

**April 30, 2014**

**Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program  
Semiannual Section B.1 Report on Section 312 Evaluation and Metrics  
For the Period from October 1, 2013 – March 31, 2014**

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## **B.1.A. SECTION 312 EVALUATION PROGRESS**

The Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program was last evaluated in May 2006. NOAA Program Suggestions, along with the Virginia CZM Program's responses, are listed below. Virginia CZM staff are currently preparing for the new Section 312 Evaluation process so that all written reports will be completed by November 15, 2014.

### **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:** Multiple strategic planning processes are already in place: 1) Every three years the Coastal Policy Team goes through a process (sometimes associated with our biennial Partners Workshop) to identify a new "focal area" for the small amount of funds (~\$350-500,000 per year) that we have available after our required continuing grants are covered; 2) 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; 3) 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:** Completed: October 2008

### **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.” Virginia has used Section 309 and 306 funds to support the Coastal Networked Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) program in Virginia. Through this support, Virginia CZM has worked with the Coastal Non-point Manager to prioritize non-point program activities and identify additional opportunities to expand and enhance the efforts of Coastal NEMO.

STATUS: Completed: October 2013

### **4. Coastal Hazards**

PROGRAM SUGGESTION: The VCZMP and its state, 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: Virginia has used the concept of focal areas since 1999 in order to concentrate financial and policy efforts on a particular resource or geographic region for a three-year period. 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. Total funding so far is \$498,606. The Hampton Roads PDC received FY 11, 12 and 13 competitive PDC grant to continue its work on climate change adaptation in the region. Also, for FY 11, 12 and 13, the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission included climate adaptation in its Technical Assistance grants. 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). Each of these initiatives, but especially climate change adaptation, 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:** In response to this suggestion, the Coastal Policy Team asked Virginia CZM staff to evaluate options for protecting endangered species through federal consistency. The Virginia CZM Program contracted with the Environmental Law Institute (ELI) to prepare routine program change submissions and then to address concerns raised about the expansion of authority regarding endangered species. The Virginia CZM Program is currently evaluating how to best move forward with this issue. At the March 2014 Coastal Policy Team meeting, the Team recommended moving forward with incorporation of state-listed threatened and endangered species. Because the Virginia Department of Transportation still objects to this action, Virginia CZM staff will be meeting with the Director of the Department of Environmental Quality to determine the best means of moving forward.

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 is currently underway to create a version 3 of the Coastal GEMS application that will take 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. The 2011 and 2012 focal area continues competitive grants for the PDCs. This has allowed 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 are generally 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. CBNERRS staff participates on the Virginia Native Plants marketing Partnership. These are all important venues for identifying common goals, priorities and programs. Virginia Sea Grant and CBNERRS communication staff are increasingly more proactive in collaborating on coastal management stories, consistent messaging and improved visibility and credit for our programs’ efforts and investments. Virginia CZM staff worked with Sea Grant Communications staff to develop and implement a Media Strategy in advance of a February 2014 Working Waterfronts Workshop. The result was several articles in local newspapers and an article soon to be published in the Bay Journal. Over the last few years, Virginia CZM Office staff participated on a Sea Grant communication focus group; collaborated with Virginia Sea Grant and other NOAA partners to offer a tour of the NOAA Okeanos research vessel; and, collaborated with CBNERRS on a CZMA 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary event at VIMS highlighting the programs’ shared accomplishments, which resulted in media coverage and increased visibility for NOAA, the CZM and both programs.

Virginia CZM staff has been engaged in ongoing coordination with state, regional and local CZM partners on communication, marketing and education efforts. The 2012 Virginia Coastal Partners Workshop in December 2012 focused on engaging stakeholders in coastal management and identifying next steps on coastal issues including improving stakeholder education and participation. The next workshop is scheduled for December 2014 and will focus in part on development of Section 309 Coastal Needs Assessments and Strategies. Virginia CZM staff continue to coordinate the Virginia Native Plants Marketing Partnership - a forum to collaborate and coordinate on consistent messaging to the general public and to maximize the partners’ limited resources - <http://www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/CoastalZoneManagement/CZMIssuesInitiatives/NativePlants.aspx>. Virginia CZM initiated and funds four regional native plants campaigns on the Eastern Shore, on the Northern Neck, in Northern Virginia and in the Hampton Roads. Each of these regional native plant campaigns is working with a local planning or steering team. Virginia CZM sponsored printing of the new Flora of Virginia, published in December 2012. Virginia CZM’s native plant marketing efforts are benefitting local governments implementing conservation landscaping to help address TMDL requirements.

STATUS: Ongoing