



Semi-Annual Success Story ("Section C")
April 2015 – September 2015
submitted to the
Office of Coastal Management/NOAA

State, Regional and Local Collaboration to Increase the Use of Native Plants

CZMA Performance Measure Area: Coastal Habitat Protection, Coastal Water Quality Protection, Government Coordination

Geographic Location: Coastal Zone of Virginia (Congressional Districts 1-4,7,8,10,11).

Identification & Description of Issue: Increasing the amount of native vegetation in Virginia's coastal zone can accomplish key goals of the program: protecting water quality and quantity, increasing carbon dioxide absorption, enhancing wildlife habitat and improving aesthetics and quality of life. However, there are a number of barriers to increasing the use of native plants, including a lack of public and provider knowledge of what plants are native to Virginia, a lack of readily available native plants in the trade and inconsistencies or a lack of point of sale information at local garden centers that do stock natives.

In spring 2009, the Virginia Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Program and its partners launched the *Plant ES Natives* campaign using proven social marketing tools and techniques with a focus on making planting natives fun, easy and popular. This campaign was highlighted in the Virginia CZM Program's April 2011 Section C Report. Since that time, the Virginia CZM's initial investment in the *Plant ES Natives* campaign has been a model for development of five other regional campaigns (one outside the coastal zone) and has led to a state-wide native plant marketing collaborative. Components of the Plant ES Natives Campaign strategy, such as a regional plant guide, have been easily transferrable to address barriers common in all the regions to planting natives. As the regional campaign effort grew, the Virginia CZM Program reached out to its state agencies and partners to establish a state-wide partnership to *Identify and prioritize opportunities to collaborate on Virginia native plant communication and marketing efforts and form cohesive and coordinated messaging and strategies to increase local availability and use of native plants state-wide.*

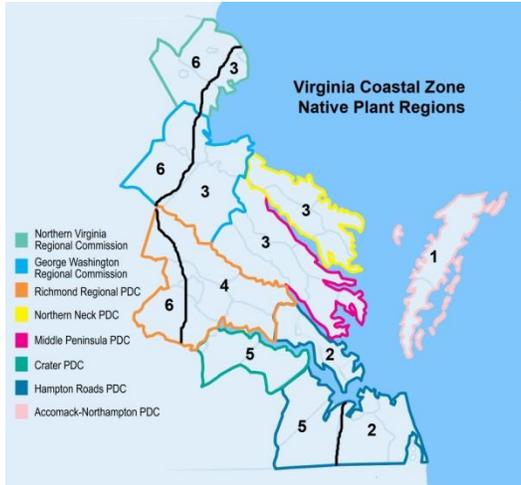


How the Virginia CZM Program Was Involved:

In spring 2009, the Virginia CZM Program and its partners launched the *Plant ES Natives* campaign (FY07 Task 10.07) using proven social marketing tools and techniques with a focus on making planting natives fun, easy and popular. The campaign was created through the Seaside Heritage Program to

help connect actions on land to protection of the aquatic habitats being restored on the Seaside of Virginia's Eastern Shore, and also to advance the Virginia CZM Program's efforts to protect and increase native vegetation on the Shore, a critical migratory bird rest stop.

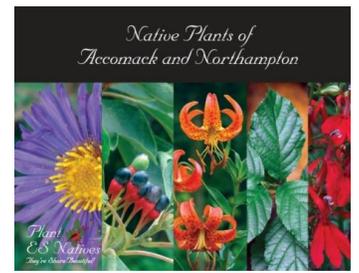
Plant ES Natives goes beyond awareness to change individual behavior and to make planting natives the social norm rather than the exception. Since the campaign was launched in April 2009, it has been a model for



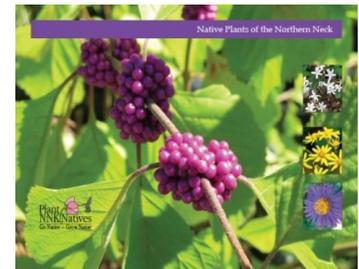
development of four additional regional campaigns/projects in Virginia's Coastal Zone initiated with Virginia CZM funding – *Plant NNK Natives* (Northern Neck), *Plant NOVA Natives* (Northern Virginia) and projects in the Hampton Roads and George Washington regions. (See planting region map at left, developed by DCR Natural Heritage Program staff. Also, see the projects funded in the

"CZM Funds Expended" section on page 5). These regional campaigns are visibly linked through their names and shared design elements in their campaign logos, and they are programmatically linked as they share their progress and experiences. Each region however is unique and the planning teams are continuously evaluating which place-based approaches are most effective in reaching their gardening population. Virginia CZM staff are working closely with regional partners on these campaigns, including development of regional native plant guides, which have been immensely popular. Staff also facilitate and encourage the regions to share lessons learned and resources, and this has been every effective at bringing more regions in the state on board.

