



Virginia's Working Waterfronts

Middle Peninsula

Regional Value

- Commercial fishing and working waterfronts play a central role in the history, culture, development and economy of the region.
- Over 10% of Virginia Blue Crab landings come through lower Gloucester County alone.

Regional Challenges

- Conflict and pressure from competing and adjoining uses
- Cultural shifts are changing the demographics of the once rural coastal waterfront
- Commercial watermen and water-dependent businesses are being displaced
- The working waterfront fabric and cultural identity of the Middle Peninsula is under increasing duress

Virginia's working waterfronts are of great historic, economic and cultural value. Unfortunately, they are disappearing. It's time to find solutions.

The following organizations have come together to harvest solutions at the Virginia Working Waterfronts Workshop:

Perrin River Wharf: Preserving Public Access to the Water...Forever

In the Middle Peninsula and in most coastal communities nationwide, the commercial seafood industry has had to adapt and shift as coastal land use and waterfront property ownership is altered. Historically, as epicenters of economic development, coastal communities were the location of strong fishing industries and shipbuilding as well as public access areas for recreational and commercial uses. However, as more and more people move toward the coast, the demographics and coastal dynamics change. This impacts traditional and culturally significant working waterfront industries, specifically commercial seafood.

Coastal Gloucester, Virginia is no different. It is well known that key commercial seafood businesses have closed in Gloucester for a variety of reasons (read more about Cook's Seafood below). To compound the



Virginia Working Waterfront Workshop

Exchange ideas and potential strategies to keep Virginia's waterfronts working!

Wednesday, February 26, 2013

Virginia Institute of Marine Science
Eastern Shore Community College (satellite location)

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Middle Peninsula

problem, traditional access points are built upon, fenced off, posted “No Trespass”, or purchased by new owners who are unwilling to continue old patterns of public access uses. Consequently, as watermen are forced to move from or are restricted from using traditional access points, they struggle to sustain their commercial seafood business. With limited sites available for mooring their boats, as well as limited safe infrastructure on which to conduct business, watermen seek new and innovative options to continue business as usual.



Perrin Wharf during Crab Season (before reorganization)

Eldridge Cook, founder and owner of Cook’s Seafood, began hauling seafood to New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Savannah in 1932, when he was just 17 years old. In 1939 he purchased 10 acres on Sarah’s creek and, in the early 1950’s, started processing seafood. The processing plants once employed up to 250 workers and the company delivered seafood from Virginia to California and overseas to Europe. In 2010, after more than 70

years, Mr. Cook decided to retire. Though he still owns the property, he has no family to take over the business and he does not have any plans to sell the business or the property. The 15 or so commercial seafood boats that docked at Cook’s Seafood were displaced and had to find dockage elsewhere.

To help solve this problem, In 2013, the Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority (MPCBPAA) received a 320 ft wharf from VDOT on the Perrin River traditionally used by commercial watermen for vessel moorage and offloading of seafood. The Perrin River serves as the urban working waterfront for Gloucester County. With the recent closure of several key docking locations, such as Cook’s Seafood, up to 25 commercial workboats have been displaced and were rafting up horizontally, sometimes 3 boats deep, at the Perrin Wharf, This created a need to revitalize and reorganize the public wharf mooring space.

In September, the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program funded the reorganization of the first 100 feet of the pier. Eleven new slip poles and three finger piers were installed to create slips to assist with mooring boats and off loading seafood for commercial watermen and for general use by the public. Vessels will now be able to tie up perpendicular to the pier, making more efficient and safer use of public space.

Contacts:

Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission
PO Box 286
125 Bowden Street
Saluda, VA 23149
www.mppdc.com
804-758-2311

Value of Virginia’s Working Waterfronts

Virginia is known for its rich history of maritime commerce. Today working waterfronts continue to be a force in local economies, providing critical access to coastal waters for commercial fishing, seafood processing, recreational fishing businesses, boat building, aquaculture and other water-dependent businesses. Working waterfronts are without a doubt a vital element of the culture and character of our coastal communities.

Challenges Facing Virginia’s Working Waterfronts

Working Waterfronts are under pressure. These important areas are being converted to other uses, such as condominiums, hotels, restaurants or private residences. Increasing demand for waterfront properties along Virginia’s coast has resulted in an increase in property values and higher costs for traditional waterfront businesses. Because of these and other factors, Virginia is slowly losing its working waterfronts – an issue that may have long-term consequences for local economies, the environment, our coastal culture and quality of life.