

Cumulative and Secondary Impacts: Strategy
STRATEGY: *Prioritizing Conservation Corridors*

Summary

Population growth and development in many urban and suburban areas of Virginia's coastal zone has resulted in significant habitat fragmentation and the loss of many wetlands and riparian buffers that help protect water quality. Without proper planning and coordination of management programs, much of the coastal zone's remaining "green infrastructure" will also be lost as rural areas continue to grow and develop. Traditional infrastructure like roads, water and sewer lines or electric lines need advance planning in order to ensure that corridors are available for their eventual construction. This same principle must be applied to "conservation corridors" to ensure that important habitats remain connected to each other and that an adequate filtering systems remains to protect our water resources.

A successful model for prioritizing conservation corridors in Virginia's Coastal Zone is already in place. The Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, in partnership with Virginia CZM, has developed a system of interconnected conservation corridors for its localities that prioritizes areas for preservation and restoration based on a number of data layers and local input. Designating the corridors requires GIS analysis and a consensus building process for achieving multiple environmental benefits. As part of the process, a memorandum of understanding was signed by all of the localities, agencies and organizations involved in land conservation and wetlands management. The MOU stated that these entities would consider the identified corridors as priority areas for future preservation and restoration initiatives, including wetlands mitigation. The corridor system has also been used in comprehensive planning efforts, the creation of a purchase of development rights program, and efforts to obtain conservation easements from private landowners.

Under this 309 strategy, funding would be provided for PDCs to develop, or enhance, conservation corridors. The result should be a network of identified and locally accepted conservation corridors for Virginia's entire coastal zone.

Enforceable Policies/Outcomes

- Regional conservation corridors for all coastal zone localities.
- MOUs between agencies/localities regarding use of conservation corridors to achieve multiple benefits.
- Incorporation of identified conservation corridors into local comprehensive plans and land management efforts.

Task 1: Develop regional conservation corridors for Coastal PDCs to build consensus on areas to prioritize for preservation or restoration based on existing data layers and analyses. Draft MOUs, comprehensive plan amendments and other management programs as locally identified regarding the use of these areas to achieve multiple environmental benefits.					Years 3-5	\$316,000
Total						\$316,000
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total Request	
		\$71,000	\$120,000	\$125,000	\$316,000	