

**April 30, 2019**

**Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program  
Semiannual Section B.1 Report on Section 312 Evaluation and Metrics  
For the Period from October 1, 2018 – March 31, 2019**

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

Virginia's most recent evaluation began in the fall of 2014 with the Virginia CZM Program responding to 36 evaluation questions regarding administration of the program, protection of coastal habitat, coastal hazards and sea level rise, coastal water quality, coastal-dependent uses, public access, governmental coordination, and descriptions of major achievements and challenges. NOAA then conducted an online survey of Virginia CZM stakeholders and partners, and in May 2015 conducted interviews of key partners on identified target areas. A public meeting was held on May 12, 2015.

Stakeholders interviewed by the NOAA team described the program as *partner-oriented* and *having effective partnerships with local communities and regional and non-profit groups*. "Flexible to meet the needs of locals" and "inclusionary" were some of the ways stakeholders expressed partnership demonstrated by Virginia CZM.

The three target areas identified by the NOAA team to evaluate the Virginia CZM Program were: 1) Restoring and Protecting Coastal Habitats and increasing Public Access, 2) Ocean Planning, and 3) Coastal Resilience. Preliminary accomplishments and recommendations identified by NOAA in each target area are as follows:

### Restoring and Protecting Coastal Habitats and Increasing Public Access

Accomplishment: The Public Access Authorities are providing a new tool for public access acquisition and management through a local policy framework enabled by state legislation.

Accomplishment: The Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program's place-based restoration efforts have been highly successful, leveraging significant funding from partners and resulting in "on the ground" coastal habitat improvements.

**Progress This Period (October 2018 – March 2019):** VA CZMP initiated a three-year focal area in October 2017 to be implemented by state agencies and Planning District Commissions - Promoting Sustainable Coastal Industries: Shellfish Aquaculture and Ecotourism. Working with two of coastal Virginia's economic strengths, aquaculture and tourism, the VA CZMP is supporting projects that will help boost the shellfish aquaculture and ecotourism industries through research, planning and visual tool development (see Section A report for Tasks 71-75). Working with a variety of stakeholders, grantees are looking at current industry conditions throughout the coastal zone as well as within specific areas to determine ways to improve, expand and create industry as well as public access opportunities. Program visibility is also included since this is a critical time for Congress and the public to understand the value of CZM funds. Ensuring that acknowledgement signs for projects that VA CZMP has funded over the years are still in place, and updated as needed, is critical to program visibility and is one of the subjects of this focal area. The FY18 grants are finishing up and draft applications for FY19 grants, the last year of this 3 year effort have been sent to NOAA. The Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission through its CZM technical assistance grant (see Section A report

for FY18 Task 41) continued to seek adoption of a Water Access Authority however, the County Boards of Supervisors have declined to take up this action. This focal area also includes protection of vulnerable natural and community coastal resources through Tasks 82-84 (see Section A report for progress on these tasks).

The Virginia CZM Program has nearly completed a FY16 grant for acquisition of about 102 acres (the Spady tract) on the Eastern Shore. This will be an addition to the Magothy Bay Natural Area Preserve. The program is also working on additional land acquisition projects on the Eastern Shore of Virginia in Northampton County and the lower Chickahominy (likely in Charles City County) using FY 17 and 18 funds. All of these acquisitions will protect migratory songbird habitat and provide public access for bird and other wildlife viewing as well as protect adjacent water quality.

FY17 funds (about \$20k) that had been allocated for updated signage will likely be used to restore a public access walkway on the Seaside of VA's Eastern Shore that was constructed with CZM funds in 2004. 306A documentation will be submitted to NOAA during the next reporting period.

#### Ocean Planning

**Accomplishment:** The VA CZMP's leadership in regional ocean planning has brought together diverse stakeholders to plan for the location of future offshore facilities while minimizing user conflicts and impacts to coastal resources.

