

**Final Report**  
FY 2021 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*



Funding for the Virginia CZM Program Outreach Coordinator staff position and the outreach and social marketing products outlined in this report were funded by the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program at the Department of Environmental Quality through Task 1.02 Grant # NA21NOS4190152 of the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, under the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended. The Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program is a network of state agencies and coastal localities. The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality serves as the lead agency for the network.



## FY 2021 Task 1.02

### Virginia Coastal Program Outreach and Social Marketing Final Report

October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022  
(with extensions through September 30, 2024)

The FY21 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 ---

*NOAA Evaluation of Virginia CZM Program* – Assisted in preparation for and participated in Virginia CZM's August 2022 Section 312 evaluation, including completing portions of a pre-evaluation questionnaire for NOAA, advertising and registration for a public meeting.

*2021 Virginia Coastal Partners Workshop* – Virginia's Coastal and Ocean Future - A Turning Point for Collaborating to Address Complex Challenges:

Worked with Virginia CZM staff and partners to finalize plans for and to conduct the biennial Virginia Coastal Partners Workshop, November 16 - 18, 2021, including publicity and registration. Organized and spoke on a native plant marketing panel. The recordings of all presentations, as well as [links to many relevant resources](#), are available to view on Padlet at <https://padlet.com/ctpcoordinatorcbnerr/CZMppartners>. (Organized by day; scroll through the speaker bios to the presentations). Summary of breakout session discussion:

- [Coastal Resilience](#)
- [Land Conservation and Ocean Planning](#)
- [Coastal Communities and Economy](#)



*2022 Virginia Marine Debris Summit (September 2022)* – served on the planning team, contributed to agenda development, and partnered with Clean Virginia Waterways staff on publicity, registration and on-site logistics. Presented on the Mid-Atlantic Prevent Balloon Litter campaign.

*CZM Chapter in DEQ 305(b)/303(d) Water Quality Assessment Integrated Report:*

Updated the Virginia CZM Program's chapter in the Virginia Dept of Environmental Quality's 2022 Integrated (Water Quality) Report submitted to the EPA, highlighting the availability of the Virginia Marine Debris Reduction Plan and launch of Coastal GEMS Version 4. This report can be viewed at [www.deq.virginia.gov/our-programs/water/water-quality/assessments/integrated-report](http://www.deq.virginia.gov/our-programs/water/water-quality/assessments/integrated-report)



- Submitted an article in the August 2022 Virginia Master Naturalist News on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CZMA - <http://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/home/from-our-sponsors-and-partners-summer-2022>, resulting in reprints in chapter news - <https://fairfaxmasternaturalists.org/2022/08/help-celebrate-50-years-of-coastal-zone-management/> and a request from the Fairfax Master Naturalists for a presentation about “progress made in Virginia in coastal zone management and how Master Naturalists can support these efforts.”



