

Northern Neck Planning District Commission Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program Technical Assistance Grant FY 23, Task 45 Final Report



Cat Point Creek, tributary of Rappahannock River, Richmond County



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 # NA23NOS4190255 of the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, under the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended.

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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, and letters of support. Support through regional coordination included collaboration with DCR on the continued development of the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan (VCRMP) through participation in the Project Prioritization TAC subgroup and VDEM with support of the state Hazard Mitigation Plan through the VAHMP working group.



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. Collaboration with various partners allows the Northern Neck localities to learn and experience new techniques, information, or methods that would be otherwise unavailable. NNPDC's support helps the localities to find and take advantage of these opportunities. NNPDC staff assisted three counties, upon request, with project management of the American Rescue Plan Act funding through Virginia Tourism Corporation. In the Northern Neck, the majority of these funds were used to [improve public access sites and promote sustainable tourism in the region](#). 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 provided support and planning coordination for localities. NNPDC staff continue to facilitate planning continuity in areas that directly impact the management of coastal resources [including electric vehicle charging availability](#), shoreline management, stormwater management, wastewater management,

tourism, and economic development. 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. Additionally, the [NNPDC Quarterly meeting topic for the April 2024 meeting was an in-person presentation by Alleyn Harned](#) with Virginia Clean Cities to discuss the benefits of and encourage localities to participate in the pilot project to add EV charging stations to business districts. Twenty-two people attended the meeting, including elected officials, county administration, and staff.

On [February 12, 2024, NNPDC staff coordinated with DCR](#) staff to provide VCRMP updates and training on how to enter projects into the database. The meeting was attended by seventeen people. Additionally, on the same day, NNPDC staff coordinated with the EPA WaterTA program to provide training on how to access their technical assistance program to improve water and wastewater facilities within the Northern Neck.

On June 20, 2024, as a follow-up to the NNPDC Quarterly meeting, NNPDC staff invited Virginia Clean Cities to conduct a training on electric vehicle infrastructure, planning, and Northern Neck specific data. The meeting was attended by ten people.

On September 24, 2024, NNPDC was able to host Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR) as they presented various funding and upcoming projects that will specifically impact the Northern Neck. FOR also discussed how the localities can become more involved, submit their own project requests, and request technical assistance from their staff. The meeting was attended by nine people.

On [September 26, 2024, CBNERR-VA provided training](#) on the sea-level rise tools that they have available for planning use. They first discussed the basis of how sea-level rise is affecting Virginia and the Northern Neck specifically. This was followed up by a walk-through of the tools for determining risk and vulnerability. Most notably, participants were shown the AdaptVA tool designed by VIMS and the recent updates. CBNERR-VA also mentioned that they are planning to test a scenario planning exercise and offered to do an additional training at a later date based on the exercise that they create. The meeting was attended by eight people.

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 completion of a [home elevation in Lewisetta](#) in Northumberland County. To mitigate the risk of flooding, the house was raised and the new foundation has been constructed. 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 announced flood hazard mitigation grants for the

2022-2023 grant cycle, as of the submission of this report. NNPDC staff have provided grant writing assistance and technical support to Northern Neck localities and residents to fund the elevations. The 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. NNPDC staff continues to provide information about the program and offer technical assistance to help secure funding.

IV. Northern Neck Green and Virginia Water Trails Website Maintenance

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, promotion of native plants, explanation of riparian buffers, publicizing a local anti-litter campaign, land conservation event, electronics recycling facilities, regional seminar, "Gardening in the Northern Neck," environmental student scholarships, and invasive species awareness. 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.

The [Virginia Water Trails website](#) collaboration has completed its first year operating under an MOU with participating PDCs, with cost-sharing of website maintenance among the group. NNPDC staff added a blog post for a kayak event at Menokin in July 2024.

V. Northern Neck Septic Pump-Out and Septic & Well Assistance Programs

NNPDC executed the CBPA Local Program Implementation Support agreement #17371 dated March 14, 2023, for the administration of the [Northern Neck Septic Pump-out Program](#). The NNPDC was given an extension on the grant until December 31, 2024. During the CZM grant year covered by this report, 48 septic tanks have been pumped out for qualified low-to-moderate income households in the Northern Neck.

NNPDC staff continues to promote the Septic Pump-out Program on the NNPDC website and through local newspapers, distribution of applications at local laundromats, through NNPDC and County offices, faith-based organizations, and mailed upon request. There has also been an effort to reach out to residents

that had expressed interest in the programs, but have not submitted a full application

The Septic and Well Assistance Program consists of [two active grants](#) that provide financial assistance to low-income homeowners to drill new wells, or hookups to municipal water systems, and to install new septic systems through the Virginia Department of Health. NNPDC staff administered the grants, monitored construction, and submitted quarterly reports and reimbursement requests. One of the grants is 100% completed with ten wells and one water line hookup to municipal water service. The second grant is 80% completed. This [second grant](#) has funded the drilling of nine wells, one sewer connection to a municipal sewer system, one traditional septic system, and one alternative septic system. The grant period has been extended to the end of December.

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.

Under a previous CZM grant, Northern Neck Consortium for Environmental Stewardship, NNPDC staff launched a digital environmental collaborative through the website nnkgreen.org. The project brought together various environmental stakeholders active in the Northern Neck, each with its own log-in to post, blog-style, events, and articles of local environmental interest. Eight years after the launch, the website is still active and remains the only digital property in the region for environmental resources – organizations, events, general information. The role of nnkgreen.org has expanded as an introductory site for those moving to the area, often to waterfront properties, from higher-density urban environments. Gardening seminars, trash pick-ups, and guided walks are all recent posts that help new residents learn about the ecology and best environmental practices for the Northern Neck. This website has the capacity to effect behavior change, the most difficult – and farthest-reaching – frontier for transforming public attitudes towards the environment.

VII. Advancing Ecosystem and Community Resilience

The [Regional Resiliency Equity Workgroup \(RREW\)](#), successor to the RAFT process, holds monthly core workgroup meetings as well as subgroup meetings in which NNPDC staff participate. RREW Economic Development & Living Wages subgroup focuses on economic resilience priorities of the group, and there is also a focus on ecosystem and community resilience. The Affordable Housing and Shelters subgroup 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 subgroup discusses the logistics of how to best help people have access to medications, food, and education.

NNPDC staff continues to advance ecosystem and community resilience by building off the outcomes of the Northern Neck RAFT, through the [HMP maintenance and update](#), and through local stakeholder meetings. The HMP is also the Community Flood Preparedness Plan for the region, and regional priorities are set and revisited annually. The first stakeholder meeting was held on May 3, 2024, and was geared towards the Regional Northern Neck Hazard Mitigation Plan annual review. Since the HMP is only a year old, there were no significant changes needed. The second meeting was on September 23, 2024, and was hosted by DCR as they presented on the VCRMP Phase II. There were about 30 attendees there to learn about the updates to the plan. NNPDC staff continues to provide technical assistance and coordination to local governments on resiliency through local stakeholder groups, dubbed “implementation teams”, some of whom meet regularly to advance locally and regionally developed resilience priorities. NNPDC staff is also active in a TAC for the VCRMP, is the co-lead of the Northern Neck / Middle Peninsula Regional

Resilience Equity Workgroup and participates in the Rappahannock River and Potomac Watershed Roundtables.