Components of the *Plant ES Natives* Campaign strategy— such as a regional plant guide based on the new **Flora of Virginia** published in December 2012 (<http://floraofvirginia.org/>) and garden center plant tags – have been easily transferrable to all the regions. The colorful guide to Eastern Shore native plants, designed by Virginia CZM staff, has been a template for development of three other coastal regional guides, and one in Virginia's Piedmont (covers and links to guides on right). As part of the regional marketing strategies, local volunteer leaders are helping make planting natives more popular. In Northern Virginia, 200 Community Leaders have been trained to help implement and spread the campaign message, and a second series of trainings are being held. Many of the same organizations are also participating on regional campaign planning teams, including local chapters of the Virginia Native Plant Society, Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, Audubon Society and local Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Districts.



Plant ES Natives - www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/CoastalZoneManagement/CZMIssuesInitiatives/NativePlants/PlantESNatives.aspx



Plant NNK Natives - <http://vnps.org/northernneck/grow-native/>



Plant NOVA Natives - www.plantnovanatives.com



Piedmont Natives www.albemarle.org/nativeplants/

In August 2011, it became clear that the Virginia CZM Program could fill a need for improved communication and coordination among its partner agencies and other organizations engaged in native plant related education and communication in the Coastal Zone. Virginia CZM established a new collaborative forum – the **Virginia Native Plant Partners (VNPP)**, which has expanded beyond the coastal zone and taken on a state-wide focus. The Virginia CZM Program co-chairs this partnership with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. A Steering Team of 30 agencies and organizations identified the partnership’s priorities as: 1) development of a Virginia conservation landscaping certification; and, 2) development of new collaborative strategies to help increase the availability and use of native plants state-wide, including a framework and guidelines for native plant seed collection/propagation. The VNPP Steering Team has written and is currently refining an Action Plan based on these priorities and feedback from the two public/partner forums held in May 2013 and January 2014. This Action Plan outlines goals, strategies and collaborative projects that can be more effectively and efficiently addressed through partnership, with governmental and private partners working together.

Qualitative Summary of Accomplishments and Outcomes:

Virginia CZM Program’s investment on the regional campaigns and in the Virginia Native Plant Partners has helped increase the program’s visibility and resulted in a growing appreciation for the program’s coordinative role. This work has also led to new relationships with an array of partners on the state to local level, as well as with coastal businesses – specifically the horticulture industry. One significant result of working with the Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association (VNLA) was the first time addition of a native plant section in the Virginia Growers Guide in 2014. A member of the VNLA Executive Board expressed their gratitude: “Thank you again for getting a partnership in place to accelerate the availability, affordability and acceptability in the marketplace for Virginia grown, Virginia native plants in each physiographic region.” The Program’s efforts with the regional campaigns and the VNPP has also attracted the interest of other states. A recent request from University of MD Extension staff led to Virginia projects and resources used in training of MD nurseries and landscape professionals. MD Extension staff commented afterwards that the contribution “helped to highlight the point that Maryland could be doing more to help its nursery industry grow and sell native plants”.

The *Plant NNK Natives* campaign, launched in 2013, is making a great impact on Virginia’s Northern Neck. Over 3,000 copies of the guide - Native Plants of the Northern Neck, have been distributed by the campaign. “Customers come in with plants circled in the guide and ask how they can get them,” one local retailer reported to volunteer campaign staff. The Rappahannock Record cited the guide as the “best regional catalog” in 2013.

“We couldn’t be more pleased with the level of interest the Plant NoVA Natives Campaign has received from people throughout the region,” comments Corey Miles, Northern Virginia Planning District Commission,

Comments about Regional Campaigns and VNPP

This is a great project that should be emulated in every region across the state. My Master Gardeners use this book at each of their plant clinics across the County- great job!- Adria Bordas, VCE Fairfax County

We use this project and guide as an example of what successful Community Based Social Marketing looks like at our Community Based Social marketing workshops. - Amanda Rockler, UMD Sea Grant (and CCLC affiliate)

This guide has beautiful photos. We want to create something similar, can we use the photos? - Chris Meyers, Anacostia Watershed Society

This has been a great project for the region and an excellent example of regional collaboration- will you come speak about it at our next commission meeting? - Mark Gibb, Executive Director of NVRC

This guide is perfect for when I'm working with homeowners on landscape designs. - Adele Kuo, Landscape Designer

Plant NoVA Natives has really taken off, I'm impressed by how enthusiastic people are about it. - Kirsten Buhls, VCE Arlington County

"I spent some time looking at your very well-designed and lovely website and the current version of Plant NoVA Natives publication. Kudos to you and your team for a job VERY well done!" - staff at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

"I really enjoyed the exchange of ideas and was excited by what I thought was significant forward progress." – Virginia Native Plant Society Board Member after VNPP Steering Team meeting to develop draft Action Plan.



