

Northern Neck Planning District Commission Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program Technical Assistance Grant FY 22, Task 45 Final Report



Virginia Coastal Zone
MANAGEMENT PROGRAM



This project was funded by the Northern Neck Planning District Commission and the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program at the Department of Environmental Quality through Grant # NA22NOS4190187 of the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, under the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended.

Table of Contents

I. Coastal Management Support	3
II. Local Planning Coordination and Training	3
III. Hazard Mitigation Grant Assistance for House Elevation	4
V. Hazard Mitigation Planning	5
VI. Benefits Accrued from Previous CZM Grants	6
VII. Advancing Ecosystem and Community Resilience	7
VIII. Advancing Economic Resilience	7

I. Coastal Management Support

NNPDC staff provided continuing coastal management support to the four counties and six towns of the Northern Neck as well as the Northern Neck Land Conservancy, Friends of the Rappahannock, Northern Neck Soil & Water Conservation District, and a myriad of other regional, state and federal entities dedicated to environmental stewardship, conservation, and resiliency. Support provided includes, but is not limited to, regional coordination, technical assistance, planning, grant writing, project management, GIS analysis, and mapping products. Support through regional coordination included collaboration with FEMA and DCR in support of the development of the Northern Neck's Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan that also incorporated the Regional Resilience Plan. NNPDC staff also continued support for the continued development of the Virginia Resilience Master Plan through the Project Prioritization TAC subgroup.

The benefits of this continuing support range in their effects and include the identification and mitigation of environmental impacts of those projects reviewed where construction is being undertaken, such as the continuing Business District Revitalizations. Other benefits include ensuring the accuracy and completeness of local zoning and comprehensive plans, such as with the Towns of White Stone, Colonial Beach, and Richmond County. Some examples of this GIS support can be seen at this [hyperlink](#). Any major issues encountered and/or addressed during this period using coastal resources can not be described by the new Environmental Planner, as they were not present when those instances would have occurred. The Environmental Planner did reach out to the previous planner for any information, but did not receive any correspondence in return. Collaboration with various partners allows the Northern Neck localities to learn and experience new techniques, information, or methods that they otherwise wouldn't have access to. NNPDC's support helps the localities to find and take advantage of these opportunities. Other benefits include education and outreach through a myriad of environmental stewardship, conservation, and resiliency efforts and educational initiatives in partnership with Friends of the Rappahannock, the Northern Neck Soil and Water Conservation District, and other stakeholders. Countless other unquantifiable benefits result from the regional coastal management support provided to Northern Neck localities and environmental organizations.

II. Local Planning Coordination and Training

NNPDC staff continued to provide coordination of coastal planning efforts and training opportunities to its member localities. Local planning coordination included collaboration with FEMA, VDEM, DCR, and local stakeholders for the update of the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan. NNPDC staff convened and facilitated stakeholder meetings throughout the grant year to collect input and make collective decisions regarding the HMP. Additionally, NNPDC staff conducted quarterly Land Use Administrators and Coastal Managers meetings to coordinate planning efforts and to provide training to local Administrators and staff. Trainings and meetings topics aimed to adhere to a continuing theme of concern to coastal communities, resiliency, and the protection of coastal resources.

On October 7, 2021, NNPDC hosted a Hazard Mitigation Training through the Northern Neck 2023 HMP Update Working Group and Public Input Meeting. The combined training/meeting resulted in an understanding of the HAZUS model for risk assessment and the level of risk for each individual hazard. The meeting notes/transcript and attendance can be seen as an attachment to the [HMP](#).

On February 28, 2023, DEQ provided an ESC/SWM training specific to rural opt-out localities. Participants came away with an understanding of local roles in ESC/SWM permitting authority and greater coordination between DEQ and locality staff. As a follow-up and to help with regional questions, the new Environmental Planner for the NNPDC became certified as a dual program administrator on November 2, 2023.

On March 27, 2023, NNPDC hosted a local land use staff meeting and invited VDH and Three Rivers Health District staff to join for the purpose coordinating the transfer of CBPA septic pump-out authority from localities to VDH. The meeting started with a presentation from Wetlands Watch by Shereen Hughes about the Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional Certification. This was followed by a discussion with VDH and Three Rivers Health District staff that resulted in VDH's understanding of local authority over pump-outs and a sharing of data regarding past pump-outs, residential addresses, and past compliance. The hybrid meeting/training concluded with roundtable updates from NNPDC and local staff.

