

## Enhancing Public Access in the York River System FINAL REPORT

NOAA Grant # NA23NOS4190255 | FY 23 Task 9  
Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Virginia

### SUMMARY

In 2022, a NOAA Hollings Scholar, under the supervision of CBNERR-VA, and motivated by expressed needs of the York River and Small Coastal Basin Roundtable (YRSCBR), studied public access signage in the York Watershed System (System). Among the scholar's findings, were the conclusions that little to no watershed-specific interpretation was enhancing user experience at site; and that a visitor's experience post site visitation did not leverage or apply communications conveyed by signage at a site. These conclusions motivated the YRSCBR to develop collective messaging on the watershed and its benefits/values to residents and visitors alike. Recognizing that watershed literacy has the potential to foster stewardship and inspire the continued support of related services and experiences, CBNERR-VA proposed to expand upon the Hollings study toward the development of interactive signage for the System's public access sites that would incorporate YRSCBR messaging. The goals of the signage developed would be to: i) increase watershed awareness and literacy, and ii) enhance the public access experience at sites throughout the System. Complementing these communication efforts would be a continued study of public access infrastructure to: i) inform interpretation and infrastructure funding moving forward, and ii) provide the public with an indication of public access sites throughout the System. The following deliverable/products were proposed in association with this grant – their current status is detailed:

#### PRODUCT #1: York Watershed System 101 video.

This product, approximately 3 minutes in length, communicates watershed connectivity and resident/visitor responsibility through mindful stewardship and best practices. Content includes the definition of a watershed, an overview of the York Watershed System, and key messages on stewardship from the YRSCBR's State of the York report. This task was contracted and developed in cooperation with workgroup members. The final product is hosted on the [CBNERR-VA website](#), which is linked on plaques and stickers throughout the System via QR code (Product #4). **Status: Complete. Direct link to video [here](#).**

#### PRODUCT #2: Site specific videos.

These two products, each an average of 1.5 minutes in length, offer an introduction and invitation to two public access sites within the York Watershed System: Gloucester Point Beach Park and Machicomoco State Park. Each video addresses the activities and sights one can engage with in place. Moreover, each video connects the related site to the larger System, defines watershed, and encourages further exploration of related resources via a [CBNERR-VA website](#). This task was contracted and developed in cooperation with workgroup members. The final products are hosted on respective pages

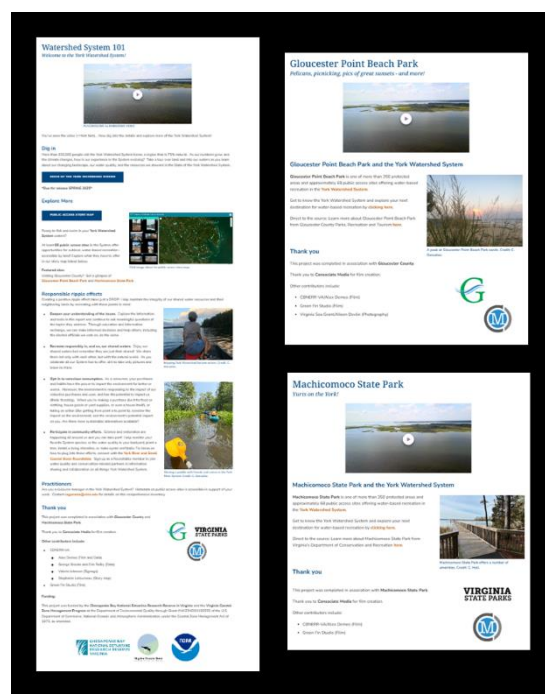
of the CBNERR-VA website ([Gloucester Point Beach Park here](#), [Machicomoco State Park here](#)), and promoted on plaques at respective sites via QR code. **Status: Complete.** Direct links to [Gloucester Point Beach Park video here](#); [Machicomoco State Park video here](#).

