

## 2016 Virginia's Working Waterfront Master Plan

Guiding communities in protecting, restoring and enhancing their water-dependent activities

Ever since 1607, when the first settlers set foot on Virginia soil, working waterfronts have been the main portal for commerce in Virginia. Commercial waterfronts in coastal Virginia have become the primary facilities supporting not only the economy of eastern Virginia, but all of the Commonwealth and the eastern US.

### Working waterfronts support most of Virginia's:

- Commercial fishing operations - large and small
- Ship and boat building, maintenance and repair operations
- Marine research facilities
- Export and import facilities
- Recreational boating and support services
- Marine transportation

### Impact of Working Waterfronts Activity in Virginia:

- 2998 Commercial License Sales in VA (VMRC, 2014)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> largest producer of Marine products in US (Virginia Marine Products Board, 2012)
  - 4,944,028,366 pounds in 2012
  - Dockside value - \$192M
  - Hard clams and oysters - \$36.9M
- Recreational boating impact, annual to VA
  - Between \$1.2 (VMRC) and \$2.9B (NMMA)
  - Between 8,732 (VMRC) and 23,044 (NMMA)
- Port of VA impact (Pearson & Swan, 2013)
  - \$60B
  - 6.8 percent of Gross State Product
  - 374,000 total jobs
  - 9.4 percent of VA employment
  - \$17.5B in wages

Unfortunately, the changing global economy, increasing competition, land and water conflicts, decline in water quality and fisheries habitat, an aging workforce, and vulnerability to increasing natural threats (rise in sea level, frequency and magnitude of storm events, land subsidence, shoaling of navigable channels, etc.) pose significant threats to the future of the approximately 600 working waterfronts in operation in coastal Virginia. These threats make it imperative that concerted action at all levels of government and the private sector be taken in the years ahead to ensure that these precious resources are available to support Virginia's economy.

*Virginia's Working Waterfront Master Plan* outlines a whole series of actions across all levels of government and private sector that, if implemented, will lead to the preservation and redevelopment of working waterfronts in Virginia. The following is an outline of the recommendations contained in this *Master Plan*.



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Virginia Coastal Zone  
MANAGEMENT PROGRAM



## Recommendations

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### FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ACTIONS:

- Adopt a national Working Waterfront Preservation Act.
- Reinstate shallow channel-dredging program funding of the Army Corps of Engineers.
- Designate additional America's Marine Highway Program corridors in Virginia.
- Increase promotion of working waterfronts along the Captain John Smith Chesapeake Bay Historic Trail.

### VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTIONS:

- Enact a Working Waterfront Preservation Act.
- Establish a legislative study commission to review the viability of working waterfronts.
- Establish a shallow channel dredging matching grant program.
- Dedicate marine-related taxes/fees to working waterfront improvements.
- Enable localities to establish Working Waterfront Development Areas.
- Enable localities to classify commercial fishing vessels and related equipment as a separate class of personal property.
- Expand the Port of Virginia Economic and Infrastructure Development Fund to include private investment at smaller commercial harbors.
- Establish a state Working Waterfront Preservation income tax credit.

### GOVERNOR'S ACTIONS:

- Establish priority for working waterfront improvements in numerous State administered grant programs.
- Establish an advisory group to evaluate the impacts of State storm water and Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act regulations on working waterfront development.
- Charge the Commonwealth Center for Recurrent Flooding Resiliency with long-term planning for the resiliency of working waterfronts of regional importance.

### VA PORT AUTHORITY ACTIONS:

- Expand funding for small port and harbor improvement throughout Tidewater Virginia.

### COMMONWEALTH ACTIONS:

- Continue active fishery resource management and Chesapeake Bay cleanup programs.
- VMRC should engage stakeholders involved in the water conflict mediation process for feedback on the processes' efficiencies and inefficiencies and could consider updating their processes for resolving use conflicts on or over the Virginia's tidal waters.

- Establish adequate workforce development programs and facilities for the changing marine-related industries.

### COASTAL PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSIONS' ACTIONS:

- Continue research and planning for the preservation/redevelopment of working waterfronts.
- Increase working waterfront preservation and redevelopment technical assistance to local governments.
- Establish working waterfront preservation/redevelopment test demonstrations sites.
- Create revolving loan funds for commercial waterfront development and equipment.
- Use Public Access Authorities for acquisition and development of working waterfront sites.

### COASTAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACTIONS:

- Adopt an explicit working waterfront development policy.
- Establish permissive, by right, zoning policies for working waterfronts.
- Establish local tax policies that stimulate water-dependent business development.
- Review zoning provisions to that regulate shoreline uses and uses connected to the shoreline by a wharf, pier, dock or similar structure to resolve potential use conflicts;
- Establish incentives encouraging appropriate uses of working waterfronts.
- Invest in the development of select working waterfronts.
- Deploy appropriate development districts (Enterprise Zone, Technology Zone, Community Development Authorities, Tax Increment Financing, etc.) to increase working waterfront development.
- Plan for adaptation and resiliency of public facilities along the waterfront.

### PRIVATE SECTOR ACTIONS:

- Educate the community leaders and the public on the importance of our working waterfronts to our economy and our culture.
- Conduct succession planning to ensure continuation of marine businesses.
- Plan for the resiliency of their waterfront businesses.