On August 15, 2023 the new Environmental Planner hosted a meeting with the local Coastal Managers to get a sense of the work that has been done and what priorities they would like to focus on. The meeting was a great introduction for everyone involved to get to know what is expected of each other as well as what the major goals for the region are. This meeting was followed up by a training with the Northern Neck Land Conservancy (NNLC) on September 13, 2023. The training focused on conservation easements and how they intersect with land use planning for localities. Lisa Biever and Drew Gladwell of NNLC presented the audience with a breadth of local conservation easement statistics and examples that emphasized how unique and valuable these areas are for environmental quality, historical preservation, and family values. The Land Use Administrators (LUAs) were also able to explore the legal aspects of a land easement and how they can differ on a case-by-case basis. This allowed the LUAs to discuss amongst one another and with the Land Conservancy staff how to take into account land use planning while taking into account the unique aspects of the various conservation easements within the Northern Neck. A major takeaway for the group as a whole was that both the Land Conservancy and the LUAs agreed that there should be increased and updated communication of where conservation easement restrictions are in place, their specifications, and when new ones are established. Lastly, the Land Conservancy and Northern Neck localities have historically held MOUs, however, they are outdated so locality staff are often unaware of their existence. Therefore, another outcome of the LUA training was a conversation on creating new MOUs so that they can continue to work together in the most effective way possible.

III. Hazard Mitigation Grant Assistance for House Elevation

The Northern Neck Planning District Commission administers a program to assist localities and residents mitigate the impacts of recurrent flooding through the elevation of structures prone to repetitive loss. NNPDC staff assisted localities in the Northern Neck through the administration of several home elevations funded by FEMA, with additional funding, when required, by VDEM and/or the property owners.

In this grant year, NNPDC staff oversaw the elevation of one home in Lewisetta in Northumberland County. As of September 30, 2023, the house is nearly completed. It has been raised and the new foundation has been constructed. Plumbing and electrical work was conducted after the end of the grant period and the house is only waiting for an engineering firm to come do the survey for the after elevation certificate. The elevation will be completely done by the end of November. The before and after photos of the home elevation can be viewed at this [hyperlink](#). NNPDC staff provided grant writing assistance and technical support to the property owners to apply for funds and received FEMA funding to cover part of the cost to elevate the homes. NNPDC staff conducted project management and oversaw the completion of construction activities and project closeout.

The Program also has pending applications for Hazard Mitigation Grants to elevate five additional homes in the Northern Neck. Applications were submitted to VDEM in October of 2022 and as of September 30, 2023, FEMA is still reviewing applications and has not awarded flood hazard mitigation grants for the 2022-2023 grant cycle. NNPDC staff have provided grant writing assistance and technical support to Northern Neck localities and residents to fund the elevations. Pending applications include three additional

projects in the Lewisetta area of Northumberland County, one additional project in Essex County, and one project each in the Windmill Point and Morattico areas of Lancaster County. Regardless, NNPDC staff continues to provide information about the program and offer any technical assistance needed to help secure funding.

IV. Northern Neck Green

NNPDC staff, in collaboration with Northern Neck Environmental Stewardship Consortium (NNESC), created the NNKgreen.org website in 2015 with funds from the VACZM program, grant #NA15NOS4190164. The website acts as a regional clearinghouse and events calendar for environmental topics relevant to the Northern Neck of Virginia. The website is maintained by NNPDC staff, who act as administrator, and members of the NNESC, which consists of organizations dedicated to making the most out of the region's air, land, and water.

This grant year, NNPDC staff maintained and directed content across the site related to environmental news, projects, meetings, and events in the Northern Neck. Topics posted included: Household Hazardous & E-Waste Collection events, NNSWCD Academic Scholarships, Earth Day Festival, Free Tire Disposal event, The Greenhouse at the Northern Neck Technical Center, NAPS Great Wicomico River Cleanup, and information on the Virginia General Assembly's passage of legislation in 2021 that will ban the use of Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) by food vendors beginning July 1, 2028. The latter will be an ongoing campaign. Additionally, NNPDC staff engaged with environmental education and outreach leaders, such as the Northern Neck Soil and Water Conservation District, Friends of the Rappahannock, Northumberland Association for Progressive Stewardship, Northern Neck Land Conservancy, and Northern Neck Master Gardeners to increase the site's utilization as the premiere platform to educate residents of the Northern Neck and inform them regarding events and educational opportunities throughout the year.

