

**SUMMARY OF THE
HAMPTON ROADS REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
AUGUST 7, 2025 at 10:00 A.M.
CHESAPEAKE, VA**

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

The summary and attendance of the July 2025 meeting were included in the agenda. There were no edits.

2. Elizabeth River Trail Foundation

Ms. Kindra Greene, Elizabeth River Trail Foundation, gave a presentation to the Committee on the organization's ongoing activities and plans for the continued development, improvement, and maintenance of the Elizabeth River Trail (ERT). Currently, the trail extends approximately 10.5 miles from Norfolk State University to Norfolk International Terminals, 90% of which is either offroad or dedicated bike lanes. The overall goal is for the ERT to run from Naval Station Norfolk into Virginia Beach. Ms. Greene described the trail's role as storyteller for the region, communicating the area's natural history, working waterfront heritage, and now its challenges with sea level rise and climate adaptation. The foundation is also incorporating a blueway into the trail, with one kayak launch in place at Plum Point Park, another under construction at Larchmont, and others planned for near Harbor Park. In addition to the kayak launch, the trailhead at Plum Point Park also includes a playground, shelter, benches, picnic tables, bike support, and other amenities. The foundation is also planning connections to Virginia Beach and other regional trail networks. More information on the trail is available at <https://elizabethrivertrail.org/>.

3. Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement

Dr. KC Filippino, HRPDC, gave a presentation to the Committee on proposed revisions to the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. The current agreement is the fourth in a series of commitments since 1983 made by the various jurisdictions and entities that comprise the Chesapeake Bay Program, which now includes Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, Washington, DC, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Chesapeake Bay Commission. The 2014 agreement includes ten goals with thirty-one outcomes. 2025 was a major benchmark year for 12 of the 31 outcomes, in addition to being a key target year for the Chesapeake Bay TMDL. However, there are multiple lines of evidence that show that the intended reductions will not be achieved. Although 18 of the 31 outcomes are on course, the remaining are considered off course.

To address the lack of progress, the Executive Council created "Beyond 2025" to recommend a path forward that would prioritize next steps for meeting the goals and outcomes of the Watershed Agreement. Phase 1 of the effort included completing the Beyond 2025 report, which included high-level recommendations to amend the Agreement, strengthen the partnership and address future conditions. Phase 2 of the effort includes revising the Watershed Agreement and restructuring the partnership. One of the key proposed changes is to reduce the number of goals from 10 to 4 and the number of outcomes from 31 to 21. The four proposed goals are healthy landscapes, clean water, engaged communities, and thriving habitat and wildlife. Management

strategies to actually accomplish the goals and outcomes will be determined later. Another significant proposed change is to include tribal nations.

Dr. Filippino has been working with regional stakeholders and partners to develop regional comments. These include:

- Overall support for the changes and updates
- Support for consolidation and streamlining of the Partnership
- Identifying clear funding paths
- Ensuring metrics are achievable and realistic

Public comments on the proposed revised agreement are due by September 1, 2025.

4. Recycling Education Outreach Grant Update

Ms. Katie Cullipher, HRPDC, updated the Committee on the regional EPA Recycling Education and Outreach Grant. The HRPDC is wrapping up the first year of the three-year, \$1.96 million grant. HRPDC's grant was one of twenty-five awarded nationwide, one of three in EPA Region 3, and the only grant in Virginia. The four goals of the project are to decrease municipal waste generation, increase recycling knowledge and participation, decrease recycling contamination, and increase confidence in local recycling programs. To date, most of the work completed has focused on research through surveys, focus groups, recycling audits, and targeted behavior-change education. HRPDC has also developed some web-based recycling and disposal education and outreach tools. These tools include a dynamic waste disposal/recycling lookup tool and an interactive waste sorting game. The tools are designed for both desktop and mobile. Another major effort has been the "Feet on the Street" route-level curbside recycling education program, which combines targeted outreach, cart tagging, and cart rejection. This effort covered over 32,000 households in six jurisdictions (James City County, Newport News, Norfolk, Suffolk, Virginia Beach, and York County) for eight weeks from March 31 to May 23, 2025. Key messages for the targeted outreach and tagging included warnings against bagging recyclables and what materials were acceptable and not. The effort also involved using advertising and media to get the word out. Pre- and post-implementation audits showed an overall decrease in contamination in each of the six localities. Key takeaways from the effort are that a feedback loop is important, enforcement works, and focusing on education helps.

Work remaining to be done includes advertising, public relations, and community engagement. The project includes \$1 million in funding for a multi-channel advertising and public relations campaign. The project will also include a regional direct mail campaign and convenience center signage to help educate and instruct residents. The project is scheduled to be completed by May 2027.

5. Other Business

The next meeting of the Regional Environmental Committee will be held on September 4, 2025.