**Recommendation:** The NOAA Office for Coastal Management encourages the VA CZMP to continue its leadership role in regional ocean planning and to plan for how the work will move forward over the next five years, including continued emphasis on ways to diversify and leverage funding.

**Progress This Period (October 2018 – March 2019):** The CZM Program Manager continued to lead ocean planning efforts for the Mid-Atlantic as federal, state and Tribal entities regrouped after the Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body (RPB) was disbanded under Executive Order on June 19, 2018. Calls with staff who had been on the RPB continued and efforts focused on developing a new organizational structure and hosting a Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum on March 20 at Monmouth University in New Jersey. A new entity was created, the Mid-Atlantic Committee on the Ocean (MACO), and, at the first official MACO meeting on March 21, the Virginia CZM Program Manager agreed to serve as the sole Chair of MACO through June 30, 2019 when her previous term as RPB Co-Chair would have ended. It was also agreed that MACO would include a 7-8 member Steering Committee with 2 (in addition to the Chair being a state MARCO Board member) state seats, 3 federal seats and one Tribal and one Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council seat (should MAFMC choose to hold a seat).

Throughout this period, the Virginia CZM Program Manager continued to lead efforts on marine habitat data, shifting species, marine debris and the Ocean Mapping & Data.

During this period Virginia CZM contracted with The Nature Conservancy to conduct a FY18 grant project to create visualization tools for the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal that will allow users to see shifts in the distribution of species both seasonally and over longer periods of time (see FY18 Task 94.02). The Marine Debris Work Group continued work on its \$149k grant from the NOAA Marine Debris Program to expand Virginia's balloon release reduction social marketing campaign to the entire Mid-Atlantic region. Monitoring of balloon debris was conducted in each state during the fall and 4 states have also completed their spring monitoring.

The FY17 project to identify Ecologically Rich Areas in the Mid-Atlantic was cancelled in accordance with the new Executive Order's guidance to federal agencies prohibiting federal agency involvement in such efforts.

The VA CZM Manager continued to serve as the Virginia representative on MARCO's Management Board. Materials developed by MARCO are available on the MARCO website at <http://midatlanticocean.org/resources/>.

### Coastal Resilience

**Accomplishment:** The VA CZMP's leadership in coastal resilience has enhanced the capacity of local partners for adaptation planning and promoted the use of living shoreline approaches to enhance community and ecological resilience.

**Recommendation:** The NOAA Office for Coastal Management recommends that the VA CZMP further define the program's "niche" as it relates to coastal resilience.

The Virginia CZM Program addressed this recommendation by focusing its efforts to build coastal resilience into two key areas identified in the Section 309 Coastal Hazards Strategy. The Strategy targets community resiliency (the built environment) and shoreline resiliency (natural and nature-based features). Projects funded through the Strategy should ultimately lead to new enforceable policies that advance coastal resiliency in these two areas. Resilience-building projects are also being funded through the Virginia CZM Program's Focal Area.

The first year of the Strategy (October 2016 to September 2017) focused on acquiring the data necessary to develop local shoreline management plans, and on providing training for shoreline contractors and local government officials responsible for shoreline management decisions. Two regional projects designed to improve community resilience in Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads were also completed.

Progress for the second year (October 2017 to September 2018) included more work to promote better shoreline management and the use of living shorelines, but also two community resilience projects. The first was designed to promote local adoption or expansion of the community rating system under the national flood insurance program, while the second will provide coastal communities with a tool to comprehensively evaluate their current resiliency efforts.

Coastal resilience projects currently underway (October 2018 to September 2019) include the following:

- evaluating living shoreline performance
- refining the shoreline management model and running new analyses
- supporting regional adaptation planning in Northern Virginia
- analyzing first floor elevations in Hampton Roads
- developing a Tidal Shoreline Policies Handbook
- shoreline management training for local officials
- shoreline evolution analyses, evaluating localities for Community Rating System participation
- promoting the beneficial use of dredged material
- developing a database of potential resilience-building projects