

**SUMMARY OF THE
HAMPTON ROADS REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 2, 2025 at 10:00 A.M.
Virtual Meeting on Zoom**

1. Summary of the September 4, 2025, Meeting of the Hampton Roads Regional Environmental Committee (REC)

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

2. Norfolk Southern Living Shoreline Project

Norfolk Southern has completed a multi-year living shoreline restoration along the southern edge of its historic Lambert's Point coal terminal in Norfolk. Mr. Adam Lambert, Norfolk Southern, briefed the committee on this successful project.

The site, owned by Norfolk Southern for over a century, serves as a major hub for transporting coal from West Virginia to international markets. The project was developed to address severe shoreline erosion along the property. Norfolk Southern evaluated both traditional "hard" stabilization methods and more sustainable "green" alternatives, ultimately selecting a living shoreline design. Modeling conducted with Dewberry showed erosion rates exceeding two feet per year in some areas. The final design emphasized native vegetation, sustainable grading, and a lighter construction footprint compared to traditional armoring. Post-construction monitoring is required for ten years.

Phase I restored approximately 900 feet of shoreline using native plants and oyster sills. Early monitoring showed strong oyster growth, though invasive phragmites have begun to reappear. Following the success of Phase I, Norfolk Southern pursued additional funding for Phase II and explored Virginia's nutrient banking program as an opportunity to offset some of the project costs. Through collaboration with the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC), the project's co-located oyster reefs and living shoreline were approved for nutrient credit generation. This was only the second living shoreline in Virginia to be approved for nutrient mitigation in the Commonwealth. Phase II also incorporated a geoweb system to stabilize the eroding cliff face. This innovative approach allows Norfolk Southern to generate nutrient credits through a state-approved bank managed by ECOcap and the value of these credits has the potential to offset much of the project's construction costs. Mr. Motsinger emphasized that this project was made possible over several years by key partnerships with the City of Norfolk, the Elizabeth River Project, and state agencies.

Participants commended the project as an exemplary example of green infrastructure and innovation in shoreline stabilization. The project also supports the City of Norfolk's Green Infrastructure Plan and offers opportunities for continued monitoring through VIMS's SHOREWATCH program. Norfolk Southern noted the project was five years in the making and may serve as a model for future restoration or mitigation opportunities on other properties.

3. City of Chesapeake Trails & Connectivity Plan

The City of Chesapeake adopted the Chesapeake Trails and Connectivity Plan (TConn) in November 2024. The plan builds upon the City's 2050 Comprehensive Plan and was recently recognized with the 2025 Commonwealth Connectors Award by APA-Virginia. Mr. Kevin Finn, City of Chesapeake, provided an overview of the plan which focuses on expanding pedestrian, bicycle, and blueway networks to connect open spaces and enhance active transportation options across the city.

The plan began as a trails and open space connectivity initiative aimed at creating a citywide network that benefits residents of all demographics. Development was guided by strong community engagement, including participation from over 250 residents and nearly 400 map-based comments. The planning process identified key destinations, population centers, and park systems, and explored opportunities to utilize rail-to-trail corridors and utility rights-of-way to improve connectivity. Core network recommendations were established to guide implementation priorities. In addition to the citywide framework, the plan includes more detailed small area plans, such as those for Greenbrier, the Chesapeake Industrial Waterfront, and the Deep Creek area, which incorporates the Dismal Swamp Trail system.

The plan also assesses accessibility to parks, schools, jobs, transit, and the broader bike network. Design principles emphasize inclusivity for all users and adaptability to both urban and rural contexts. The plan's appendix provides detailed design guidelines to ensure facilities are accessible and appropriate for multiple activity types. A story map available on the City's website allows users to explore the trail network and proposed connections interactively.

Participants asked questions about surfacing materials and the balance between paved and unpaved trail options, particularly in rural areas where residents prefer natural surfaces to preserve the local character. These considerations will be addressed in future small area and design-phase plans. The strong community interest in expanding access to green spaces was noted as a key outcome of public engagement, echoing similar themes identified through other regional planning efforts.

