

April 30, 2015

**Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program
Semiannual Section B.1 Report on Section 312 Evaluation and Metrics
For the Period from October 1, 2014 – March 31, 2015**

	Page
SECTION B.1.A: Section 312 Evaluation Progress	2
1. Coastal Policy Team	2
2. Grants Management	2
3. Water Quality	3
4. Coastal Hazards	3
5. Federal Consistency	4
6. Public Participation and Outreach	4

B.1.A. SECTION 312 EVALUATION PROGRESS

The Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program was last evaluated in May 2006.

1. Coastal Policy Team

PROGRAM SUGGESTION: The Coastal Policy Team should establish a strategic planning effort for the team and the VCZMP. The strategic plan could also set annual objectives and some measurable goals or performance measurement criteria to help gauge success.

DESCRIPTION OF PROGRESS/RESPONSE: Two strategic planning processes are in place: 1) Every five years the Coastal Policy Team engages in the Section 309 Coastal Needs Assessment & Strategy Development process – a strategic plan for prioritizing and developing new policies; 2) At almost every CPT meeting (1-2 times per year) the group discusses the next priority for incorporating new state laws or regulations into the Virginia CZM Program.

Given the limited resources we have, both in staff time and available dollars, it's not clear that sufficient benefit would derive from adding on yet another strategic planning process. We would like to discuss the need for this further with NOAA in the event that there is some aspect of strategic planning that we are neglecting but do or could have the resources to address.

STATUS: To be completed September 2015

2. Grants Management

PROGRAM SUGGESTION: Prior to development of the application for 2007 grant award funds, the VCZMP should consider ways to diversify match used for the CZMA cooperative agreement and to ensure mechanisms are in place to spend federal funds within the 18-month time frame of the award.

DESCRIPTION OF PROGRESS/RESPONSE: While it is understandable that NOAA would like to see the CZM funds that DEQ retains for its own staff be matched task by task, it is not realistic to expect in this economic climate that the Commonwealth can afford to allocate new funds to the Virginia CZM Program. Like most states, Virginia has been through several rounds of state budget cuts and more are expected. Fortunately, the WQIF funds that are used to match DEQ tasks have been maintained and the Commonwealth is actually spending millions more dollars on sewage treatment plant upgrades than are captured as match for our CZM awards. Also in light of Congress' failure to fund the Coastal Nonpoint Program, these sewage treatment plant upgrades funded with matching dollars are one of the few water quality projects the Virginia CZM Program has. The Virginia CZM staff diligently attempt to complete grant tasks within 18 months, and most tasks are, however, unforeseeable circumstances such as staff turnover, weather, and difficulties in obtaining various approvals at all levels of government do often necessitate extension requests. With funding so reduced, it is essential to try to reprogram any unspent funds toward the end of each year.

STATUS: Completed: October 2007

3. Water Quality

PROGRAM SUGGESTION: With the ‘devolution’ of local road planning, operations, and maintenance from the Virginia DOT to the local level, the VCZMP should consider using nonpoint program funding to support targeted assistance for the “Roads, Highways, and Bridges” nonpoint program management measures. The VCZMP and the nonpoint program manager should work to establish priorities for the nonpoint program and identify and develop for implementation some projects for whenever and whatever funding becomes available.

DESCRIPTION OF PROGRESS/RESPONSE: Congress continues to fail to appropriate funding for the Coastal Non-Point program. In the event that funding for special initiatives for the water quality and non-point source program becomes available, the Virginia CZM Program will work to identify opportunities for targeted assistance to local governments for the “Roads, Highways, and Bridges” nonpoint program management measures.” To date, Virginia CZM continues to use Section 309 and 306 funds to support the Non-Point Pollution and Healthy Waters programs in Virginia. Through this support, Virginia CZM works with the Coastal Non-point Manager to prioritize non-point program activities and identify additional opportunities to expand and enhance the efforts of the Healthy Waters program.

