



NA23NOS4190255

Task 47

4/2/2025

George Washington Regional Commission Coastal Zone Management Technical Assistance Program Report FY2023



Virginia Coastal Zone
MANAGEMENT PROGRAM



Fiscal Year 2023 Coastal Zone Management Technical Assistance Final Annual Report

April 2025

George Washington Regional Commission

406 Princess Anne St,
Fredericksburg, VA 22401
540-373-2890

NOAA Grant **NA23NOS4190255**, Task 47

Acknowledgements

**GWRC Staff,
Caroline County,
King George County,
City of Fredericksburg,
Stafford County,
Spotsylvania County,
VA CZM Program Staff,
Wetlands Watch Staff,
Chesapeake Stormwater Network Staff,
Friends of the Rappahannock Staff,
DCR Resilience Planning Staff,
Plant Central Rappahannock Natives campaign,**

And the many others who participated and contributed to an exciting year of enhancing coastal resiliency in the GWRC region.

Table of Contents

Fiscal Year 2023 Coastal Zone Management Technical Assistance Final Annual Report	2
February 2025	2
Acknowledgements.....	2
Executive Summary.....	4
Product #1: Technical Coordination	4
A. CZM Coordination Meetings	4
B. Regional Environmental Managers Technical Committee & Regional Resiliency Meeting.....	6
C. Deliverables	7
Product #2: GWRC Environmental Website	7
A. Project Summary.....	7
B. Deliverable	7
Product #3: Benefits Accrued from Prior CZM Grants	8
A. Plant Central Rapp Natives Campaign	8
Product #4: Resiliency Focal Area – Resilience Planning	8
A. Regional Resiliency Coordination	8
B. Resilience Database Contributions	9
C. University Partners and Urban Heat Island Effect	9
D. Regional Definition of Resiliency	9

This project was funded, in part, by the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program at the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality through Grant # NA23NOS4190255 of the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, under the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended.

Executive Summary

The George Washington Regional Commission (GWRC) developed and maintained several projects with funding assistance from the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program (Virginia CZM) in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023. These projects included the addition of a new regional definition for with the help of the Regional Environmental Managers Technical Committee and partners. The Plant Central Rappahannock Natives campaign members also met and coordinated care for the native plant demonstration garden at Cedell Brooks Jr. Park. Resiliency played a central role in all the projects GWRC implemented, but especially in trainings and increased efforts for public engagement. Resiliency for Planning District 16 in FY2023 involved a lot of relationship building as the last environmental planner left GWRC and the new environmental coordinator came onboard. However, progress has been made on the start of the GWRC septic program with Septic Local Partner Program (SLPP), Septic & Well Assistance Program (SWAP), and Section 319(h) grants. Additionally, green infrastructure projects have been making their way into the ground with the help of Friends of the Rappahannock through an Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act (IIJA) grant. Finally, GWRC staff continued to serve as a liaison between state groups, such as the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan (VCRMP) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Coastal Policy Team (CPT), and the localities in our region to communicate state funding opportunities and locality needs.

Product #1: Technical Coordination

A. CZM Coordination Meetings

George Washington Regional Commission (GWRC) staff participated in the following statewide CZM-related meetings:

- 1) Quarterly Coastal PDC Meetings:
 - a. 11/30/23 – PlanRVA hosted the Fall Coastal PDC meeting
 - b. No meeting was held for Winter 2023 due to inclement weather.
 - c. 5/23/24 – ANPDC hosted the Spring Coastal PDC meeting in Machipongo, VA where CZM staff gave updates on BIL funding, held a discussion on CZM grants, and discussed updates on “inner coastal” issues, 309 assessments, and FY24 projects. Virginia Tech Tidewater AREC gave a presentation on their agriculture study and demonstrated their new webtool. The field trip showcased the Barrier Island Center.
 - d. 10/22/24 – HRPDC hosted the Fall Coastal PDC meeting which started with a field trip to view and learn about the Penniman Spit restoration project. The meeting consisted of a presentation on the Penniman Spit project and the Department of Defense (DoD)’s Readiness & Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) program which funded it. Virginia CZM staff also discussed NOAA’s Recreation Study Index (RSI) pilot project in the Middle Peninsula and applications to other regions.
 - e. Due to staff turnover, GWRC was unable to attend the meeting on 8/6/24 at Crater PDC.
- 2) Virginia CZM Coastal Policy Team (CPT) Meetings:
 - a. 1/30/24 – The January CPT meeting was held in Richmond and consisted of a number of funding and partner updates. Partners were updated on focal area and Projects of Special

Merit, NOAA's Office for Coastal Management (OCM), Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding, Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) capacity funds, FY23 funds, and FY24 funds.

