



Virginia Coastal Zone MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Semi-Annual Success Story (“Section C”)

October 2020 – April 2021

Submitted to the Office of Coastal Management/NOAA

Plant Virginia Natives: Virginia CZM Program Initiative Sets Example and Expands State-wide

CZMA Performance Measure Area: Coastal Habitat Protection, Coastal Water Quality Protection, Government Coordination

Geographic Location: Coastal Zone of Virginia (Congressional Districts 1-4,7,8,10,11) and expansion state-wide.

Identification & Description of Issue:

The Virginia CZM Program has invested significant funding and effort over its 30 year history on land and water-based habitat restoration and protection, and improving the quality of coastal waters, so preserving our native vegetative cover is a significant goal.

Increasing the amount of native vegetation in Virginia’s coastal zone helps accomplish four of the ten goals of the Virginia CZM Program: protecting water quality and quantity, increasing carbon dioxide absorption, enhancing wildlife habitat and improving aesthetics and quality of life.

However, there are a number of barriers to increasing the use of native plants, including a lack of public and provider knowledge of what plants are native to Virginia, a lack of readily available native plants in the trade and inconsistencies or a lack of point of sale information at local garden centers that do stock natives.

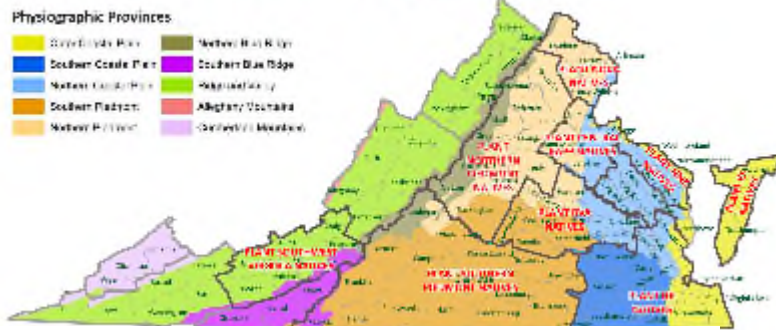
In spring 2009, the Virginia CZM Program and its partners launched the first regional native plant marketing campaign on the Eastern Shore. This model campaign was designed to go beyond awareness to change individual behavior and to make planting natives the social norm rather than the exception.

The model’s design follows a Community-Based Social Marketing approach and was informed by research first conducted on the Shore – by listening to our public audience. This research identified the barriers that are inhibiting the public from planting natives; the benefits they would receive by increasing their use of natives; and the outlets through which they receive information. These findings were then validated through additional research in other regions.

There are now campaigns being implemented, and regional native plant guides being distributed, throughout Virginia’s coastal zone. In addition, Virginia CZM Program’s efforts generated interest in other areas of the state, and have leveraged the development of four campaigns outside Virginia’s coastal zone.



Virginia Regional Native Plant Campaigns



Map shows boundaries of the coastal native plant regions for which a campaign and/or guide have been developed, and the boundaries for the campaigns west of the CZ that are being developed.

The Program’s investment and example has led a state-wide commitment taken up by dozens of additional partner organizations and recognized by other grant programs and funding entities.



All the campaigns are programmatically linked through the use of shared campaign techniques and materials – multi-media elements of the Plant ES Natives Campaign strategy have been easily transferrable to address barriers common in all the regions to planting natives - such as the regional native plant guide, point-of-sale materials and demonstration gardens. The campaigns are visibly linked through shared design elements in their campaign logos. Many of the same organizations are participating on the regional campaign planning teams, such as regional planning district commissions, local governments, soil and water conservation districts, state agencies – including the Virginia departments of conservation and recreation and forestry, and non-governmental partners like the Virginia Native Plant Society, local garden clubs, botanical gardens, master gardeners, and master naturalists.