STATUS: Ongoing

4. Coastal Hazards

PROGRAM SUGGESTION: The VCZMP and its Commonwealth, regional, and local community partners should consider development of a coastal community resiliency initiative through existing partnerships and programs (e.g., SAMPS, directed technical assistance) as a further means to address coastal hazards. Existing research data and results and recent development of infrastructure (i.e., data layers and geospatial information) such as Coastal GEMS could be translated and disseminated through training programs and workshops for local government decision-makers as part of this effort.

DESCRIPTION OF PROGRESS: The Sustainable Community Planning Focal Area was chosen after extensive input from partner agencies and through discussions of the Coastal Policy Team in 2008 and included the concept of coastal hazards. As a result, Virginia CZM resources, including staff time and grants, were directed at state agencies and coastal planning district commissions to help coastal localities plan for adaptation to climate change and to protect blue and green infrastructure. The Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program has supported the recurrent flooding / sea level rise adaptation efforts of four coastal planning district commissions (PDCs) since 2008. The Virginia CZM program has also supported numerous shoreline management planning initiatives, including the use of living shorelines as a means of preserving wetlands in the face of rising sea levels. Coastal GEMS is an important means of communicating information on resiliency-related topics, and a number of local government

training sessions have been conducted by Virginia CZM staff (see Suggestion 6). Virginia CZM staff also participate in the Climate Change Action Team of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean, as well as several state-level initiatives to address climate change adaptation and sea level rise. Each of these initiatives addresses the NOAA suggestion for a community resiliency initiative.

STATUS: Ongoing

5. Federal Consistency

PROGRAM SUGGESTION: The Coastal Policy Team should consider using federal consistency as a tool for identifying opportunities to review state policies or influencing new state policy based upon new situations presented in federal consistency determinations.

DESCRIPTION OF PROGRESS: At the December, 2014 Coastal Partners Workshop, stakeholders suggested adding provisions to Virginia's federal consistency and state environmental impact review requirements to help improve coastal resiliency in the face of climate change. This suggestion will be considered through the current Section 309 evaluation process.

Virginia CZM staff have evaluated options for protecting state-listed endangered species through federal consistency. The Virginia CZM Program is currently trying to address this issue through the dispute resolution provisions in the Program's Executive Order. Virginia CZM staff are also working to provide routine program changes to NOAA and to identify the enforceable policies among the changes.

STATUS: Ongoing

6. Public Participation and Outreach

PROGRAM SUGGESTION: The Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program should evaluate the numerous educational and outreach markets it serves and consider a stronger focus on the local and coastal decision-makers. The planning district commissions, Sea Grant, the Chesapeake Bay-Virginia NERR Coastal Training Program, and the federal staff of the Chesapeake NEMO program could provide coordination and assistance.

RESPONSE: In early 2008, Virginia CZM released an improved version of Coastal GEMS (version 2). Since that time, numerous data layers have been developed and added to GEMS to make the system even more-user-friendly to planners and to make the connections between land and water resources more visible. For example, several data layers were synthesized to create a single, comprehensive Land Priority Conservation Areas (PCA) dataset that allowed PDCs and local planners to use a single layer for comprehensive planning versus the multiple layers previously available. In FY 2010 the recently completed Estuarine Priority Conservation Areas layer was incorporated into an updated PCA dataset to create a synthesis map now called the

Coastal Virginia Ecological Value Assessment (Coastal VEVA) – giving localities and state agencies a single layer depicting all known blue and green infrastructure within Virginia’s coastal zone. This FY 2010 grant is also focusing on training for elected officials and local planning staff on the value and use of this new data layer. The NEMO Coordinator as well as staff from DCR, DGIF VCU and VIMS are all involved in this effort. To ensure that local/coastal decision makers are aware of the Coastal GEMS tool and its capabilities VA CZM staff continues to offer Coastal GEMS training. Most recently, training was provided to local planners during a Richmond Regional PDC meeting (FY10) and Hampton Roads PDC meeting (FY11). An FY10 grant to VCU’s Center for Environmental Studies resulted in version 3 of the Coastal GEMS application and takes advantage of new web based mapping software to provide an enhanced user experience.

