

Final Report
FY 2022 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



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FY 2022 Task 1.02
Virginia Coastal Program Outreach and Social Marketing Final Report
October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023
(with extensions through December 31, 2024)

The FY22 NOAA CZM grant enabled the Outreach Coordinator to coordinate with Virginia CZM staff and to engage with partners in the following activities, and to produce or assist in producing the following products:

General Virginia CZM Program Outreach ---

Virginia Coastal Zone Management Magazine –

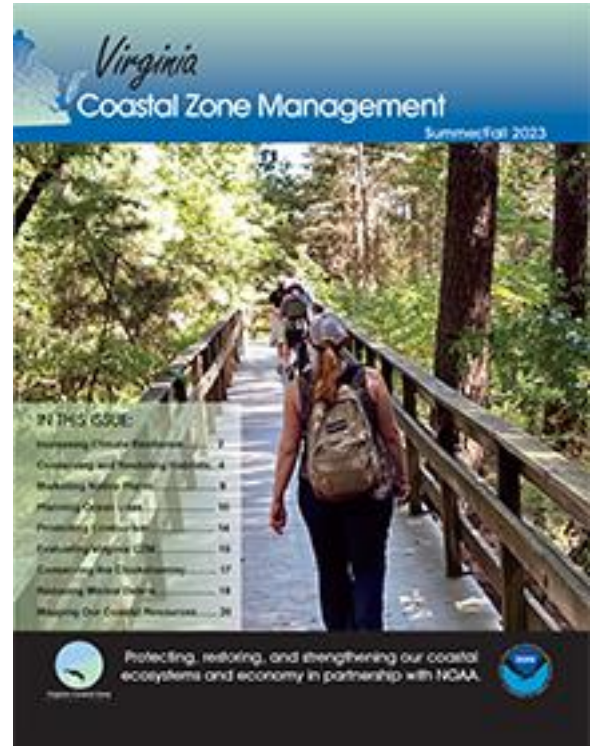
Coordinated publication of the Summer/Fall 2023 issue of *Virginia Coastal Zone Management Magazine* (published in November 2023; printing and distribution funded through FY20, Task 1.02 grant). Copies were mailed to state, local and regional officials, including all members of Virginia's General Assembly, and hardcopies distributed during meetings, exhibits and events.

Downloadable from:

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

Represented Virginia CZM on the following committees

and workgroups: Mid-Atlantic Marine Debris Work Group; Chesapeake Bay Program Stewardship Workgroup; Virginia Resource-Use Education Council (co-treasurer); Virginia Plastic Pollution Prevention Network; Virginia Native Plant Society (Publications Chair); Virginia Invasive Plants Coalition.



Outreach efforts coordinated through this grant, including media outreach, exhibits, and presentations, resulted in positive press and visibility for the program, including the following:

Examples of Articles Submitted and Published:

- *Tackling the Problem of Plastics in our Ocean* in Fall 2022 Virginia Master Naturalist newsletter (Oct 31, 2022) focused on the 2021-2025 VA Marine Debris Reduction Plan, Mid-A PBL campaign, Plastic Pollution Public Survey report and Virginia Marine Debris Summit – <https://rb.gy/eoyps>.
- *Virginia Natives Initiative Grounded in Collaboration* – in the Winter 2023 issue of Sempervirens, newsletter of the Virginia Native Plant Society – <https://rb.gy/55uz3>.
- *NOAA Honors Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program* in DEQ News in February 2023, about the CZM 50th and the NOAA letter to the VA Governor on the value of VACZM, resulted in a Plant NOVA Natives partner sharing the E-News with a regional listserv noting that it was

about “the Coastal Zone Management Program, our original campaign funder using NOAA \$\$\$ and our ongoing supporter through Virginia Witmer, who oversees Plant Virginia Natives.”

- The Mid-Atlantic Prevent Balloon Litter Campaign! in April 2023 MARCO News - <https://www.midatlanticocean.org/the-mid-atlantic-prevent-balloon-litter-campaign/>
- NOAA Commends Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program in DEQ News in August 2023 - https://myemail.constantcontact.com/DEQ-News--Aug--4--2023.html?soid=1102622079757&aid=BhLYKWXFm_4
- Virginia Balances Economic Growth and Ecological Preservation Through Ecotourism in DEQ News in September 2023 - <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/DEQ-News--Sept--21--2023.html?soid=1102622079757&aid=TwT3vq2ypPc>.
- Drafted a press release—issued by George Washington Regional Commission and Garden Club of Virginia—to highlight that the Virginia CZM-funded Plant Central Rapp Natives demonstration gardens at Cedell Brooks, Jr Park (<https://www.plantvirginiannatives.org/cedell-brooks-jr-park-native-landscaping>) were selected as the regional King George and Fredericksburg Tour headquarters during 2023 Historic Garden Week. Article appeared in <https://richmondmagazine.com/home/historic-garden-week-2023/>

