April 24, 2025

Memorandum #2025-57

TO: Regional Environmental Committee Members

BY: Whitney Katchmark, HRPDC Principal Water Resources Engineer

RE: Regional Environmental Committee (REC) Meeting – May 1, 2025

The next meeting of the HRPDC Regional Environmental Committee will be held on Thursday, May 1, 2025, at 10:00 AM. The agenda and related materials are attached. This meeting will be held virtually using Zoom. Please use the following information to join the meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting:
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82562806906?pwd=8pN4f1XEhp5TsAl32UXHKImho0QbEy.1

Meeting ID: 825 6280 6906
Passcode: 481670

One tap mobile:
+13092053325,,82562806906#,,,,*481670# US
+13126266799,,82562806906#,,,,*481670# US (Chicago)

If you have any questions or need further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

EC/se

Attachments

AGENDA
MEETING OF THE
HAMPTON ROADS REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
MAY 1, 2025 at 10:00 A.M.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

1. **Summary of the April 3, 2025, Meeting of the Hampton Roads Regional Environmental Committee (REC)**

   The summary and attendance sheets of the April 2025 meeting are attached.

   ACTION: Accept the Meeting Summary and Attendance

   Attachments: 1A Meeting Summary April
   1B Meeting Attendance April

2. **Microplastics Study**

   Dr. Chris Burbage, Hampton Roads Sanitation District, will present on the SWIFT microplastic study and a look at microplastics in wastewater treatment.

3. **Environment Virginia Symposium Recap**

   The Environment Virginia Symposium was held last month, bringing together environmental professionals from across the Commonwealth. Several members of the HRPDC Water Resources Department attended the conference this year and gave presentations in technical sessions. HRPDC staff will provide a recap from the conference including highlights from the state agency directors panel, DEQ updates, and technical sessions.

4. **Resilient Stormwater Best Management Practices**

   As part of a grant from the Community Flood Preparedness Fund, the HRPDC has been working with AMT to assess how stormwater best management practices will respond to climate change impacts to identify BMPs that function well and potential modifications that can make them more resilient. Mr. Ben McFarlane, HRPDC, will brief the Committee on the project findings and potential next steps.

5. **DCR's Flood Resilience Planning Update**

   The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Office of Resilience is responsible for developing, administering, and implementing the Virginia Flood Protection Master Plan and the Coastal Resilience Master Plan. Ms. Carolyn Heaps-Pecaro, Virginia DCR, will provide an update on these efforts.

SUMMARY OF THE
HAMPTON ROADS REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
APRIL 3, 2025 at 10:00 A.M.
Virtual Meeting on Zoom

1. **Summary of the March 6, 2025, Meeting of the Hampton Roads Regional Environmental Committee (REC)**

   The summary and attendance of the March 2025 meeting were included with the agenda. There were no edits.

2. **Proactive Planning for Resilience**

   In 2024, the University of Virginia Environmental Institute launched *Proactive Planning for Resilience*, an online tool designed to help communities assess climate risks, explore adaptation strategies, and develop implementation plans. Ms. Elizabeth Andrews, from the University of Virginia Institute for Engagement and Negotiation, provided an overview of the project. She acknowledged the contributions of her research assistants and thanked SeaGrant for funding the project and assisting with website design and hosting.

   Originally conceived as a white paper, the project evolved into an interactive website in response to stakeholder feedback. Designed primarily for local staff and adaptation leaders, the tool aims to provide actionable guidance, including a concise list of key takeaways for elected officials. The website features a background information section that defines resilience and discusses managed retreat, while the user guide and table of contents help users navigate resources based on their planning needs.

   Legal considerations, particularly for Virginia, are a key component of the site. Topics covered include private property rights, shifting property lines, and rolling easements. The site also provides case studies and a categorized set of tools developed by federal agencies, independent organizations, and Virginia-specific sources. Additionally, a dedicated funding page explores challenges and available grants and loans.

