



Semi-Annual Success Story ("Section C")

submitted to the

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Prioritizing Conservation Corridors in the Hampton Roads Region

Geographic Location: Hampton Roads Planning District; Congressional Districts 1,2,3 and 4
CZMA Performance Measure Area: Government Coordination

How the Virginia CZM Program Was Involved: The Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC), in partnership with the Virginia CZM Program, has developed a system of interconnected conservation corridors, or "blue and green infrastructure" for its localities that prioritizes areas for preservation and restoration based on a number of data layers and local input. Designating the corridors required GIS analysis of state data layers and a local consensus building process for achieving multiple environmental benefits. The individual data layers to support this initiative were developed over a number of years by several state agencies and institutions for the entire coastal zone, all with assistance from the Virginia CZM Program. Through a collaborative project between these organizations the information was synthesized into a unified dataset of Priority Conservation Areas (FY '08 Task 11.02) and used in the HRPDC planning effort.

So far, the Hampton Roads region has used its corridor system in local comprehensive planning efforts, for the creation of a purchase of development rights program, to develop a multi-agency agreement on wetlands mitigation targeting, and in efforts to obtain conservation easements from private landowners. The corridors will also be a valuable tool for both local and regional planners as they face new water quality regulatory requirements such as storm water management regulations, Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) implementation plans, and Urban Development Area (UDA) requirements. As part of HRPDC's most recent project, a "Vulnerability to Development model" was created in order to predict where future growth will occur in the region and how the conservation corridors may be impacted. This gives planners a tool to prioritize land acquisitions in the face of limited funding. The project also looks at the potential impact of sea level rise on the corridors. Additionally, an updated parks and recreation database was created in GIS and compared to the network in order to help document conserved lands and to prioritize future acquisitions. A project report entitled "A Green Infrastructure Plan for the Hampton Roads Region" February, 2010 (FY '08 Task 97.02) provides a synopsis of this multi-year effort including the process for developing and updating the conservation corridor network GIS model and developing the vulnerability model.

Because of the success of the conservation corridor / blue-green infrastructure planning process in the Hampton Roads area, the Virginia CZM Program has taken steps to expand

the initiative to the entire coastal zone. Using the HRPDC model as a starting point, projects are now underway in the remaining seven coastal planning districts to incorporate state level data into local plans and land management ordinances. Efforts are also underway to refine the available data layers and provide more information on the estuarine, or blue, coastal resources. Results of this initiative will be available to all Virginia coastal zone stakeholders through Coastal GEMS, an interactive coastal mapping tool, developed and maintained by the Virginia CZM Program. The ultimate outcome will be a network of identified and locally accepted conservation corridors for Virginia's entire coastal zone.