Example of Exhibits Shared:

- Nottoway Pow Wow in Southampton County in November 2022, sharing the Prevent Balloon Litter and Plant Virginia Natives displays – engaged with approximately 250 people.
- Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Association Annual Meeting in December 2022, sharing the Prevent Balloon Litter and Plant Virginia Natives displays. Virginia CZM also sponsored this event.
- Designed, with Virginia CZM staff, a new coastal resilience exhibit highlighting the program’s investment, and shared during the Virginia Resilience Reception in Richmond in February 2023.
- RVA Environmental Film Festival in March 2023, sharing the Prevent Balloon Litter display. Played the animated video funded by Virginia CZM.
- Historic Garden Week at Cedell Brooks Park in King George in April 2023. This Plant Central Rapp, Virginia-CZM-funded demonstration site was selected as the headquarters for the Historic Garden Week regional tour, and was received a lot of visibility, including interpretive panels with Virginia CZM acknowledgement. (Plant Central Rapp Natives campaign exhibit)
- Maymont pollinator education event in June 2023 (Plant RVA Natives and Prevent Balloon Litter exhibits)



- Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association Field Day in August 2023, where Virginia CZM's leadership on the Plant Virginia Natives Initiative was highlighted during the keynote presentation by Peggy Singlemann, host of VA public television show Virginia Home Grown.
- Rockwood Park Beekeepers Event in in September 2023 (which attracted thousands or attendees and hundreds of visitors to the Plant RVA Natives campaign display)
- Virginia State Fair exhibit in September (Plant RVA Natives and Prevent Balloon Litter exhibits, and interacted with hundreds of visitors, including pledge collection, shown on panel in image above.)

Examples of Presentation and Trainings Given:

- Assisted in planning and conducting Virginia CZM Program sponsored Community-Based Social Marketing Training with expert Doug McKenzie-Mohr (February 27 – March 1, 2023). Provided a brief overview of use of social norming in the Prevent Balloon Litter Campaign at request of Dr. McKenzie-Mohr, who has now incorporated the campaign into his slide deck as an example of pledging/commitment.
- Worked with VACZM staff in planning for the biennial Virginia Coastal Partners Workshop, scheduled for November 2023, including lead on communications and registration.
- Served on the planning committee for the *Statewide Invasive Plants Workshop: Building a Coalition and Strategic Blueprint to Suppress Invasive Plants and Strengthen Native Flora Statewide*, scheduled for December 12-14, 2023.
- Presented during Gloucester Master Gardeners training in April 2023.
- Presented to the Richmond Green Drinks in August 2023.
- Provided materials for many partner meetings and trainings, such as Hampton Roads Master Gardener training events in November 2022 (131 attended).

Virginia CZM Program Website:

Served as primary administrator of the Virginia CZM Program's website, including working with DEQ Communication Office to ensure all pages published on redesigned VACZM website - www.deq.virginia.gov/our-programs/coastal-zone-management



Community-Based 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 22 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 FY22 Virginia CZM Program Outreach grant, the Outreach Coordinator collaborated with the other state partners on the Work Group to continue implementation of the Mid-Atlantic Prevent Balloon Litter Campaign through fall 2022 – fall 2023, 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, and later, pro-bono ads in publications.

The FY22 NOAA CZM grant enabled the Outreach Coordinator to do the following in support of the campaign:

Updated the **Campaign Strategy Overview**

(<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1urfSQ7xORN9NZrNs2xS157pLf8j0Uw/view?usp=sharing>).

Prevent Balloon Litter.org
Inspirational, colorful, litter-free ideas to celebrate, to remember
and to honor the people who impact our lives.

Mid-Atlantic Prevent Balloon Litter Campaign Overview
as of March 2023

About the Campaign
The Mid-Atlantic Prevent Balloon Litter Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM) Campaign was piloted in Fall 2021 and Spring 2022, and has since been fully implemented, 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.

The campaign is being funded through Spring 2023 by a NOAA Marine Debris Program (MDP) grant to the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO).

