



Semi-Annual Success Story ("Section C")
submitted to the
Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management/NOAA
October 2012 – March 2013

Virginia CZM Leverages Donation of Critical Shoreline Acreage Valued at \$1.6M

CZMA Performance Measure Areas:

Coastal Habitat Protection, Government Coordination & Decision-Making, Coastal Dependent Uses & Community Development, Public Access

Identification & Description of Issue:

One of Virginia's eight coastal planning district commissions, the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission (MPPDC) is an important partner in the Virginia CZM Program and receives annual CZM grant to support regional coastal technical assistance. The MPPDC has established a valuable regional partnership with the Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority (PAA), created in 2003 with funding from the Virginia CZM Program. The PAA works to preserve and manage access to the rivers, creeks and bays that dominate the Middle Peninsula landscape. By the end of 2012, the PAA had acquired approximately 864 acres across the region through gifts and grant funds, including Virginia CZM Program funding.



In February 2013, the PAA was gifted 96.81 acres of waterfront property on the Severn River in Gloucester County valued at \$1.6 million. The property consists of twenty-one parcels, three of which have dwellings. Much of the property is pristine coastal ecosystem, including densely forested mixed hardwood and pine forests, and tidal wetlands. Thousands of feet of the property have shoreline for water access and a long pier juts hundreds of feet into the Severn River and has a dock with a boat lift. A portion of the property serves as a new home for the Gloucester Crew Team. The site is also potentially a hub on a Middle Peninsula network of blue-water trails. Once a management plan for the property is in place the property will be fully open to public access. A Virginia CZM Program grant to the MPPDC will support development of this plan, which will be designed to meet the goals of the Public Access Authority while maximizing water access, outdoor recreational and community needs.

Geographic Location: Congressional District 1.

How the Virginia CZM Program Was Involved: In 2003, the Virginia General Assembly approved House Bill 619 and the creation of the Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access

Authority (MPCBPAA), which establishes an institutional framework for local governments in the region to address public access along more than 1,000 square miles in Virginia's coastal zone (Chapter 66 (§ 15.2-6600 et seq.) of Title 15.2 of the Code of Virginia) (<http://www.virginiacoastalaccess.net/MPPAA.html>). The Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission drafted the language for this legislation as part of its annual Coastal Technical Assistance grant from Virginia CZM. The MPCBPAA is composed of elected officials and local government administrators from five counties (Essex, Gloucester, King and Queen, King William, and Mathews) and three towns (Tappahannock, Urbanna, and West Point). It promotes land acquisition and public access enhancements in the Middle Peninsula region, often partnering with federal and state agencies, including the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program, non-governmental organizations, and private citizens.

Shortly after the creation of the MPCBPAA, the Virginia CZM Program gave a \$10,000 grant to the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission (MPPDC) to assist the MPCBPAA to: 1) Adopt By-Laws and an Operating Agreement for the MPCBPAA; 2) List possible acquisition sites proposed by member counties and towns; and 3) Draft a summary of public access guides and maps produced in the Middle Peninsula.

Then in 2003, the Virginia CZM Program awarded the MPCBPAA a \$392,000 grant to acquire the 274-acre Browne Tract. The parcel straddles Essex and King & Queen Counties in the Dragon Run watershed.



During the 2007 session, the General Assembly passed House Bill 2781 sponsored by Delegate Harvey Morgan which, “allows the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB), upon the request of a public access authority, to transfer to the authority any and all rights and interests of the Board in highways, highway rights-of-way, and landings without first abandoning or discontinuing them.” This removed a huge obstacle to conserving road endings to enhance public access to the water. With funding from the Virginia CZM Program, the MPCBPAA has identified 300 roadways with public access capabilities running to or near waterways in the Middle Peninsula.

In 2013, the Virginia CZM Program will support, through a \$5,000 grant to the MPPDC, the development of a management plan for the newly donated 96.81 acres of waterfront property on the Severn River in partnership with the MPCBPAA. The structures on the property “present new opportunities for enhancing public water access as well as new management issues for the PAA,” states Lewie Lawrence, Executive Director, Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission.

“Thanks to the support of the Virginia CZM Program over the last 10 years, the Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority has done and will continue to do real and permanent good for the citizens of the Middle Peninsula and the Commonwealth at large,” added Lawrence.

Qualitative Summary of Accomplishments and Outcomes:

Recent testimonies from stakeholders and beneficiaries of the Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority’s work convey the success of PAA in helping to provide for the region’s public access needs:

Gloucester County Supervisor Louise Theberge, who envisions the property becoming quite an asset to Gloucester commented in a recent article in the Daily Press newspaper that she thinks the “*community is going to be feeling fortunate we've got it*”, referring to the Severn property.

This sentiment is already shared by the Gloucester High School crew team. The team is excited about the opportunity to use an existing structure on the property as a base of operations. The site is half of the distance to the high school than its current practice facility. “*With our move to a more central location in Gloucester County, we hope that more young people will have the opportunity to experience the sport of crew,*” states Chris Hutson, Vice President of the Gloucester Crew Team, and member of the Gloucester County Board of Supervisors. “*By moving into our new ‘home’ the week of Spring Break, the student rowers of Gloucester High School were given the opportunity to perform many hours of community service and develop a sense of ownership of the property,*” comments Hutson.

Quantitative Summary of Accomplishment and Outcomes:

Due to the generous funding and support provided by the MPCBPAA's large network of partners, including the Virginia CZM program, it has acquired just under 1,000 acres in the Middle Peninsula which offers previously unavailable water access.

CZM Funds Expended & Other Funds Leveraged:

In addition to the February 2013 gift to the Chesapeake Bay Middle Peninsula Public Access Authority of 96.81 acres of waterfront property on the Severn River in Gloucester County valued at \$1.6 million, Virginia CZM funding to support the MPCBPAA has leveraged \$770,200 in other federal, state, local and private funding and donations.