   During the discussion, participants considered ways to tailor the tool's content for different audiences. Elizabeth proposed developing summary sheets and potentially incorporating the tool into RAFT to better communicate key information to elected officials and planning teams. Ms. KC Filippino, HRPDC, emphasized the importance of connecting resilience strategies to water quality improvement efforts, and Elizabeth noted the need to highlight the co-benefits of these practices, as many stakeholders remain unaware of their broader environmental advantages.

   The conversation also focused on rolling easements, a topic of growing interest in the region. Questions arose about existing examples of strategic implementation and the long-term viability of neighborhoods facing rising sea levels. Ms. Mary-Carson Stiff, Wetlands Watch, shared insights from a three-year rolling easement workgroup that explored land conservation as a resilience tool. The group discussed various approaches, from local overlay districts like those in Norfolk to broader policy models such as Texas' Open Beach and Maine's Sand Dune Rules, which address the impact of shifting shorelines on land use decisions.

The meeting concluded with a discussion on proactive versus reactive responses to structural threats in coastal areas. The situation in Rodanthe was highlighted as an example, where oceanfront home removals were justified on public health, safety, and welfare grounds. Looking ahead, participants expressed interest in developing a regional collaborative effort to explore strategic resilience measures for communities facing similar challenges.

As next steps, participants were encouraged to provide input on additional topics or resources that could enhance the tool's effectiveness. The group also considered ways to further distill key information for different audiences and identify additional examples of rolling easement implementation to inform strategic planning efforts.

3. Designing Living Shorelines

In January 2025, Wetlands Watch, with support from the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program, released *Designing Living Shorelines for Sea Level Rise in Virginia*, a new resource for shoreline professionals. This guide provides strategies for designing living shorelines that can adapt to sea level rise while continuing to protect against coastal hazards. It includes more than two dozen case studies of permitted and installed shoreline projects that demonstrate these techniques. Ms. Mary-Carson Stiff and Ms. Stacie McGraw from Wetlands Watch briefed the Committee on the project.

The initiative builds on Virginia's 2020 legislation, which established living shorelines as the preferred method for shoreline erosion control unless deemed unsuitable based on the best available science. In response, the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) developed guidelines in 2021, identifying the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) as the authority for determining suitability. Areas with high winds, heavy wave action, or deep-water channels may not be appropriate for living shorelines, but in all cases, designs must account for resilience to coastal storms and sea level rise.

Recognizing that the permitting guidelines lacked clarity, Wetlands Watch developed this guide to provide practical, user-friendly guidance. The project involved a broad stakeholder engagement process, including three in-person and six virtual meetings, listening sessions with five localities, multiple review periods, and input from a technical review subcommittee. The primary audience is shoreline practitioners—those involved in designing, permitting, installing, and maintaining living shorelines. The guide features foundational resources, design considerations such as slope and depth, adaptive management strategies, and case studies, with before-and-after photos for most projects.

Looking ahead, Wetlands Watch aims to maintain the guide as a living document and develop a dedicated webpage and searchable database of case studies. The resource will also be incorporated into the 2025 Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional (CBLP) training program. Additionally, Wetlands Watch is seeking funding to expand training for other stakeholder groups, including real estate professionals and local wetlands boards. One ongoing challenge is that the current general permit application does not explicitly require applicants to address how projects are designed for sea level rise and coastal hazards—an issue that Wetlands Watch continues to engage on.

In Norfolk, most living shoreline projects have been implemented by nonprofits, raising questions about how to broaden participation. As part of its next steps, Wetlands Watch is

exploring opportunities to adapt the CBLP shoreline training for a wider range of stakeholders and expand support for local implementation efforts.

4. Aberdeen Gardens

In December 2024, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency awarded $20 million to Wetlands Watch and the City of Hampton to support flood mitigation and pollution reduction efforts in Aberdeen Gardens, a historic neighborhood with deep cultural and regional significance. Scott Smith, Hampton's Coastal Resilience Engineer, provided an overview of the planned resilience projects and the community's role in shaping them.