- *Submitted article published in the Spring 2022 Issue of the Virginia Forest Landowners Update* (which has a circulation of 10,000 readers) on the Plant Virginia Natives Initiative - [https://forestupdate.frec.vt.edu/content/dam/forestupdate\\_frec\\_vt\\_edu/newsletter/archives/2022/spring-2022/Spring2022.pdf](https://forestupdate.frec.vt.edu/content/dam/forestupdate_frec_vt_edu/newsletter/archives/2022/spring-2022/Spring2022.pdf)
- *Contributed to a chapter in the Virginia Master Gardener Training Manual on Virginia Native Plants*, which links to Virginia CZM website and PlantVirginiaNatives.org.
- *Secured a recurring PSA on the Virginia Farm Bureau's Real Virginia television program running the animated Prevent Balloon Litter video on balloon litter impacts and alternatives* produced by Virginia CZM and Clean Virginia Waterways.
- *Drafted a press release with Clean Virginia Waterways to announce publication of the Virginia Marine Debris Reduction Plan*, resulting in media coverage, including <https://www.wavy.com/news/virginia/virginia-coastal-zone-management-program-outlines-plan-to-reduce-waste-in-coastal-waterways/>
- *Coordinated with partners to plan the first annual Plant Natives! Festival, Henrico in April 2022* – sponsored by Virginia CZM and Plant RVA Natives, planned in collaboration with Keep Henrico Beautiful, Henrico Parks and Rec, and Root 5 Family Farms (native plant nursery). Organized keynote speaker, author Dr. Doug Tallamy (funded by Virginia CZM). Staffed Plant RVA Natives exhibit, with 4 hours of non-stop conversations with 250 visitors.
- *Exhibited at the Maymont Bumblebee Jamboree, Richmond* – 1,300 visitors, directed by Maymont staff to the Plant RVA Natives display as they entered the event area.
- *Presented during the Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs Tidewater District meeting* (October 2021)
- *Presented during Middle & Upper James Riparian Consortium Virtual Buffer Summit* (October 2021)
- *Presented during the Goochland-Powhatan Master Gardeners Association meeting* (August 2022)
- *Coordinated the Landscaping with Virginia Natives Webinar Series* (3070 participants) - facilitated the final 6 webinars of this 12-part series in fall 2021, including a welcome highlighting Virginia CZM's role in initiating, coordinating and funding the Plant Virginia Natives Initiative. Public participation and response to the series continued to be tremendous. The Adult Education Coordinator at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, a key partner in hosting the series, shared a Facebook conversation in which two members of the public mentioned being “converted” to use of native plants by participating in the Landscaping with Virginia Natives webinar series. Series speaker Kim Eierman, an ecological landscape designer and author living in New York noted in her presentation and in a follow-up email – “The work being done by the Plant Virginia Natives Marketing Partnership is really fantastic and a great example for every state!” Kim is now highlighting the initiative in her presentations. Among the comments received during the series:
  - *“Kudos to the group who pulled this series together. What a tremendous effort that is much appreciated.”*
  - *“This has been a superb series!”*
  - *“Tonight's program was superb. These webinars have been really helpful and very well run.”*
  - *“The Native Plant presentation last night was OUTSTANDING! Thank you so much for providing such wonderful opportunities for us to learn from the top leaders in their profession. I look forward to the remaining programs.”*
  - Also received a message from Joe Uravitch, NOAA-retired – *“Hi Virginia, I just wanted to let you know how much I am enjoying the Virginia Native series. I am now a Master Gardener in Arlington/Alexandria. In the small world category, before retirement I managed a variety of NOAA coastal and ocean programs and was the lead for Virginia Coastal Program development and approval in the 1980s. I'm happy to see the VA CZM is still going strong. Keep up the great work.”*

The series raised \$30,950 to support native plant marketing activities. Recordings are shared on [www.PlantVirginiaNatives.org](http://www.PlantVirginiaNatives.org) – and the Plant Virginia Natives YouTube Channel - <https://bit.ly/3aCMAET> and have reached 5,685 viewers to date.

#### *Virginia CZM Program Website:*

Served as primary administrator of the Virginia CZM Program's website. The focus during this grant period was completing implementation of an overhaul of the Virginia CZM website in conjunction with a redesign of the Virginia DEQ website - and including new navigation and content to better highlight program successes with a focus on conveying stories and results of CZM investments. This entailed working with DEQ Communication Office staff to complete changes to navigation - [www.deq.virginia.gov/our-programs/coastal-zone-management](http://www.deq.virginia.gov/our-programs/coastal-zone-management)



## Community-Based Social Marketing to Reduce Marine Debris ---



## Prevent Balloon Litter.org

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

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 21 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 FY21 Virginia CZM Program Outreach grant, the Outreach Coordinator collaborated with the other state partners on the Work Group on final preparation for the October 4, 2021, launch of the new Mid-Atlantic Prevent Balloon Litter Campaign, and implementation of the campaign through 2022 (FY 21), 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 FY21 NOAA CZM grant enabled the Outreach Coordinator to design, including illustrations, additional multi-media during implementation of the campaign late fall 2021 through fall 2022 (adding to the campaign's resources developed with FY20 funding, which included test pledge decals, a social media plan, and a set of seven 11"x17" or 17" x 11" impact and alternative posters, with versions of each of the 7 posters for the 3 aquariums participating in the campaign launch in October 2021. All multi-media was printed through an FY18 NOAA Marine Debris Program grant to MARCO).*

### Final Pledge Decals:



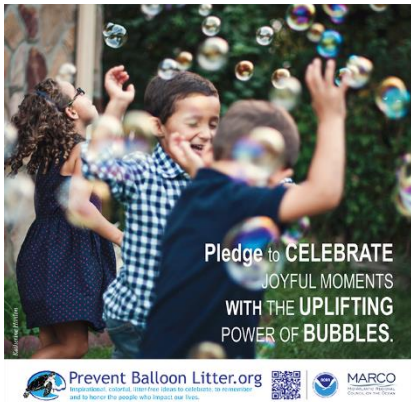
Decals were given to aquarium visitors who pledged as a take-away reminder of their commitment. The decals were tested during the campaign's launch, and well received. With feedback during master coaching with Doug McKenzie-Mohr, who received updates on implementation and advised the campaign, the decal design was altered to include a new pledge statement.