For more information about MARCO and this campaign, please contact Avalon Bristow, MARCO Program Director, at 302-561-2520 | abristow@midatlanticcoocean.org

Timeline for Implementation of Campaign – Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 Pilot Phases, Full Implementation through Spring 2023

The Mid-Atlantic Prevent Balloon Litter CBSM campaign launched at all aquariums – National Aquarium, New York Aquarium and Virginia Aquarium – on October 4, 2021. This was the first of two pilot phases, with a second pilot phase implemented in spring 2022.

The pilot phases tested the campaign strategy – messaging and approach. MARCO partners collaborated with the aquariums to help ensure that the campaign is implemented in a coordinated and consistent fashion. The aquariums were asked to track and report on metrics of success, and at the conclusion of the NOAA MDP grant in spring 2023, MARCO will measure and provide an analysis of this data. MARCO also looked to the aquariums for input on whether adjustments were necessary to the campaign strategy, including all multi-media materials, prior to implementing a spring phase of the campaign in 2022.

October 4, 2021:
Fall Pilot Campaign Launch!

December 15, 2021:
Submit measurement data from fall implementation period.

Winter/Early Spring 2022:
Data analysis and strategy evaluation. Check-in with Doug McKenzie-Mohr. Revisions to strategy if needed.

March 14, 2022:
Spring Pilot Campaign Launch!

May 16, 2022:
Submit measurement data from spring implementation period.

Designed and distributed a Behavior Change Survey - In December 2022, surveys were sent via email to 651 individuals who had pledged to abstain from releasing balloons during the fall of 2021 and spring of 2023. These pledges were made both at aquariums and through PreventBalloonLitter.org. A reminder was sent in mid-January 2023, and to enhance the survey response rate, an additional incentive was introduced in mid-February 2023. Respondents were offered a chance to participate in a raffle to win four complimentary tickets to one of the three aquariums. These tickets were donated by the aquariums. The raffle drawing was conducted on April 19. Despite a modest response rate of 44 returns, the results were promising.

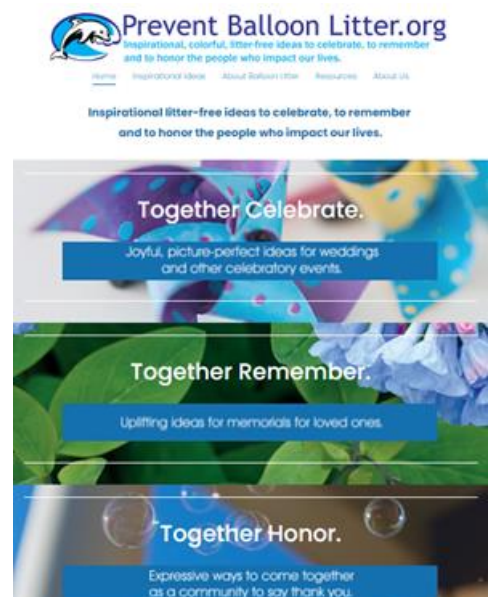
Among the respondents, 31.1% indicated that they have already embraced an alternative to balloon releases, while 17.8% expressed intentions to adopt such alternatives. Furthermore, 57.8% conveyed their commitment to honoring their pledge when the appropriate occasion arises, even if it hasn't materialized yet. Notably, none of the respondents reported participating in a balloon release, nor did they indicate any lapse in remembering their pledge.

Designed digital and print ads and compiled an Ad Kit – a request for pro bono ads was made to a variety of publications in an ongoing effort to spread the campaign messages. The ad kit, available to all participating Mid-Atlantic campaign partners, includes suggested language to solicit the ads and access to full page, ½ page and ¼ page print-ready ads as well as two sizes of digital ads. See example of ad published in Alexandria Town Crier – https://issuu.com/otcva/docs/otc0423_final_lr (pg 37). The Town Crier also asked to have ¼ page ads of all the campaign messaging to have on hand to print on a monthly basis.

Provided content for the final grant report submitted by MARCO to the NOAA Marine Debris Program in April 2023.

Prevent Balloon Litter Website:

The Outreach Coordinator continued to serve 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 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, and highlights the impacts of balloon litter, and offers video, online and print resources. (2,600 visits – a 22% increase over year prior – and 4,200 pageviews a 24% increase yr/yr), adding a Press Room and Teacher Kit page.