and Director of the Northern Virginia campaign. As a result of the overwhelming interest in the campaign, the Northern Virginia Regional Commission hired a Community Leader Coordinator (with CZM funding) to help manage over 200 volunteers. Last April, Plant NoVA Natives campaign partners were asked to present to the 29 members of the Northern Virginia Regional Commission to highlight how collaboration is key to the success of this campaign. Congressman Gerry Connolly was present at the meeting. A FY15 Section 309 Virginia CZM Program grant to the Northern Virginia Regional Commission will begin looking at enforceable policies that will remove additional barriers to increasing native plant use, such as revisions to local weed ordinances. Other regional campaign partners are already eager to replicate or model what is achieved in Northern Virginia, and state agency staff engaged in the VNPP have offered to assist in this project – developing model ordinance language that supports an increase in native plant vegetation is a strategy in the partnership’s Action Plan. In the image at left, Nancy Vehrs, President of the Virginia Native Plant Society, a key local and state partner, presents a Northern Virginia native plant guide to Governor Terry McAuliffe.

Quantitative Summary of Accomplishment and Outcomes:

At the outset, Virginia CZM and its partners identified that the key measure of behavior change in each of the regional campaigns is an increase in the sales of native plants. Although it will take more time to affect native plant supply, and it can be difficult to collect sales data in a consistent manner, we know that demand for native plants as been steadily growing. “During a Native Plant Day at the store, sales more than doubled what they had anticipated,” says Janet Pawlukiewicz, Northern Neck Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society secretary and Plant NNK Natives Campaign coordinator. In Northern Virginia, demand for natives is outpacing supply at garden centers participating in the campaign. Community Leaders have been visiting garden centers to determine current stocks of natives and public interest. Early indicators are very encouraging and show that the Virginia CZM Program’s investment in these regional efforts, combined with its continued collaborative efforts with the Virginia Native Plant Partners, is having an influence that will lead to positive and long-term changes in the market availability and use of natives – and ultimately an increase in habitat, improvements in water quality and overall quality of life for Virginia residents.

CZM Funds Expended & Other Funds Leveraged:

Virginia CZM Program Grants			
Portions of FY 06 – FY 15 Tasks 2 & 1.03, FY06 10.20	\$167,516	Virginia CZM Program	Outreach Activities (staff time for coordinative efforts, installation of demo gardens and various multi-media materials for Plant ES Natives Campaign)
FY 07 Task 10.07	\$10,000	Virginia CZM Program	Virginia Eastern Shore Native Plant Social Marketing Campaign
FY 10 Task 50	\$15,000	Northern Neck Planning District Commission	Northern Neck Native Plant Social Marketing Campaign
FY 11 Task 54	\$48,500	Northern Virginia Regional Commission	Northern Virginia Native Plant Social Marketing Campaign

FY 13 Task 55	\$19,651	Hampton Roads Planning District Commission	Developing a Native Plants Promotion Strategy for Hampton Roads
FY 14 Task 54	\$16,035	Northern Neck Planning District Commission	Phase 2 Implementation of Northern Neck Native Plant Social Marketing Campaign
FY 15 Task 47	\$9,000	George Washington Regional Commission	Coastal Technical Assistance (development of George Washington native plant social marketing campaign a deliverable of grant)
FY 15 Task 94.03	\$39,476	Northern Virginia Regional Commission	Phase 2 Implementation of Northern Virginia Native Plant Social Marketing Campaign
Total CZM Funding - \$325,178			
Leveraged Funds			
NOAA EE	\$2,800	Virginia Naturally Grant to ES SWCD	Support for Plant ES Natives Campaign Marketing Materials
EPA	\$1,440	DCR grant to ES SWCD	Support for Plant ES Natives Campaign Marketing Materials
Transurban	\$2,500	95 Express Lanes Community Grant Program to Plant Nova Natives	Support for reprint of the Plant NOVA Natives regional native plant guide
Partner Cash Donations to Plant NOVA Natives Campaign	\$8,567		Support for reprint of the Plant NOVA Natives regional native plant guide
Volunteer Match Time to Plant NOVA Natives and Plant NNK Natives Campaigns	\$68,222		Volunteer match time to CZM grants to native plant campaigns on Northern Neck and in Northern Virginia
NWIF and Matching Virginia Environmental Endowment and other matching grant Funds	\$310,000	Wetlands Watch (Virginia Native Plant Partners Member)	Development of Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional Certification Program
Total Leveraged Funding - \$393,529			

For more information on the coastal regional native plant campaigns, visit <http://www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/CoastalZoneManagement/CZMIssuesInitiatives/NativePlants.aspx> or contact Virginia Witmer, Outreach Coordinator, Virginia CZM Program – 804.698.4320 or Virginia.Witmer@deq.virginia.gov