Pledges are collected in one of three ways:

- 1) Collection of pledges at venue using provided I-Pad (to on-line Google Form).
- 2) QR code to the (on-line Google Form) is displayed on the campaign posters.
- 3) Pledges collected on the campaign website (to Google Form) - [Link to Google Form](#).

### 10 x 10 Adhesive Poster Stickers:

Designed a series of poster-sized stickers to facilitate display by partners in publicly visible areas. At home this could include a privately-owned trash can. Feedback from partners as well as our targeted audience for CBSM campaign's is crucial too. Waste Management expressed a concern that placing the stickers on recycling bins might suggest that balloons can be recycled.



### Teacher Kit:

Adapted most of the Prevent Balloon Litter Campaign multi-media resources to be accessible and downloadable on a new webpage for Teachers on the Prevent Balloon Litter website at <https://www.preventballoonlitter.org/teacher-kit>

### Prevent Balloon Litter Factsheet Series:

Designed a Prevent Balloon Litter fact sheet on power outage caused by balloons as part of outreach to power companies to convey message to their customers. This factsheet is downloadable from the PBL website at <https://www.preventballoonlitter.org/want-to-read-more>

### Media Outreach Kit:

Developed a Media Outreach Strategy and Kit, including writing a letter to the media and print-ready article and writing and designing three factsheets. This media kit was distributed to media outlets via email in collaboration with Clean Virginia Waterways, resulting in response from multiple outlets for feature article or press release. Published new Media page on campaign website at <https://www.preventballoonlitter.org/pressroom>

### Campaign Exhibit Kit:

Compiled a Prevent Balloon Litter Campaign Kit to facilitate reaching as many members of the public as possible with the campaign's messaging and call to action. The display was carefully designed to reflect the campaign CBSM strategy with captivating, colorful panels and material, and a pledging and prompt/reminder component. New materials were designed for the campaign kit, highlighted below. (Printing of these materials was funded by a FY18 NOAA Marine Debris Program grant to MARCO for the Mid-Atlantic campaign.) Developed a guidelines document for partners outlining setting up the exhibit, engaging public commitment, and documenting pledges and other response to the campaign (particularly important for new partners to the campaign effort).



## Pop-up Display Panels and Table Runner –

- Three 24" x 36" pop-up display panels –
  1. Impacts of balloon litter on animals (entanglement and ingestion)
  2. Examples of alternatives to releasing balloons
  3. Pledge banner –  
Visitor pledges by writing first name on a circular post-it note (representative of a bubble) and applies it to this reusable banner.
- 3' x 7.5' table runner with full color campaign logo and tagline.



## Sticker Sheet –

### 5" x 8" sticker sheet with 5 stickers

- one 4" circle
- one 1-7/16" circle
- one 1-1/8" circle
- one 1-7/16" x 1-7/16" square
- one 1" x 1" square

Designed with kids in mind, the sticker sheet has also been popular with adults who display the stickers on cell phones, laptops and other portable items, helping spread campaign's message.



## DIY Bubble Wand and Recipe Card –

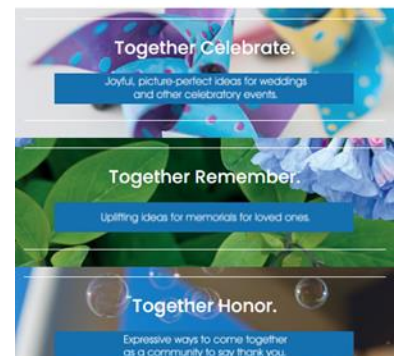
- 3" x 5" DIY bubble wand and recipe card
- Optional Exhibit Activity for young visitors to make their own wand - an easy way to capture the attention of kids, while also engaging adults.
- Bubble Machine also included in the kit to help attract attention to the exhibit.

## Prevent Balloon Litter Website:

The Outreach Coordinator continued to serve as the primary administrator of [www.PreventBalloonLitter.org](http://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. (2,200 visits – a 26% increase over last year – and 3,800 pageviews), adding a Press Room and Teacher Kit page. The Prevent



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





Balloon Litter website was featured as the “Communication Product of the Month” in the October issue of NOAA’s Coastal Communicators newsletter.