How the Virginia CZM Program Was Involved:

In spring 2009, the Virginia CZM Program and its partners launched the Plant ES Natives using proven social marketing tools and techniques with a focus on making planting natives fun, easy and popular. The campaign was created through the Seaside Heritage Program to help connect actions on land to protection of the aquatic habitats being restored on the Seaside of Virginia’s Eastern Shore, and also to advance the Virginia CZM Program’s efforts to protect and increase native vegetation on the Shore, a critical migratory bird rest stop.



Ten years later, in April 2019, the Virginia CZM Program, in collaboration with more than 20 partner state agencies and non-governmental organizations, launched its sixth regional native plant campaign in the coastal zone, Plant RVA Natives.

The campaign is focused on increasing the use and supply of plants native to the Virginia Capital Region, encompassing nine counties and the city of Richmond.

The Plant RVA Natives campaign is part of a coast-wide regional native plant marketing effort initiated and funded in large part by Virginia CZM through grants from NOAA. In addition to publishing an immensely popular regional guide, like the other coastal campaigns, Plant RVA Natives is partnering with local

Plant Virginia Natives



MARKETING PARTNERSHIP
www.PlantVirginiaNatives.org

providers on point of sale marketing, such as signage and plant tags, to make it easier for consumers to identify plants as native to the region.

In July and August 2019, the Virginia CZM Program partnered with its network agency, the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, to conduct three workshops to build the capacity of regional and local

partners to apply the regional native plant marketing model beyond Virginia's coastal zone. As a result, four new campaigns are underway in the northern and southern piedmont, southwest Virginia and the northern Shenandoah Valley.

The growing Plant Virginia Natives initiative advances the goals of the work in Virginia's coastal zone to help landowners learn more about their property and the ecological benefits of a native plant landscape, and to recruit local garden centers and other providers to promote native plants and to increase the supply and variety of the native plants they carry. Finally, the campaigns work with local jurisdictions to strengthen policies that favor native plant landscaping. Northern Virginia Regional Commission staff share that all the hard work of promoting native plants has really paid off with Fairfax County actually adopting a comprehensive plan amendment that requires public facilities to use "natural landscaping" i.e. native plants. The language includes several references to Plant NOVA Natives.



Participation in the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Plant Central Rapp Natives campaign's demonstration gardens at a King George County park reflected the many partners involved.

The Virginia CZM Program Outreach Coordinator leads the Plant Virginia Natives initiative, works directly with regional campaign coordinators and connects with over 135 organizations on the campaign steering teams, which has increased the program's visibility state-wide. The Outreach Coordinator provides guidance to the campaigns, and encourages and facilitates collaboration among the campaigns. Research tools and results, campaign strategies and materials, and campaign successes, fails and challenges are all readily shared.

Details about all the regional campaigns, including downloadable regional guides, are available at www.PlantVirginiaNatives.org. The Outreach Coordinator is the primary administrator of this website.

Qualitative Summary of Accomplishments and Outcomes:

Virginia CZM Program's investment in the Plant Virginia Natives initiative has helped increase the program's visibility and resulted in a growing appreciation for the program's coordinative role with an array of partners in the coastal zone as well as on the state level. Virginia Native Plant Society President, Nancy Vehrs, had this to say in her 2019-2020 fundraising letter to members and supporters - "As a statewide

organization, the VNPS would like to continue to support the regional native plant marketing effort... We want to help the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program and partners reach the goal of publishing a Regional Native Plant Guide for every area of the state. The interest in planting natives is growing. We are at a pivotal moment to keep public sentiment moving in the right direction. The Regional Native Plant Guides have proven to be an inspiration to landowners and other stakeholders to plant natives. Imagine what an impact we can have for plants and wildlife, including the birds and pollinators we love, by helping influence whole communities to Plant Virginia Natives."



The Plant Virginia Natives initiative's rapport with providers also is growing, as recent input demonstrates – "Thank you SO MUCH for the vital work you do to coordinate these campaigns across the state! It's marvelous!" – Anna Maria Johnson, *The Natural Garden Nursery*; "Thank you for all your hard work putting together these great VA native talks via zoom. If you ever need a speaker or if there's anyway I can help, let me know. I love your lineup so far!!" – Meg French, *Landscape Designer*; and, "My landscape clients and I LOVE the native plant booklet." – Peggy Krapf, *Heart's Ease Landscape*.