4. Environmental Education Program Update

Each year, the region collaborates through askHRgreen.org to deliver outreach and environmental education to thousands of Hampton Roads residents. Ms. Katie Cullipher, HRPDC, provided an overview of FY25 program highlights and current initiatives led by the four askHRgreen subcommittees: Recycling & Beautification, Stormwater, Water Awareness, and Fats, Oils & Grease (FOG).

The askHRgreen program continues to serve as a leading regional platform for environmental education and community engagement. In 2024, the program received more than 70,000 website visits. This number was slightly fewer than in previous years but coincided with higher engagement per visit. Outreach efforts included participation in 29 community events and business engagement initiatives such as the "Foam Free" campaign, which provided toolkits and educational materials to help restaurants comply with Virginia's expanded polystyrene ban. The program also distributed new activity booklets for children and reached over 5,500 students through the Environmental Education Mini-Grant program.

A major achievement this year was the continuation of the three-year, \$1.96 million EPA Regional Recycling Education and Outreach (REO) Grant. This initiative supported the Feet on the Street cart-tagging program, which reached 32,000 households and achieved a 36 percent reduction in recycling contamination. The grant also funded the development of new educational tools such as the Waste Wizard search feature and an interactive sorting game, along with surveys and focus groups to refine public messaging.

Additional program highlights included the Great American Cleanup, which engaged more than 3,400 volunteers who collected 68 tons of litter and 661 tires, and the continued tour of the "Love" sign made from recycled materials. The Stormwater Committee hosted Stormwater Awareness Week, featuring social media campaigns, educational contests, and the installation of 39 new pet waste stations. The Water Awareness Committee introduced Hydro Joe, a new mascot appearing at community events, and the Imagine a Day Without Water campaign, which featured interviews with

major water users to share non-utility perspectives. The FOG Committee launched HRGFOG.com, a new platform that expands accessibility and will include Spanish and Chinese translations in FY26.

Media and outreach efforts also reached new audiences through partnerships with social media influencers and content creators, resulting in nearly 9 million engagements across all platforms. A featured influencer video received over 78,000 views, helping expand the program's visibility far beyond its traditional audience.

Looking ahead, HRPDC staff noted upcoming efforts including a complete website redesign, a new outreach trailer, and updates to the Bay Star Homes and Business programs. The FY2024–25 Annual Report includes additional details about these initiatives. During discussion, participants asked about the Bring Your Own To-Go initiative and noted that health code restrictions prevent outside containers from being brought into restaurants. Attendees also commended the influencer partnerships as an innovative and effective strategy for expanding public engagement.

5. Community Flood Preparedness Fund Update

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) announced awards for Round 5 of the Community Flood Preparedness Fund (CFPF) on July 1, 2025. Mr. Ben McFarlane, HRPDC, provided an overview of the regional results and an update on the status of Round 6, including anticipated timelines and potential regional applications.

Hampton Roads performed very well in Round 5, with five localities receiving awards to support capacity building, studies, and project implementation. In addition, HRPDC received funding for its regional sensor network project, and HRSD was awarded both grants and loans to support its resilience initiatives.

The Round 6 grant manual has not yet been finalized, but DCR expects to open the next round soon, with the goal of announcing awards by the end of calendar year 2025. A 45-day waiting period is expected between application submission and award notification.

HRPDC submitted comments on the draft Round 6 manual focused on improving accessibility and alignment with regional needs. Recommendations included increasing the benefit-cost analysis (BCA) threshold from \$2 million to \$5 million, removing the \$200,000 cap on resilience plan grants, and ensuring consistency with federal regulations for repetitive loss and Severe Repetitive Loss (SRL) properties. HRPDC also suggested that if a BCA is required, it should be reflected in project scoring.

Additional comments recommended allowing project capacity grants to fund new staff positions for up to five years, with the option for renewal, to help localities build long-term resilience capacity. HRPDC expressed concern over a proposed limitation that would restrict capacity-building grants to low-income communities, noting that this could limit overall regional participation. During discussion, it was noted that some localities had not yet received their official award packages from DCR.

6. Other Matters

HRPDC staff provided an update on the status of new LiDAR data for the region. Final revisions were submitted to USGS the previous week, and the data is expected to be available soon. Communities directly involved in the data collection effort will receive follow-up communication from HRPDC staff once the data is released. For other localities or partners interested in accessing the dataset, HRPDC will make the information available upon request.