Mid-Atlantic. The website is a collection point for pledges from visitors not to participate in a balloon release, highlights the impacts of balloon litter, and offers video, online and print resources.

- *Balloon Litter Impacts Factsheet and Balloon Release Alternatives Flyer* - redesigned two balloon debris factsheets – one highlighting balloon litter impacts and the other alternatives to release – which are downloadable at www.preventballoonlitter.org/want-to-read-more.



Plant Virginia Natives



PLANTVIRGINIANATIVES.ORG

The Outreach Coordinator coordinated the Plant Virginia Natives Initiative, including collaboration with members of the statewide marketing partnership and regional native plant marketing campaigns to advance the mission of the Initiative's Action Plan – www.plantvirginianatives.org/virginia-native-plant-marketing-partnership-action-plan/ – “to identify and prioritize opportunities to collaborate on Virginia native plant communication and marketing efforts and form cohesive and coordinated messaging and strategies to increase local availability and use of native plants state-wide for their many ecological benefits.”

Below are highlights of this work, which raised visibility of Virginia CZM's leadership and investment in the Plant Virginia Native's Initiative and leveraged partner resources:

- Coordinated with regional campaigns state-wide to plan, advertise and conduct a 2021 Landscaping with Virginia Natives webinar series, including 12 presentations (6 in spring and 6 in fall 2021), over 3,000 registrants and hundreds of questions asked at each webinar. Provided scripting for and a welcome to each webinar. Collaborated with Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden to collect registrations and with the garden and Blue Ridge PRISM to host the webinars via ZOOM. While a registration fee (\$10 for all 12 webinars) enabled speaker honorariums, Virginia CZM funded a keynote presentation by Doug Tallamy and presentations by two authors – Kim Eierman and Nancy Lawson. Response to the webinars was extremely positive. Among the comments received:
 - “Kudos to the group who pulled this series together. What a tremendous effort that is much appreciated.”
 - “This has been a superb series!”
 - “Tonight's program was superb. These webinars have been really helpful and very well run.”
 - “The Native Plant presentation last night was OUTSTANDING! Thank you so much for providing such wonderful opportunities for us to learn from the top leaders in their profession. I look forward to the remaining programs.”

- Also received a message from Joe Uravitch, NOAA-retired – *“Hi Virginia, I just wanted to let you know how much I am enjoying the Virginia Native series. I am now a Master Gardener in Arlington/Alexandria. In the small world category, before retirement I managed a variety of NOAA coastal and ocean programs and was the lead for Virginia Coastal Program development and approval in the 1980s. I'm happy to see the VA CZM is still going strong. Keep up the great work.”*

The series raised \$30, 950 to support native plant marketing activities. Recordings are shared on www.PlantVirginiaNatives.org – and the Plant Virginia Natives YouTube Channel - <https://bit.ly/3aCMAET> and have reached 4,937 viewers to date.

- Serves as chief administrator of the Plant Virginia Natives Initiative Website – <http://www.PlantVirginiaNatives.org> – home for the statewide Plant Virginia Natives marketing partnership, a central hub for Virginia native plant information and host to a sub-site for 9 regional campaigns, maintained with the assistance of 9 web authors - Plant Eastern Shore Natives, Plant Central Rapp Natives, Plant Hampton Roads Natives, Plant Southwest Virginia Natives, Plant Northern Piedmont Natives, Plant Southern Piedmont Natives, Plant Richmond Virginia (RVA) Natives, Plant Ridge and Valley Natives and Plant Southwest Virginia Natives. A native plant marketing issue page is available on the Virginia CZM Program website and highlights the role of the program - <https://www.deq.virginia.gov/our-programs/coastal-zone-management/coastal-conservation/native-plant-marketing>. During the grant period, from October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021, the Plant Virginia Natives website had 91,000 visits (up 134% from the previous year), 69,000 unique visitors (up 122% from the previous year) and 161,000 page views (up 121% from the previous year). (Since the sites launch in 2017, it has received 395,000 visits from 310,000 unique visitors, with 688,000 page views a 48% average increase in visitors year to year.)
- Worked closely with regional native plant campaign coordinators and steering teams as an advisor, to provide assistance where needed, and to encourage communication and sharing of resources between the campaigns. An overview of the regional marketing efforts is available at <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58e25c41e6f2e17ea4cb7766/t/65820e17a2cd713c0a948658/1703022103320/Plant+Virginia+Natives+Initiative+Overview+-+rev+12-1-23.pdf>
 - Organized and led virtual retreat in December 2020 with regional campaign coordinators to encourage share of successes and challenges, which resulted in regular Campaign Coordinator Collaboration Calls in 2021.

- Advised development of regional campaigns and guides outside of the coastal zone, including Plant Southwest Virginia Natives, Plant Southern Piedmont Natives, Plant Northern Piedmont Natives and Plant Ridge and Valley Natives. These campaigns recognize the Virginia CZM Program as a partner in presentations and materials.
 - An updated state-wide regional campaign boundary map can be viewed on PlantVirginiaNatives.org at <https://www.plantvirginiannatives.org/virginia-regional-native-plant-campaigns-guides>
 - Continued to serve as the Plant RVA Natives campaign coordinator until another partner or partners take on this role.
- Designed new “Please Carry Cards” for use by all regional campaigns, which are provided when gardeners pledge. The purpose of the card is to leave it with the provider to either thank them for carrying native plants or the plant the consumer is looking for, or to let them know that the consumer is looking for a particular species, and to contact the consumer when the native plant(s) is available. The card helps convey the growing demand for Virginia natives. The card includes an acknowledgement to the Virginia CZM Program.



THANKS FOR STOCKING VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANTS. I'LL BE SURE TO LET MY FRIENDS KNOW!

PLEASE CONTACT ME

(area or phone number)

WHEN YOU STOCK THE FOLLOWING NATIVE PLANT(S)

(name of plant(s) - or scientific name if you know it)

Provided by the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program