Aberdeen Gardens, established in 1934, was the first planned Black community in the U.S., designed by a Black architect from Hampton University. Originally built with self-sufficiency in mind, each half-acre lot included space for farming and chicken coops, fostering a strong sense of community. Today, the community continues to demonstrate resilience but faces growing threats from flooding and climate change.

Wetlands Watch led a collaborative effort with Old Dominion University, Hampton University, and Virginia Tech to develop the *Aberdeen Gardens Community Resilience Action Plan*, which proposed measures such as rain gardens, increased stormwater storage in medians and on private parcels, and other flood mitigation strategies. Hazen & Sawyer later conducted a *Watershed Study*, leveraging community input to identify flooding hotspots and develop data-driven solutions.

As part of this effort, Mr. Natale Carollo, a project engineer with Hazen & Sawyer, explained that the study incorporated a 2D PCSWMM model covering 428 acres and 590+ conduits. The most problematic area identified was Aberdeen Creek, where trash accumulation and inadequate stormwater capacity contribute to chronic flooding. The study proposed 51 projects, ranging in scale, to improve stormwater infrastructure, including enhanced curb and gutter systems, additional water storage at road low points, and expanded drainage capacity.

Community engagement was central to the project's success. Wetlands Watch and the Greater Aberdeen Community Council (GACC) facilitated outreach efforts, including surveys and neighborhood meetings. A cul-de-sac meeting on a specific roadway—suggested during a joint committee session—led to a new project being added to the flood mitigation plan, an example of how local input directly shaped project priorities. A Power BI tool was used to prioritize projects based on community feedback, with 52 survey responses helping to inform decision-making.

Although the EPA Community Change Grant was awarded in December 2024, the project is currently on hold pending federal review. While the agency has indicated that the city can continue to incur costs, reimbursement is not guaranteed. In the meantime, the city and Wetlands Watch plan to pursue additional funding through other sources such as the Community Flood Preparedness Fund (CFPF) and FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program to ensure project implementation.

During the discussion, concerns were raised about trash accumulation in Aberdeen Creek. Mr. Smith noted that much of the debris originates from upstream sources, including Mercury Boulevard and the nearby Walmart parking lot, though the community actively participates in regular stream cleanup events. When asked about community interest in the Power BI

prioritization tool, Mr. Carollo explained that residents were engaged in learning how their survey responses influenced the scoring and appreciated the transparency of the decision-making process. The tool remains a living document, with updates expected as more feedback is collected.

Despite funding uncertainties, the City of Hampton and its partners remain committed to implementing these resilience improvements in Aberdeen Gardens, ensuring the neighborhood can continue to thrive in the face of future climate challenges.

5. Coastal Zone Management Update

Every five years, the Virginia Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Program collaborates with state agencies, local governments, and other stakeholders to assess the condition of Virginia's coastal resources and management efforts. This assessment helps identify high-priority coastal enhancement areas, leading to the development of a five-year grant strategy aimed at creating new enforceable policies to address these issues. The process for the FY2026-2030 strategies is currently underway.

Ben McFarlane, HRPDC, provided an update on the CZM Section 309 process, a requirement under the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA). The assessment follows a three-phase approach, culminating in the development of targeted strategies. Phase 1 is a high-level assessment of coastal needs which was completed at the end of 2024. Phase 2 involves a review of the assessment areas by the Coastal Policy Team (CPT) which occurred in February of 2025. Phase 3 is in progress and involves an in-depth assessment of high-priority areas and strategy development.

During the CPT meeting, coastal enhancement areas were ranked as low, medium, or high priorities. The highest-ranked areas for Hampton Roads included wetlands, coastal hazards, ocean resources, and marine debris. Next steps include finalizing draft strategies, submitting them for NOAA review, and preparing the final assessment and strategy document for NOAA submission.

6. Other Business

The next meeting of the Regional Environmental Committee will be held virtually on May 1, 2025.

Mr. McFarlane reminded the committee that there will be a virtual Coastal Resiliency Workgroup held on April 25th, 2025, during which NOAA representatives will present the Atlas 15 product.