The website has been an increasingly useful tool for environmental outreach in the region since it was established and is a way for residents to plan for and engage in environmental activities throughout the region. Usage and visitation metrics are tracked and available upon request.

V. Hazard Mitigation Planning

NNPDC staff, in collaboration with FEMA, VDEM, DCR, and local jurisdictions coordinated planning for the purposes of updating the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP); last updated using partial funding from an FY17 VCZMP TA grant # NA17NOS4190152. The NNPDC applied for and received funding for the HMP update from FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program and DCR's Community Flood Preparedness Fund (CFPF). This funding, along with FY21 VCZMP TA grant funding, enabled the NNPDC to procure a qualified consultant, The Olsen Group, and to engage in with local stakeholders and residents. The process continued into FY22 with the new VCZMP TA grant funding which resulted in a completed, approved, and adopted Regional HMP for the Northern Neck.

NNPDC staff implemented a robust outreach and engagement campaign with local stakeholders, community leaders, and residents to ensure the HMP is more comprehensive in its mitigation strategies and resilience goals and fully meets the needs of the region and its residents. The NNPDC, at the behest of local jurisdictions, appointed a core stakeholder group to oversee the planning and update process. NNPDC staff convened the stakeholder group for one final meeting in October of this grant period which was accessible to the public and was advertised as such. There was also a Town of White Stone Jurisdictional Interview with locality representatives, the regional planner, and The Olsen Group. The Steering Committee met with The Olsen Group in November and again in February with the addition of VDEM. The purpose of these

meetings was to review, discuss, and finalize components of the plan for submission and approval. Lastly, on February 3, 2023, the Steering Committee, The Olsen Group, VDEM, and DCR came together for an HHPD Information Meeting for the purpose of discussing the process of addressing High Hazard Potential Dams within the Northern Neck which was identified as a priority through the HMP process.

NNPDC staff coordinated with The Olsen Group and local stakeholders to help implement the outcomes of the Resilience Adaptation Feasibility Tool (RAFT), conducted through an FY 19 VCZMP grant and an FY 20 VCZMP TA grant, # NA20NOS4190207. Additionally, NNPDC staff incorporated the outcomes of Product #8: Regional Resiliency Coordination and Product #9: Regional Resiliency Priorities into the hazard mitigation planning process and the hazard mitigation plan and NNPDC staff worked to ensure the completed hazard mitigation plan aligns with the anticipated outcomes of Product #10: Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan. Over the course of the past four years, with additional VCZMP funding dedicated to the Resilience Focal Area and with assistance from the RAFT, NNPDC staff have coordinated with stakeholders from all ten local jurisdictions to assess their local resilience priorities. The resilience actions prioritized by each local jurisdiction provided the basis for revamping local mitigation goals, objectives, and actions in the HMP. The NNPDC incorporated those locally specific priorities into the HMP for adoption by local governing bodies and those priorities are meant to guide local comprehensive planning, land use planning, and capital improvement planning. This methodical planning to implementation approach hopes to garner support and buy-in from community leaders and residents and further activities that lead to greater community resilience. Alignment with State-wide efforts such as the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan ensures that both local and regional hazard mitigation and resilience efforts utilize the most current and accepted data and methodologies.

NNPDC staff, with coordination from The Olsen Group and DCR incorporated flooding resiliency into the HMP, specifically to include flood plain management, dam safety, and components of a “resilience plan” as outlined by DCR. Challenges from climate change have exacerbated impacts from flooding events and significantly elevated hazard risk for residents. With increases of intensity, duration, and frequency of rain events, pluvial flooding was added to the HMP as a significant hazard. Including pluvial flooding as a hazard shifted the focus and resources to combat the impacts of rain events and protect people and property. A few areas of the Northern Neck are at much higher risk to flooding hazards and as such this plan update emphasizes the need for more comprehensive and engaged floodplain management. A significant component of floodplain management is an emphasis on High Hazard Potential Dams and the impacts from recent dam failures. As such, the plan update prioritizes completing a comprehensive inventory of dams and the potential impacts to life and property should the dam fail. This will enable communities to address any High Hazard Potential Dams and take mitigation action to prevent the loss of life and property.

