

Virginia CZM Program Social Marketing: Making Doing Fun, Easy and Popular



Photo courtesy of DCR.

A little lightheartedness has its place and can go a long way in capturing the attention of the public, helping raise awareness of coastal issues, and leaving a memorable impact, such as Omar and Seacil have (see photo of these costumed characters on the reverse side). But, once we have their attention, how do we get people to take the next step and change their behaviors that have an impact on the coastal resources they now better know and appreciate?

In busy lives often overloaded with information, simple, illustrated step by step guides of “how to do it” are one way. Sometimes a little more knowledge in the right format, or presented in just the right way, will encourage people to act. Omar is one way we have interjected fun, but the next step was making oyster gardening - a way many individuals could take on an active role in helping restore oysters - easier. Working with its partners, the Virginia CZM Program produced a “how to guide” to oyster gardening. As a result of the guide, permits for oyster gardening have steadily increased.

But what happens when action is slow to happen, or does not happen at all? How do we make doing more popular? In spring 2009, the Virginia CZM Program launched the “Plant ES Natives” community-based social marketing campaign through the Virginia Seaside Heritage Program. The campaign is going beyond awareness to change a social norm. It was designed after listening to Shore residents and identifying the barriers that were inhibiting the planting of natives, and uses a multi-media mix to sell natives and make planting fun, easy and popular. And the campaign is having the desired effect. People are excited and buying more natives. Social marketing will continue to be a significant part of the Virginia CZM Program’s strategy to engage Virginians in coastal resource protection.



The Virginia Coastal Zone Management magazine (begun in 1991) tells stories to illustrate the extent of a coastal management problem, which partners were brought in to form solutions and how CZMA funding leads to real, on-the-ground change and improvements.



Virginia Coastal Zone
 MANAGEMENT PROGRAM



This accomplishments fact sheet was originally produced by the Virginia CZM Program for a June 2012 event to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the CZMA and to highlight the accomplishments made possible through this federal funding.

Plant ES Natives Social Marketing Campaign Results

- One Eastern Shore garden center reported that native plants sales went up 8-10% after the campaign was implemented in April 2009. Another center/nursery reported they planned to grow 40 native plants in anticipation of greater demand, while a local nursery indicated that they planned to focus future planting on native shrubs and asked the campaign for advice on species.
- Much as the mini-oyster reef in the aquarium illustrated how this habitat is special (like at the Smithsonian exhibit in photo above right), Plant ES Natives campaign demo gardens (10 in place) follow the rule that seeing is believing and showcase the beauty of Eastern Shore native plants. In a campaign survey 98% of respondents who visited a garden said that it influenced their purchase or plan to purchase native plants.
- Just as the oyster gardening guide focused on making it easier to garden oysters, a colorful guide to Eastern Shore native plants makes it easier for residents to identify native plants, and a series of noticeable, eye-catching, self-explanatory prompts at point of sale makes it easier to find them, such as the plant tags in the photo below. The guide has been incredibly popular and garden centers report that customers are bringing in a copy. Garden centers also suggested an additional tag for native trees to make them even more prominent.
- Leaders within the Eastern Shore's communities are helping make planting natives more popular.
- The Plant ES Natives campaign is serving as a model to implement similar campaigns in other regions of Virginia's coastal zone.
- Virginia CZM has reached out to other partners engaged in native plant marketing efforts in the coastal zone and initiated a new Virginia Native Plant Marketing Partnership. This new partnership is a forum for the partners to collaborate and coordinate, leading to more consistent messaging to the general public and greater efficiencies in the use of limited resources.

For more information on Virginia CZM's communication and social marketing efforts:

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Smithsonian or Bust! Oysters, Seahorses and Undersea Grasses Fascinate the Folks!

The Virginia Coastal Program exhibited in June at the 2004 Smithsonian Folklife Festival on "The Mall" in Washington, D.C. The theme—Mid-Atlantic Maritime Communities. Aquaria, kid's activities, Omar (the oyster), and Seacil (the seahorse), brought crowds and fun-filled learning!

Live Sea Creatures
 The Coastal Program's exhibit highlighted the importance of oyster reefs and underwater grasses, and featured the efforts the Program has made toward restoration of these key habitats. Two 50-gallon aquaria housed a mini-eel grass bed and oyster reef. Special thanks go to CBNERRS at Gloucester Point for providing the water and animals! The blue crabs and seahorse were a huge hit!

Kids Activities
 Children helped build an oyster reef and a sea grass bed. They also walked away with an Omar tattoo and a "bit of habitat" they built for their Seacil seahorse cookie cutter out of green straw and pipe cleaners!

Omar of the Reef and Seacil of the Seagrass
 —the star attractions!

Photos by Virginia Witmer, VCR.

Virginia Oyster Gardening

Native Plants of Accomack and Northampton

Plant ES Natives