- b. 4/18/24 – The April CPT meeting was virtual and mostly consisted of information surrounding BIL funding. There was also a great discussion surrounding the project selection process and how proposals should be scored to be fair. Project ideas were shared for FY25 funding and Lucas introduced the FY23 BIL capacity funds.
- 3) VCRMP TAC:
- a. 12/15/23 – The December VCRMP TAC was an all-virtual meeting that consisted of updates from DCR, reports from TAC subcommittees, discussion of subcommittee recommendations, and introduction of the VCRMP Phase II Outreach and Engagement Strategy.
 - b. 3/13/24 – The March VCRMP TAC was held in Richmond and discussed some of the recent outcomes of the subcommittees to the whole group. The group also discussed what additions needed to be made or problems addressed.
 - c. 11/13/24 – The final VCRMP TAC meeting was held in Richmond and discussed how the subcommittee actions were synthesized and what parties would be responsible for their completion.
- 4) VCRMP Subcommittee (Outreach and Engagement):
- a. 11/8/23 – The virtual meeting consisted of continued discussion of the outreach and engagement strategy as well as the end user stakeholder survey in which members provided feedback on the drafts.
 - b. 2/22/24 – The meeting in Richmond consisted of discussion on the Outreach and Engagement Strategy update, recommendations for future planning, and subcommittee discussion for new business.
- 5) Living Shoreline Design Workgroup:
- a. 11/4/24 – The workgroup meeting mostly discussed the final touches of the living shoreline design guidance. The group discussed formatting, wording, and how the document was to be shared out.
 - b. GWRC was unable to attend the other meetings due to staff turnover.

As well as numerous other smaller meetings and communications.

These meetings included presentations and/or discussions on Virginia CZM program updates, funding opportunities, the VCRMP, Resilience Adaptation Feasibility Tool (RAFT), native plant campaign implementation, ecotourism, future grant focal areas, and Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (CBPA) regulations, among other topics.

GWRC staff have presented information on Virginia CZM-related activities to the GWRC Board as needed.

GWRC staff also regularly attended meetings of the Rappahannock River Basin Commission Technical Committee, the York River and Small Coastal Basins Roundtable (YRSCBR), American Planning Association (APA) legislative recaps, Wetlands Watch Community Rating System (CRS) Workgroup meetings, and the Potomac Watershed Roundtable. Staff from GWRC also served as the Rappahannock River Roundtable's Middle Rappahannock Regional Coordinator and an Advisory Committee Member for the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin. These positions will be reassessed with GWRC's new environmental coordinator.

B. Regional Environmental Managers Technical Committee & Regional Resiliency Meeting

The GWRC Regional Environmental Managers Technical Committee (REMTC) includes locality staff members and meets regularly. The Regional Resiliency Group is open to the public and often includes city and county planning, parks and recreation, and other department staff, town managers, representatives from state agencies (including Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR), Virginia Department of Health (VDH), and Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM)), Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and occasionally elected officials, as well as stakeholders and professionals from universities, nonprofits, military installations, and private organizations.

GWRC hosted quarterly coordination and training meetings for the REMTC and the Regional Resiliency Stakeholder Group on:

1. REMTC:
 - a. 2/21/24 – 15 attendees
 - b. 9/4/24 – 8 attendees
2. Regional Resiliency Stakeholders:
 - a. 12/19/23 – 14 attendees
 - b. 3/19/24 – 15 attendees
 - c. 6/18/24 - 18 attendees
 - d. 12/17/24 – 9 attendees

The purpose of these meetings was to bring together regional stakeholders to discuss topics of mutual interest in the spheres of water quality, resilience, hazard mitigation, energy, stream and shoreline protection, wildlife and habitat protection, and other topics centered around resiliency, the green economy, and environmental protection. The topics were explored through trainings and discussions on any new or revised regulatory changes, best management practices, exploring grant opportunities, exposing stakeholders to new ideas, and other matters relevant to the group. This forum has been effective in facilitating and propagating the latest changes in the stormwater regulations and best practices. The meetings were especially important for sharing grant opportunities which could further other regional environmental initiatives.