VI. Benefits Accrued from Previous CZM Grants

NNPDC staff tracked measurable benefits accrued from previous grant products that have served as a foundation for additional projects. The initial funding of projects which developed the region’s first water trails has resulted in the expansion of the Northern Neck Water Trail Network and a plan to improve public access and public access facilities. The Virginia Water Trails initiative has resulted in a 4-PDC Memorandum of Understanding to sustain the website <https://virginiawatertrails.org/> beyond the term of the grant. The momentum created by this project has been amplified by the Northern Neck Tourism Commission pursuing a DRIVE Outdoor grant opportunity through Virginia Tourism Corporation. Additionally, two counties, Lancaster and Northumberland are expanding public access sites and facilities, adding sites and amenities to the Virginia Water Trails network.

Additional benefits include NNPDC staff contributions to the continued development and improvement of the Virginia Resilience Master Plan, in part through participation in the Project Prioritization TAC

subcommittee. VCZMP activities have culminated in the development of the statewide plan and have led to the funding of resilience capacity building in Virginia's Coastal Zone. Continued VCZMP funding of technical assistance and resilience capacity building will see additional benefits accrue in subsequent years.

Other benefits include the continuation of the Northern Neck Assign-A-Highway program which saw litter collected along Northern Neck roadways. The Northern Neck program ensures litter and debris are removed and mitigates local waterway contamination. Other benefits include NNPDC staff participation in and contributions to several environmental and resilience technical advisory groups that indirectly resulted from work funded by the VCZMP. NNPDC staff, in collaboration with academic institutions and environmental groups, have participated in efforts to study the impacts of sea level rise and flooding on critical transportation infrastructure and the economic well-being of the Coastal Region.

VII. Advancing Ecosystem and Community Resilience

NNPDC staff advanced ecosystem and community resilience by building off the outcomes of the Northern Neck RAFT, through local stakeholder meetings and engaging in continuing educational opportunities provided around the region and state. The regional HMP lays out the resilience priorities for each locality within the Northern Neck and ranks their priority level as high, medium, or low. Through conversations with local governments, NNPDC prepared and submitted regional priorities into the VCRMP database. NNPDC staff provided technical assistance and coordination to local governments on resiliency as discussed in section V of this report. However, with a change in personnel within the NNPDC staff, some of the momentum slowed in order for the new Environmental Planner to onboard and become familiar with the region's needs. The RAFT implementation team meetings (replacing the semiannual stakeholder meetings) were held before staff turnover, which allowed for individual conversations to be held between the stakeholders and the new Environmental Planner to assess needs and discuss future coordination possibilities during the second half of the fiscal year.

The Regional Resiliency Equity Workgroup developed during the RAFT process also holds monthly core workgroup meetings as well as subcommittee meetings which NNPDC staff participate in multiple of which are described in section VIII of this report. Section VIII focuses on economic resilience priorities of the group, but there is also a focus on ecosystem and community resilience. The Affordable Housing and Shelters Group focuses on trying to find the best ways to protect citizens and buildings from the increasing natural disasters that are being seen with climate change and rising waters. The Transit group is trying to discuss the logistics of how to best help people have access to natural resources, medications, food, and education. Likewise, the Economic Development and Living Wages group is constantly taking into account the potential for eco-tourism and how to provide the best possible pathways for citizens to be able to engage with and improve their communities.

Through the RAFT and HMP processes, the Northern Neck communities were able to find projects that they deemed priorities to enhance resilience. The new Environmental Planner just started in the position when DEQ was asking for feedback on the CZM Resilience Database and for the bulk project upload. Therefore, there was not as much feedback or information to respond with at the time. The NNPDC provided three ongoing projects for the database (septic pump-outs, septic and well repairs/replacements, and housing elevations) as well as one under final design and permitting (Windmill Point; Figure 1). However, after the NNPDC Environmental Planner was able to have further discussions and combed through the finalized HMP, the regional resilience priorities became evident. NNPDC has condensed the results of the HMP priorities into a document that lists the actions in order of priority according to the localities: [HMP Actions](#).