The Plant Virginia Natives initiative leverages partner resources, creates consistent messaging and provides a rallying point for partners. Together with these partners, Virginia CZM is growing public demand for, and a social norm in favor of, native plants and is increasing native plant vegetation cover, habitat and water quality. In 2009, prior to the Plant ES Natives campaign, the program heard natives still described as scraggly and weedy. Twelve years later, with campaigns spreading state-wide, that perception is fading away garden by garden.

Quantitative Summary of Accomplishment and Outcomes:

At the outset, Virginia CZM and its partners identified that the key measure of behavior change in each of the regional campaigns is an increase in the sales of native plants. Although it will take more time to affect native plant supply of Virginia grown species to the degree that is needed to meet the increasing demand, and it can be difficult to collect sales data in a consistent manner, we know that demand for native plants as been steadily growing. In Northern Virginia, demand for natives is outpacing supply at garden centers participating in the campaign. In April 2021, a partner emailed to share: "I bought some plants at Nature by Design last Sunday. While there I spoke with Randee, who said the number of first time native plant purchasers has exploded this year. Meanwhile, NVSWCD staff are hearing from contractors doing cost share projects are having trouble sourcing native plants because their regular wholesalers are sold out. All good news that the campaign is either making a difference or began at a good time to catch the wave." A survey targeted at native plant providers state-wide will be distributed this fall to assess native plant supply and sales.

Indicators are very encouraging and show that the Virginia CZM Program's investment in these regional efforts, combined with its continued collaborative efforts with Plant Virginia Native partners, is having an influence that will lead to positive and long-term changes in the market availability and use of natives – and ultimately an increase in habitat, improvements in water quality and overall quality of life for Virginia residents.



First Lady of Virginia Pam Northam and her Chief of Staff sign the pledge to plant RVA natives at an event at the Executive Mansion. A Virginia native plant demonstration landscaping was subsequently planted at the Mansion.

Although we have not completed our first survey in the regions to document behavior change – one is planned for circulation through the older campaigns this fall – there are other “By the Number” measures that reflect the reach and collective impact of Virginia CZM’s efforts:

- Engaging **over 135 organizations** statewide on the regional campaign steering teams. This number does not include all local providers engaged in Point of Sale activities.
- **Four regional campaigns** being designed and implemented outside of Virginia coastal zone.
- Launched www.PlantVirginiaNatives.org in November 2016 – a central hub for Virginia native plant information and host to **9 regional native plant marketing campaigns**. Number of visitors has **grown 182% year to year**, with **112,000 unique visitors**. Site was recently mentioned in a Washington Post article - <https://cutt.ly/Fv5ZX0H>.
- Distributed over **100,000 regional guides** across the coastal zone. Three guides are under production for new campaigns outside the CZ.
- Between late 2019 and early 2020, the Virginia Native Plant Society **fundraised \$35,000** to help the Virginia CZM Program and partners reach the goal of publishing a regional native plant guide for every area of the state, stating that the VNPS recognizes the important role of the Plant Virginia Natives initiative and the guides in furthering the Mission of the Society: *To protect and preserve the native plants of Virginia and their habitats.*
- **Over 5,000 Facebook users** follow the coastal campaigns, and shared social media posts and tweets exponentially increase the numbers of people exposed to the campaign messaging. One of the Plant RVA Natives providers is very active on Twitter and responses to their tweets about the campaign have been really encouraging. A tweet saying “*So excited to support this initiative! We’ve got complementary guides to give to customers. Just ask an associate for one!*” resulted in replies such as “*What a perfect partnership! Sneed’s Nursery & Garden Center. Yay! Loving this guide too! It’s invaluable for designing my little pollinating backyard and as a botanical artist too!*” and “*Oh wow this is great!!! I saw them at the Maymont plant sale the other weekend and was able to get one of their guides. Everyone needs one of these. It’s priceless.*”
- Plant RVA Natives campaign has collected **over 1,500 signed pledges** since it was launched in April 2019. Since in-person events have restarted this spring, in-person pledges are again being captured. On-line Pledges to Plant Natives for Pollinators are received almost **daily** through the PlantVirginiaNatives.org website.
- Plant Central Rapp Natives Campaign installed, with Virginia CZM funding, native plant landscaping in King George Cedell Brooks Jr. Park that includes **5 gardens, over 70 species and over 650 plants**. It was installed with **over 577 volunteer and staff hours**. Park demo gardens were placed on the Garden Club of Virginia’s Centennial Historic Garden Week tour in 2020.
- Plant NOVA Natives Campaign has been recognized with **two awards**.
- Garden Club of Virginia adopted a resolution to launch a Pollinator Protection Initiative, which mobilizes its **3,300 members** to plant Virginia natives, encouraging them to consult PlantVirginiaNatives.org for regional native plant lists.
- **Over 23,000 copies** of the Native Plants for Southeast Virginia guide have been distributed. Published in October 2016, the guide was reprinted with **100% partner funds** in June 2017. With publication of the first edition, an article appeared in the Virginian-Pilot - <https://cutt.ly/Ov5Z5nC>, resulting in **over 1,000 e-mails** in the week following with requests for a copy. The guide also