In addition to more general conversations about resilience and local issues, the meetings included the following **training** presentations:

- **12/19/2023:** York River and Small Coastal Basins Roundtable’s Wetlands Plan and Inter-basin Communication – Cirse Gonzalez, Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Virginia (CBNERR-VA) & YRSCBR
 - CBNERR/YRSCBR’s Cirse Gonzalez gave an overview of what the YRSCBR is, their goals, and their new Wetlands Plan. She also discussed how CBNERR offers technical assistance.
 - [Presentation](#), [Minutes](#), [Recording](#)
- **3/19/2024:** Marine Debris Reduction Plan and Effective Litter Campaign —Virginia CZM’s Jeff Flood and Virginia Witmer and Virginia Clean Water’s Zach Huntington
 - DEQ staff gave an overview of what Virginia CZM is, their goals, and about Virginia Clean Waterways research for the Virginia Marine Debris Reduction Plan. They discussed

various tools that are available to help with understanding the litter problem and how that litter impacts waterways. Speakers also discussed what abandoned derelict vessels (ADVs) are, current projects, and funding opportunities.

- [Presentation, Recording, Minutes](#)
- **6/18/2024:** VCAP Training – Angela Nam, Friends of the Rappahannock
 - Angela Nam, Friends of the Rappahannock’s (FOR) Green Infrastructure Specialist, presented to the group on the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) and the process to get a project approved and funded. She also discussed what best management practices (BMPs) are and which practices are eligible under VCAP.
 - [Presentation, Minutes](#)
- **12/17/2024:** Virginia CZM Section 309 Funding — Elise Frazier, Virginia CZM
 - Elise from Virginia CZM presented to the group about Section 309 funding. She discussed that the five-year cycle is coming to an end and that a new one will begin with new target areas that are influenced by the localities and stakeholders. Elise taught about the nine different categories and led a discussion about what the localities would like to see come out of the new funding cycle.
 - [Presentation, Minutes](#)

Minutes and presentation materials from each REMTC meeting are posted on [GWRC's website](#).

C. Deliverables

Minutes and presentation materials from each of the meetings are posted on [GWRC's website](#).

Product #2: GWRC Environmental Website

A. Project Summary

GWRC has updated and maintained the “Environment” tab and its subpages on the website. [Coastal Zone Management](#) has its own subpage with information on past products of the grants. The [Regional Environmental Managers Technical Committee](#) and the Environmental Strategic Plan also have subpages. New information this fiscal year has included creating a new separate GWRC environmental website since there is more new information like the start of GWRC’s septic program. The environmental tab on the GWRC website is still active and being updated, but the new environmental website can be found [here](#) along with the new GWRC environmental logo. The Environment Tab also has a sub-page for [Native Plants](#) with information and a link to the Plant Central Rapp Natives website.

B. Deliverable

The final product of this deliverable can be found at the new GWRC Environmental [website](#).

Product #3: CZM Benefits Accrued

A. Plant Central Rappahannock Natives Campaign

The Plant Central Rappahannock Natives Campaign (PCRN) is a group of regional stakeholders that have distributed educational material on the benefits of natives through their various organizations. Virginia CZM funds help GWRC continue to host the meetings in the GWRC office and to create and store program materials.

GWRC hosted meetings of the PCRN campaign. Meetings were held on:

- January 18, 2024 – PCRN Regular Campaign Call to coordinate between partners and plan collaborative outreach efforts.
- March 21, 2024 – Cedell Brooks, Jr. Native Plant Garden maintenance and meeting
- September 9, 2024 – Cedell Brooks, Jr. Native Plant Garden maintenance and meeting
- October 17, 2024 – PCRN Regular Campaign Call

GWRC is working on revitalizing the program after the conclusion of larger projects like the demonstration garden. The group needs a new project and direction to keep moving forward rather than staying stagnant. Volunteers continue to do weekly maintenance at the campaign's demonstration garden in King George County. Campaign materials were also set up at a variety of events such as the UMW Tree Festival (10/19/23), the Osprey Festival (4/13/24), the region's annual Seed Swap (1/27/24), and the annual Rappahannock River Symposium (10/25/23 and 10/16/24).