Plant Virginia Natives



The Outreach Coordinator coordinated the Plant Virginia Natives Initiative, including collaboration with members of the statewide marketing partnership and partners in the regional native plant campaigns to advance the mission of the Initiative's Action Plan – found at 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 and the program's native plant marketing efforts:

- Continued to **advise regional native plant campaign co-coordinators and steering teams**, to provide assistance where needed, and to encourage communication and sharing of resources between the campaigns. These campaigns recognize the Virginia CZM Program as a partner in presentations and materials. 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> An updated state-wide regional campaign boundary map can be viewed on PlantVirginiaNatives.org at <https://www.plantvirginianatives.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.
- Virginia CZM Program acknowledged** in newly published Ridge and Valley and Southwest Virginia regional native plant guides - <https://storage.googleapis.com/vnps-public/PlantRidge%26ValleyNativesDigitalsmall-C.pdf> and <https://www.plantvirginianatives.org/plantswvanatives/plant-swva-natives-guide>
- Established collaboration with Virginia Department of Forestry Urban and Community Forestry on **Throwing Shade pilot native tree and shrub discount program**, with expansion to nursery and wholesale and retail providers through the regional campaigns.
- Collaborated with the Virginia Master Naturalist Program to produce a **Plant Virginia Natives Initiative Project Entry for the Master Naturalist Better Impact System (volunteer management)**, outlining the types of regional campaign activities Master Naturalist chapters and members can support. The Master Naturalist Program's 2022 Annual Report, submitted to DEQ in March 2023, showed that hours contributed to regional campaigns - 1,725 hrs. valued at \$53,130 - was 3rd highest of 4 Service Types.

- Served as *main administrator (with nine regional campaign contributors) 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 - 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 still available on the Virginia CZM Program website and highlights the leadership of Virginia CZM and links to the new website - <https://www.deq.virginia.gov/our-programs/coastal-zone-management/coastal-conservation/native-plant-marketing>. During the main grant period, from October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023, the Plant Virginia Natives website had 125,000 visits (up 23% from the previous year), 98,000 unique visitors (up 25% from the previous year) and 203,000 page views (up 14% from the previous year). Responded directly to weekly on-line pledges to Plant Natives for Pollinators (including mailing materials including the pledge decal) and to requests for information that are forwarded to partners. Pledge decals appear on vehicles around Richmond (*see image above*). Referrals to the website in publications and on social media are growing, for example articles in military newspaper “The Flagship” – https://www.militarynews.com/norfolk-navy-flagship/community/go-wild-with-native-plants-in-your-lawn-and-garden-this-fall/article_3fdee95e-3a7f-11ed-b8d6-237b82121e04.html; Virginia Public Media - <https://www.vpm.org/2023-08-28/fall-is-for-planning>; and Coastal Virginia Magazine, which calls out Virginia CZM - <https://coastalvirginiamag.com/article/gardening-with-a-sense-of-place/>.

- Produced the *4th edition of native plant guide for Northern Virginia*, working with a team of Plant NOVA Natives partners on content updates (*pictured at right*). The guide is downloadable at www.PlantVirginiaNatives.org (*pictured at right*). Hardcopies were printed with funds raised by partners through sales or contributions.
- Began coordinating with regional campaign partners to *revise native plant guides for the Eastern Shore, Southeastern Virginia and Capital Region*.
- Collaborated with Plant RVA Natives partners to *develop a Garden Center Liaison training program and guidance kit* which will be piloted with a regional Master Naturalist chapter – this is part of the Virginia CZM Coordinator’s ongoing efforts to



engage community leaders and institutionalize a volunteer base to support the Plant Virginia Natives Initiative in the future.

- Responded to **interest by partners in other states and national organizations** interested in learning more about the Plant Virginia Natives Initiative and the use of Community-Based Social Marketing, including a September 2023 meeting with all staff in the national office of Wild Ones.

Collaborated with Plant Virginia Natives partners to develop messaging and marketing products with coastal as well as state-wide value:

Celebrate Virginia Native Trees – consulted and contributed to production of multi-media such as a brochure (*pictured at right*) on the value and benefits of natives in English and Spanish -

<https://www.plantnovatrees.org/campaign-materials>

Which Tree Should I Plant?: A Guide for Selecting Riparian Trees and Shrubs in Virginia

Served on the Outreach and Targeting Team of the Middle & Upper James Riparian Consortium, a collaborative network of partners whose mission is to raise awareness, build workforce capacity, and increase implementation of riparian forested buffers across the Upper and Middle James watersheds. Worked on a sub-team guiding production of a statewide riparian native plant guide (*pictured at right*) to raise awareness of and celebrate the woody native plants of Virginia's riparian Areas - <https://jamesriverconsortium.org/landowner-resources/plant-guide/> The content builds on existing partner resources to make selection, planting, and maintenance clear and easy.

"Chickadee, Oaks & Caterpillars, Oh My!"

Initiated production of this animated video with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Natural Heritage Program to highlight the benefits of native trees.