received a very favorable review in the Botanical Society of America's Spring 2017 *Plant Science Bulletin*. The guide is currently being sold at **4 of the 5 Wild Birds Unlimited stores** in Hampton Roads.

- Interviewed in March 2021, alongside co-coordinator of the Plant NOVA Natives campaign, for an hour-long Native Plant Podcast - www.nativeplantpodcast.com which has about **10,000 listeners** within Virginia and nationally (and some international audience).
- Coordinated with VA Dept of Agriculture and Consumer Services to have Nursery Inspection Program inspectors reach out to all **2,000 plant nurseries in Virginia** about need for greater variety and quantity of native species. Inspectors circulate availability of regional plant guides.
- Using the regional model provided by Virginia CZM, the New River Valley Regional Commission was successful at securing a **\$175,000 grant** from the Virginia Outdoors Foundation to support the Plant Southwest Virginia Natives campaign including a new community native plant propagation center.
- Coordinated with regional campaigns state-wide to plan, advertise and conduct a 2021 Landscaping with Virginia Natives webinar series, including **12 presentations, 2,737 registrants and hundreds of questions** asked at each webinar. Response has been very positive: *"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."* **Over \$22,000 has been raised** through the webinar series to support native plant marketing activities. At the end of the webinars, **11 of the 12 recordings** will be shared in perpetuity on PlantVirginiaNatives.org, and reach **thousands more** Virginia residents.

For more details on the Virginia CZM Program's Plant Virginia Natives initiative, visit www.PlantVirginiaNatives.org and contact Virginia Witmer, Outreach Coordinator, Virginia CZM Program – 804.698.4320 or Virginia.Witmer@deq.virginia.gov

CZM Funds Expended & Other Funds Leveraged:

Virginia CZM Program Grants			
Portion of FY 16 – FY 20 Task 1.02	\$188,204	Virginia CZM Program	Outreach Activities (staff time for coordinative efforts and production of various multi-media)
FY 16 Task 14	\$24,716	George Washington Regional Commission	Plant Central Rapp Natives Campaign Demonstration Garden in Cedell Brooks Jr. Park (King George County)
FY 16 Task 1.02	\$10,233	Virginia CZM Program	Printing of Native Plants for Virginia Capital Region guide and ads in VNLA Growers Guide
FY 16 Task 50	\$26,593	George Washington Regional Commission	Plant Central Rapp Natives Campaign
FY 16 Task 54	\$31,847	Northern Virginia Regional Commission	Plant NOVA Natives Campaign
FY 17 Task 1.02	\$2,905	Virginia CZM Program	Printing of shared regional campaign materials and ads in VNLA Growers Guide
FY 18 Task 1.02	\$6,099	Virginia CZM Program	Printing of shared regional campaign materials
FY 18 Task 47	\$8,280	George Washington Regional Commission	Special project under Technical Assistance grant – continued implementation/coordination of Plant Central Rapp Natives Campaign
FY 19 Task 1.02	\$8,042	Virginia CZM Program	Printing of RVA regional campaign materials and webinar speaker fees
Total CZM Funding - \$306,919			