[Plant Virginia Natives](#) has its own website page with information and a link to the Plant Central Rapp Natives website.

Product #4: Resiliency Focal Area – Resilience Planning

A. Regional Resiliency Coordination

The Regional Resiliency Stakeholder Group consists of the GWRC REMTC and any interested members of the public, with the intent to educate the stakeholder group on resilience topics and resources as well as engage the workgroup to develop the other project deliverables. Since there has been an abundance of local turnover in positions, GWRC staff has been updating the roster to make sure that local government/partner stakeholders are maintaining their participation in the group. Whereas the meetings begin with a training, the meeting ends with a Partner Roundtable that touches on resiliency topics important to the Stakeholder Group with particular emphasis on advancing ecosystem and community resilience. GWRC or other partners also share funding opportunities and any updates from state/federal partners. The following synopses encapsulate the Roundtable portion of the meetings:

- 1) 12/19/23 – Cirse Gonzalez presented on the York River and Small Coastal Basin Roundtable and their new Wetlands Plan/Technical Assistance. Partners shared various updates ranging from new certifications to upcoming grant opportunities. Emphasis was also put on the upcoming General Assembly and keeping an eye on any changes that may impact resiliency in the region.

- 2) 3/19/24 – DEQ CZM and Virginia Clean Waterways presented on the Marine Debris Reduction Plan and how to prevent litter. Partners enthusiastically discussed upcoming litter clean-up programs and events. Stafford County also shared that they are working on various plans including a resilience plan, nutrient management plan, and dam safety plan.
- 3) 6/18/24 – Friends of the Rappahannock presented on the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP). Partners shared results of GWRC’s Green Infrastructure Charette and discussed how VCAP could be used to further green infrastructure in the region.
- 4) 12/17/24 – Elise Frazier, representing DEQ CZM, presented to the group on Section 309 funding. Partners shared the main goals/struggles for their localities and how they would connect to prioritizing 309 funding. Partners also discussed GWRC’s upcoming septic program, updates to comprehensive plans, and a vacancy for an environmental position in King George County.

Minutes from these meetings can be found on our [website](#). GWRC is continuously engaging localities and stakeholders to determine which resiliency projects could be implemented in the region. GWRC also began a monthly newsletter to better facilitate the sharing of information on resiliency tools and grants. Archived copies of these newsletters are also available on [our website](#). These newsletters are an opt-in opportunity for community members to get news on environmental tools, water quality resources, and GWRC environmental services events. Currently the list has over 100 subscribers and goes out on the first business day of the month. The newsletters have been put on pause since the last environmental coordinator left, but they are planned to continue in the near future.

B. Regional Resilience Needs Identification

GWRC staff participated in the VCRMP TAC and the Outreach and Engagement subcommittee to provide feedback and represent the PD16 localities on the state project. The data collected and conversations held about the VCRMP database during the previous (FY22) Virginia CZM-funded TA/RFA grant led to the ability of GWRC to identify regional resiliency needs and priorities. GWRC will continue to have conversations with localities about changing priorities and goals.

C. University Partners and Urban Heat Island Effect

GWRC worked closely with George Mason University (GMU) and Old Dominion University (ODU) to craft methodology for a cost-benefit analysis of urban heat island effect in the PD16 region. The final deliverable is still pending from GMU/ODU, but the information from the region’s urban heat island study can be found on the new GWRC [environmental website](#).

D. Regional Definition of Resiliency

GWRC worked with local stakeholders and the REMTC to develop a regional definition for resiliency. Resiliency has come to possess a wide range of meanings depending on the topic, location, etc. Therefore, the PD16 region wanted to make sure that everyone was on the same page whenever the word “resiliency” is used. The GWRC board approved the definition which can be found on the GWRC [website](#).