Submitter Name, Last	Submitter Name, First	Submitter contact info (email)	Project Name	Project Owner (Select One)	Other - Project Owner (If "other" is selected please explain here)	Project Owner Contact info (email)	Project Partners	Project Phase, Project Phase (Select One)	Is related initiative? (Please ensure the Project Name is the same on both forms)	Description	Scale of Benefits (Select One)	Geographic Location (Please select one or more of PDCs, counties, cities, towns, and tribal territories)
Hall	Olivia	ohall@lar	Westland Beach - Winc	Lancaster County		ohall@lar	Windmill Poin	Under Final Design	No	Proposed Shoreline stabilization to protect Individual Lot: the proje	Lancaster County	
Heath	Brianna	bheath@n	Northern Neck Septic	Northern Neck PDC		jdavis@n	PDC Member	Under Constructio	No	Septic pump-out program for low-to-Multi-jurisdictional: the	Northern Neck PDC	
Heath	Brianna	bheath@n	Northern Neck Septic	Northern Neck PDC		jdavis@n	PDC Member	Under Constructio	No	Through the Virginia Department of Multi-jurisdictional: the	Northern Neck PDC	
Heath	Brianna	bheath@n	FEMA Housing Elevatio	Northern Neck PDC		jdavis@n	PDC Member	Complete - Project	No	Through VDEM, FEMA funds are use: Multi-jurisdictional: the	Northern Neck PDC	

Figure 1 Priority Resilience Projects

Through the process of developing the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan, localities came up with priority projects that were discussed and given a priority level within the HMP. Some of the projects were mapped by NNPDC staff and submitted for the CRMP database bulk upload. The two maps submitted were a polygon of the PDC and a polygon of Windmill Point. Localities in the process of updating their comprehensive plans received assistance from NNPDC staff in the form of plan reviews. NNPDC also continued to facilitate planning continuity for utility scale solar, shoreline management, wastewater management, tourism, and economic development.

Another effort to better engage local stakeholders and provide timely information on funding, training, and state/federal updates is in the brainstorming stage at the NNPDC. The hope is that information can be dispersed more frequently, especially for items with short turn-arounds, while also not creating a bombardment of emails that will inevitably go unread or forgotten. NNPDC staff also continues to support the VCRMP database effort and is active in the new Phase 2 TAC, which met June 6, 2023 and the “Project Prioritization” subcommittee, which met August 17, 2023.

VIII. Advancing Economic Resilience

NNPDC staff continues to advance economic resilience through coordination of local economic planning initiatives through the Northern Neck Chesapeake Bay Region Partnership. Specifically, NNPDC staff sits on the steering committee for ODU’s Coastal Virginia Adaptation and Resilience Consortium (COVA A&R) that was created by ODU’s Institute for Coastal Adaptation and Resilience (ICAR) through the GoVA project. NNPDC coordinated with ICAR to host the Small Business Resilience Training for the Middle Peninsula and the Northern Neck at the Rappahannock Community College in Warsaw on January 23, 2023. The Coastal Virginia Tourism Business Resilience Self-Assessment was presented by Old Dominion University. There was then a follow-up meeting on February 3, 2023.

On February 15, 2023, the “Coastal Virginia Small Business Resilience Self-Assessment and Guide” was made available to attendees of the Northern Neck Food & Beverage EXPO which convened food producers, institutional food providers, food manufacturers, growers, retailers, and restaurants. Most of the attendees were small business owners. The Small Business Resilience guide, which is also available on the NNPDC website, covers the following topics: business planning, emergency and disaster planning, human resources and staff, insurance protection, online marketing and selling, and business succession and exit planning.

Many of the small businesses in the Northern Neck are all too familiar with emergency and disaster planning as well as insurance protection. Environmental resiliency of fragile coastal areas is imperative

for the sustainability of the Northern Neck. This is why NNPDC staff continues to participate in the Regional Resilience Equity Workgroup (RREW) developed by UVA's Institute for Environmental Negotiation from Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula representatives involved in the RAFT program. Specifically, NNPDC staff participates in meetings as a member of the Core Regional Resilience Equity Workgroup, the Affordable Housing and Shelters subgroup, the Transit subgroup, and is a co-lead of the Economic Development and Living Wages subgroup. The RREW and its subgroups focus on addressing the challenges that rural and coastal communities deal with. Therefore, the deliverable of a "resiliency economy working group" can be found in the RREW.

Lastly, business outreach and technical support is communicated to local businesses on an ongoing basis by regular referrals to the University of Mary Washington Small Business Development Center (UMW-SBDC), who also disseminates the Self-Assessment Guide and offers business planning assistance and counseling at no cost. Although based in Fredericksburg, this office covers the Northern Neck with both virtual and on-site meetings. This group can also help resiliency planning for any small businesses that would like to seek their technical assistance.