Leveraged Funds

PROJECT	FUNDS	CONTRIBUTING PARTNERS/IMMEDIATE RESULTS
Printing - 3 rd edition of Native Plants for Accomack and Northampton guide in December 2016.	\$1,700	Contributing partner: DEQ water quality grant funds. <i>Availability of the Eastern Shore guide, as well as the Southeastern Virginia guide were highlighted in an article in Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore Newsletter in February 2017.</i>
Printing - 1 st edition of Natives Plants for Central Rappahannock in April 2017.	\$4,000	Contributing partners: Stafford County, Prince William Wildflower Society, and an anonymous donor.
Printing - 3 rd edition of the Native Plants of Northern Virginia guide in May 2017 (5,000 copies).	\$10,872	Contributing partners: Virginia Native Plant Society with funds raised through sales of the guide (\$8,372), which leveraged \$2,500 from the VA Dept of Wildlife Resources. <i>An article in the Northern Virginia Community Foundation newsletter about the campaign, which is now a recipient of private donations through the foundation, mentioned VA CZM funding support for the campaign.</i>
Printing - 2 nd edition printing of the Native Plants for Southeast Virginia guide in June 2017	\$16,988	Contributing partners: VA Dep of Wildlife Resources, Hampton Roads Storm Committee, Lynnhaven River Now, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Wetlands Watch, local chapters of Virginia Native Plants Society, and Virginia Tech. <i>Article appeared in the Virginian-Pilot in Nov (https://cutt.ly/xv30rrd), as a result guide favorably reviewed in the Botanical Society of America's Spring 2017 Plant Science Bulletin (https://cutt.ly/vv31SXY).</i>
Print - 1 st edition of Native Plants for Virginia's Capital Region	\$7,000	Contributing partners: VA Dept of Wildlife Resources, Hanover Master Gardeners, James River Association, Hanover-Caroline SWCD, Henrico Master Gardeners
Virginia Native Plant Society 2019-2020 special fundraiser	\$35,000	Fundraiser for reprinting current regional native plant guides, and producing new guides. <i>Appeal letter recognizes and praises VA CZM for funding and leadership on this issue. VNPS is assisting selling the eligible guides - https://vnps.org/virginia-native-plant-guides/ - this webpage clearly credits VA CZM and NOAA.</i>
Printing – 2nd edition Native Plants for Central Rappahannock	\$8,016	Contributing partners: Friends of the Rappahannock, Garden Gate Landscape & Design, King George County, Master Gardener Association of the Central Rappahannock Area, Master Naturalists of Central Rappahannock Chapter, Stafford County, Tri-County/City Soil & Water Conservation District, Virginia Native Plant Society
Printing – 2nd edition of Native Plants for Virginia's Capital Region	\$10,000	Contributing partners: Chesapeake Bay Foundation, VDOT Pollinator Habitat Program and Virginia Native Plant Society
Installation – Plant Central Rapp Natives Demonstration Garden in King George County	\$13,871 (577 volunteer and staff hours)	Contributing partners: Artwood Gardens, Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, Rappahannock Garden Club and King George County. <i>Public use of the campaign's demo has greatly increased. A King George Co Board of Supervisors member meets with residents every other Saturday at the park.</i>
Maintenance of Demo	\$2,000	Contributing partners: Master Gardeners for maintenance
Plant Southwest Virginia Natives Campaign	\$175,000	Virginia Outdoors Foundation grant to support production of campaign materials including guide and development of community native plant propagation center.
Total Leveraged Funding - \$284,447		