Virginia CZM’s “focal area” during the fiscal years 2008 -2010 was “Sustainable Communities: Protecting Blue-Green Infrastructure and Adapting to Climate Change.” Representatives from each of Virginia’s eight coastal planning district commissions helped refine this “focal area” during the 2007 Coastal Partners Workshop where the need for more education for local planners and decision-makers was identified as a high priority. Community planning occurs at the local government level and grants to the coastal PDCs continue to be the most effective and efficient means for the Virginia CZM Program to provide education and training to local planners and officials. Competitive grants remain available for PDCs. This allows them to prioritize internally their needs for local training efforts – some have continued in this area while others have chosen to undertake public access projects. The PDCs are coordinating with Virginia NEMO and support for NEMO is helping to provide direct technical assistance to those localities requesting it. The focal area projects have resulted in better-informed local planning staff and decision-makers and better protection and management of important coastal resources through adoption of local plans and ordinances. Coastal GEMS has also become a trusted source of information for local planners.

Since Virginia’s coastal planning district commissions are in an excellent position to provide local planners and officials regularly scheduled training on coastal resource management issues through their quarterly meetings, Virginia CZM continues to ask each coastal PDC to provide four training opportunities each year as a deliverable of their technical assistance funding. These trainings, on topics related to Virginia CZM goals and initiatives, have been ongoing for the last few years and generally are well attended across the eight coastal PDCs.

Virginia CZM staff continues to take advantage of several opportunities to improve coordination with our NOAA “sister” programs: Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (CBNERRS) and Sea Grant. Virginia CZM staff participates in Virginia Sea Grant strategic planning sessions and evaluations and Virginia CZM and CBNERRS staff occasionally holds “collaboration meetings.” The Director of Virginia Sea Grant and Manager of CBNERRS are members of the Coastal Policy Team and Virginia CZM staff serves on the CBNERRS Coastal Training Steering Committee. These are all important venues for identifying common goals, priorities and programs. Virginia CZM staff is collaborating with Virginia Sea Grant and CBNERRS communication staff on shared issues and projects, including working with Sea Grant to develop and implement a media strategy in advance of a February 2014 Working Waterfronts Workshop, resulting in very good press coverage.

Virginia CZM staff has engaged local and regional government partners in the Section 309 assessment and strategy process. The Virginia CZM Program began its 2016 - 2020 Coastal Zone Enhancement process in fall of 2014 by distributing to its partners a *Virginia Coastal Needs Assessment and Prioritization Survey*. The results of this survey were shared last December at the [2014 Virginia Coastal Partners Workshop](#), which included attendees from regional, local and state agencies, as well as academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, marine-related businesses, and individuals who help manage and protect Virginia's coastal resources. During the course of the workshop, attendees heard presentations on critical or evolving coastal resource management issues, and helped prioritize which areas should be considered the highest priorities for the Virginia CZM Program and the focus of Section 309 strategies for the coming 2016-2020 cycle. Two of the three strategies Virginia CZM will submit to NOAA will build on the program's work with local and regional governments and coastal communities: 1) Coastal Hazards – emphasizing shoreline management and community resilience; and, 2) Cumulative and Secondary Impacts of Growth and Development - including working waterfronts. The goals of this strategy are 1) to align local planning initiatives with state conservation priorities, focusing on the value of protected lands, particularly as they allow for recreation and eco-tourism; and 2) to implement elements of the newly developed Virginia Working Waterfronts Plan focused on protecting the economic viability of these unique local places.

The topic of native plant use continues to enable the Virginia CZM to engage a great variety of partners, and to work with local planning teams on regional native plant campaigns. The George Washington Regional Commission, in its proposal for 2015 coastal technical assistance funding, has decided to follow the lead of the PDCs on the Eastern Shore, in Northern Virginia, on the Northern Neck, and in Hampton Roads to develop a Plant GW Natives campaign. Recently, the Northern Virginia Regional Commission and its partners in the Plant NoVA Natives campaign were asked to present to the Commission members, who were particularly impressed by the collaborative successes of the campaign. The NVRC submitted a FY15 proposal under Section 309 to support the efforts of the campaign to work with local governments on revising weed ordinances to protect native plantings in the region and to work with county parks offices to review and revise their policies to encourage and increase native vegetation.

STATUS: Ongoing