Ms. Jill Sunderland, HRPDC, shared that VWEA's Annual Stormwater Seminar will be held on Wednesday, April 23, 2025 and early registration ends on April 10, 2025.

Mr. McFarlane also noted that the Environment Virginia Symposium will be held April 8-10, 2025, and PDC staff will be hosting a town hall titled "Future-proofing Stormwater Management in Virginia". He urged those planning to attend the conference to come to the session and join the conversation.

Ms. Christy Everett reminded attendees of the ongoing Climate Talk Series hosted by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

Mr. Ian Blair, Wetlands Watch, shared the link for a "General Assembly Recap" lunch & learn to be held on April 4, 2025 :
https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/rzoGLgvKS_Gi5UZUlJpCJQ

Locality/Agency	Representative	Representative	Representative	Representative	Representative	Representative	Representative	Representative	Representative	Representative	Representative
Chesapeake	Casey Magruder	Charlie Jones									
Franklin											
Gloucester	Kevin Landry	Mike Hudgins									
Hampton	Scott Smith	Olivia Askew									
Isle of Wight											
James City	Emily Grojean	Mike Woolson	Tammy Rosario								
Newport News	Louis Bott	Allison Watts	Sheila McAllister	Macon Whitson							
Norfolk	Christina VanLear	Gina Shaw	Justin Shafer	Seamus McCarthy	Chris Epes	Lily Betner	Fahria Hossain				
Poquoson											
Portsmouth	Brittany Collins	Debbie Gaskins									
Smithfield	Mark Kluck										
Southampton											
Suffolk	Heather Baggett										
Surry											
Virginia Beach	Angela Rivas	Jim Milliken									
Williamsburg	Heather Markle										
Windsor											
York	Kent Henkel	Charles White	Rosa Zavaleta								
Nansemond Indian Nation											
HRPDC	Ivy Ozmon	Eric Walberg	KC Filippino	Jill Sunderland	Tho Tran	Katie Cullipher	Emma Corbitt	Nikki Johnson	Rebekah Eastep	Greg Grootendorst	Ben McFarlane
HRSD	Bruce Weckworth										
HRTPO											
DCR											
DEQ											
DWR											
DHCD											
SWCD											
VDEM											
VDOF	Bryant Bays										
VDH											
VDOT											
VMRC											
Fort Monroe Authority											
Virginia Port Authority	Scott Whitehurst										
Jefferson Lab											
VACO											
NASA											
U.S. Navy											
U.S. Air Force	Suzanne Dyba	Jazmin Argarin									
NRCS											
USACE	Erin Lee	Kathy Hanes									
USGS											
USFWS											
NOAA											
ODU											
UVA	Elizabeth Andrews										
VIMS	Jeryl Phillips										
W&M											
Virginia Sea Grant											
VT Tech Center											
CBF	Lisa Renee Jennings	Christy Everett									
CCAN											
Ducks Unlimited	Barbara Gavin										
Elizabeth River Project											
Great Dismal Swamp Coll.											
James River Association											
Living River Trust											
Lynnhaven River Now											
SELC											
Wetlands Watch	Ian Blair	Mary-Carson Stiff	Stacie McGraw								
AECOM											
AES											
AMT Engineering	Ginny Snead										
Arcadis											
Bay Environmental											
Brown & Caldwell	Priyanka Mohandoss										
Cardno											
Chesapeake Conservancy											
Clark Nexsen											
Contech ES											
Dewberry											
F&R											
Geosyntec											
GKY											
Fernleaf											
Hazen & Sawyer	Natale Corrollo	Mike Barbachem									
Jacobs											
Kerr Environmental											
Kimley-Horn											
Louis Berger											
Michael Baker											
Opti RTC											
Parsons Brinckerhoff											
RK&K											
Timmons Group											
SGA											
Stantech											
Woolpert											
WPL Site											
Whitman Requardt											
Jefferson Lab											
AMT Engineering											
Public											

Attachment 1B