### PRODUCT #3: Development of QR code and related content.

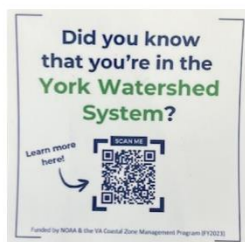
Project related content will be accessible via the QR codes incorporated into Product #4 deliverables, i.e. plaques and stickers. A [landing page](#) hosted on the CBNERR-VA website will be populated with links to: Product #1, landing pages for [Gloucester Point Beach Park](#) and [Machicomoco State Park](#), as well as their associated videos (Product #2), a featured storymap (informed by Product #5), and watershed information and resources, including links to the YRSCBR website and associated State of the York report. **Status: Complete;** [landing page link here](#).

### PRODUCT #4: Production and Placement of QR Code Plaques and Stickers.

Fifty-four plaques and 300 stickers were produced, each directing end-users to watershed-related content, including 101 video and resources, as well as site-specific webpages. Plaques and/or stickers are being posted on existing infrastructure by partners in no less than 50 spaces throughout the watershed, including within NOAA's Middle Peninsula Habitat Focus Area. CBNERR-VA staff led incorporation of partner input (provided through in-kind time) in graphic development. **Status: Complete. Signage delivery and posting ongoing.**



Screen captures of Product #3 landing pages.

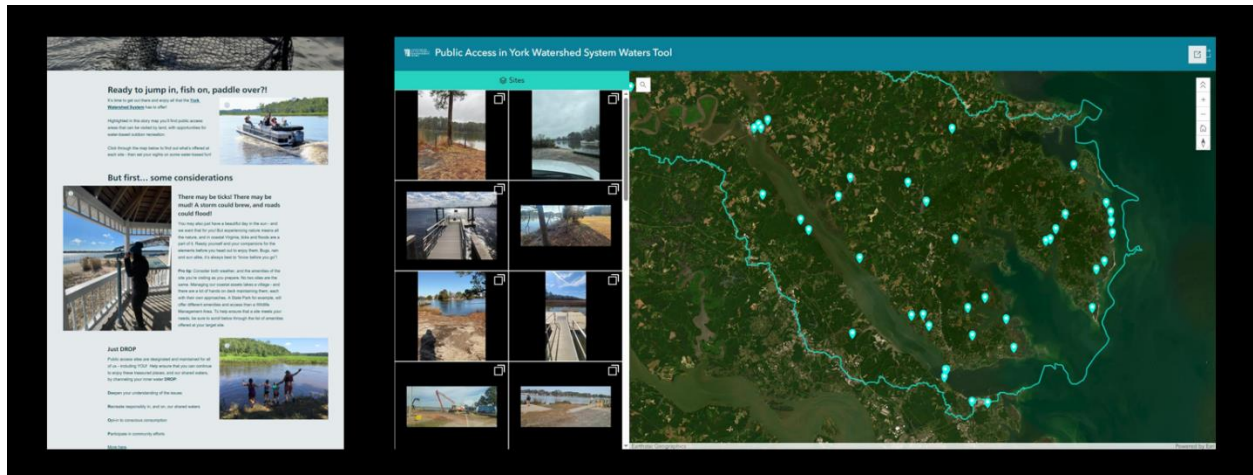


Photographs of Product #4 signage; specifically Gloucester Point Beach Park sign and sticker, tailored for watershed-wide posting.

### PRODUCT #5: Infrastructure Inventory.

A study of the System's infrastructure at public access sites having: i) access to site by land, and ii) water-based outdoor recreation, was produced. The inventory details, among other information: public access site location and land manager, infrastructure and signage in place at current site, and status of infrastructure and signage. Site managers helped inform the inventory, which was namely populated by CBNERR-VA. The [inventory](#) was developed for practitioners and will be available on request. Photo documentation accompanied all entries

and is contributing to the project's [public-facing story map](#), which will be hosted on the [CBNERR-VA website](#) and highlights the most pertinent inventory information relevant to recreationalists. This product increases visibility of public access sites for water-based recreation and tourism within the System, and establishes a baseline for future funding. **Status: Complete; direct link to [story map here](#), [practitioner inventory here](#).**



Screen captures of public-facing story map.

Explore and connect via our Linktree: <https://linktr.ee/cbnerrva>  
P.O. Box 1346, Gloucester Point, Virginia 23062 USA | 804.684.7135 | [cbnerr@vims.edu](mailto:cbnerr@vims.edu)