## Community-Based Social Marketing to Increase Native Plant Use ---

# Plant Virginia Natives



PLANTVIRGINIANATIVES.ORG

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/](http://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:*

- The Outreach Coordinator continued to work closely with the coordinators and steering teams of the current regional native plant campaigns as an advisor, to provide assistance where needed and to encourage communication and sharing of resources between the campaigns. 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>
  - Advised regional campaigns outside of the coastal zone, including Plant Southwest Virginia Natives, Plant Southern Piedmont Natives, Plant Northern Piedmont Natives and Plant Ridge and Valley Natives. These campaigns recognize the Virginia CZM Program as a partner in presentations and materials.
  - Continued to serve as the Plant RVA Natives campaign coordinator until another partner or partners take on this role.
  - Coordinated with regional campaigns state-wide to plan, advertise and conduct fall 2021 webinars as part of the *Landscaping with Virginia Natives* webinar series – detail provided earlier in report. Organized and coordinated with all speakers, scripted all webinars and provided a welcome to each webinar. Collaborated with Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden to collect registrations and with the garden and Blue Ridge PRISM to host the webinars via ZOOM. While a registration fee (\$10 for all

12 webinars) enabled speaker honorariums, Virginia CZM funded fall presentations by two authors – Kim Eierman and Nancy Lawson.

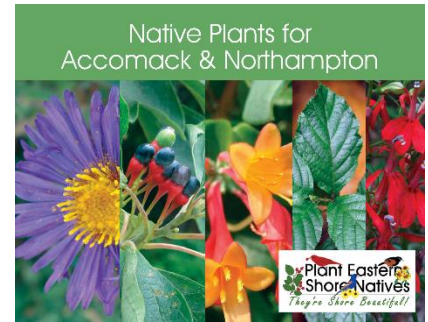
- Continued to serve as main administrator (with nine regional campaign contributors) of the Plant Virginia Natives Initiative Website – <http://www.PlantVirginiaNatives.org> – home for the statewide Plant Virginia Natives marketing partnership, a central hub for Virginia native plant information and 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.deg.virginia.gov/our-programs/coastal-zone-management/coastal-conservation/native-plant-marketing>. During the main grant period, from October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022, the Plant Virginia Natives website had 101,000 visits (up 12% from the previous year), 79,000 unique visitors (up 14% from the previous year) and 177,000 page views (up 10% from the previous year). (Since the sites launch in 2017, it has received 534,000 visits from 421,000 unique visitors, with 894,000 page views a 36% average increase in visitors year to year.)
- Produced the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of NOVA native plant guide for Northern Virginia, working with a team of Plant NOVA Natives partners. Printing was funded with \$10,000 raised by the partners to print 7,000 copies.

**Extensions of this FY21 grant to September 30, 2024, were approved to spend remaining funds, as well as unspent FY 21 funds transferred to Task 1.02 from Task 2, 42, 9.02 and 9.01. These funds were efficiently used to:**

- Secure Virginia CZM sponsorship of the following events, including staff registrations, exhibit space and sponsorship recognition, and VA CZM logo and ad space in conference materials:
  - Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council's Turning a New Leaf conference – December 2022
  - Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts conference - December 2022 (*image at right*)
  - Rappahannock River Watershed Symposium - October 2024
- Secure rental space at the Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center for the August 2024 Community Open Forum in support of the Virginia Ocean Plan (*image at right*).
- Reprint of a new edition of the regional native plant guide for the Eastern Shore in May 2024 (*cover of guide on next page*).
- Purchase of outreach supplies and marketing materials:



- Adobe Creative Suite license renewals for Virginia CZM staff – outreach coordinator and specialist and GIS coordinator
- Digital SLR camera kit for Virginia CZM staff use - an upgrade to equipment with the capacity to take b-roll for Virginia CZM video production
- Tumblers with Virginia CZM logo and “Partner” for Coastal Policy Team members and other key CZM partners
- Educational handouts encouraging waste reduction - Swedish dishcloths (an alternative to paper towels) - and alternatives to single-use plastics - glass straws with a label encouraging public participation in the Virginia Ocean Plan stakeholder survey distributed to attendees of the VOP Forum in August 2024 (*image below*)



- Reprint of Plant Virginia Natives CBSM marketing materials proven strategic and effective:
  - Pledge Decal reprint
  - Please Carry Card reprint
- Plotter paper to continue in-house production of maps and exhibit panels, which leads to substantial savings versus contracting with outside vendors
- Virginia CZM logo tablecloths and runners to replace 20 plus year old tablecloths. The replacement table coverings were imprinted with a significantly larger Virginia CZM logo for enhanced visibility at events and the runners will allow flexibility in display set-up.