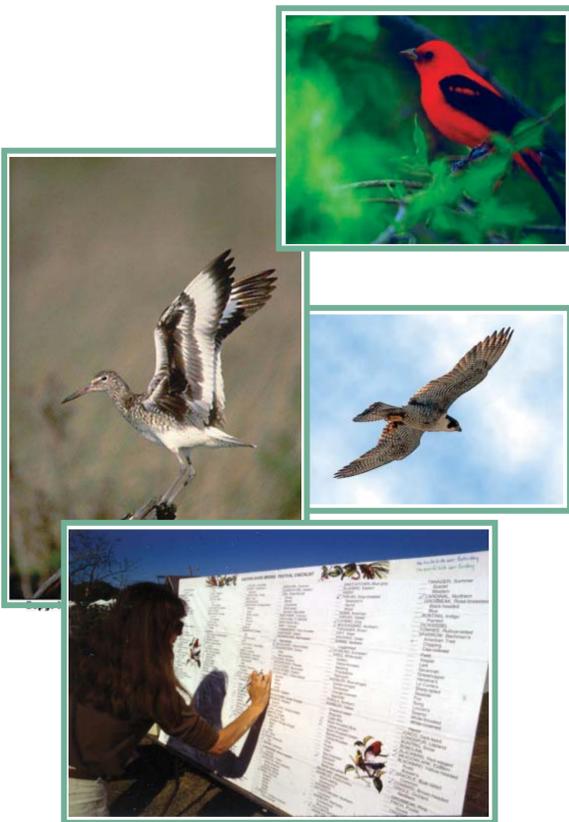


Focusing On Unique Ecosystems...

Northampton County *Special Area Management Plan...*



Every year millions of birds leave their summer nesting areas in the northeast US and Canada and migrate south to Central and South America for the winter. They navigate along the Atlantic and where there are large breaks in the coastline, such as the mouths of Delaware and Chesapeake Bays, the birds stop, rest and feed before crossing large expanses of water. Near the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, Northampton County's mudflats, marshes, dunes and maritime forests provide over 300 species of birds with a crucial "rest stop."

For the declining numbers of **neotropical migratory songbirds** such as Black-throated blue warblers, American redstarts, common yellowthroats and scarlet tanagers, Northampton's dense understory shrubs and vines are critical to their survival. In late summer this habitat type provides ripening berries and swarms of insects to fuel their long journey. The dense thickets also provide hiding places for these small birds which their predators (sharp-shinned hawks, peregrine falcons, merlins and other raptors that migrate right along with them) cannot penetrate.

Southern Watersheds *Special Area Management Plan...*



The Southern Watersheds Area of the cities of Virginia Beach and Chesapeake is uniquely located at the northern range limit for many southern species and community types and at the southern range limit for many northern species and community types. Because of this merging of southern and northern species and habitats, the **biodiversity of the Southern Watersheds Area is remarkable.**

The area contains 19 rare community types and is characterized by wind-tide and fresh-water tidal marshes, forested swamps, Mesic upland forest and pocosins (a habitat type that is fast disappearing from the southeastern US). In 1728, William Byrd described this area as a "green sea" due to the broad expanses of undulating, tall, green reeds. Today, you will find 67 plant species, such as Elliot's aster, spreading begonia, silky camelia, salt-marsh spikerush, and epiphytic sedge and 22 rare animal species such as the Virginia Rail, Swainson's warbler, Dismal Swamp southeastern shrew, the dukes skipper of the swamps, the canebrake rattlesnake of the upland forests, and the little grass frog of the marshes.

Dragon Run *Special Area Management Plan...*



The Dragon Run is **ranked 2nd of 232 natural areas in the Chesapeake Bay region** for its ecological significance and is recognized as the **most pristine watershed in Virginia** (Smithsonian Institute). A state aquatic biologist calls it one of the best freshwater tidal systems remaining in the Chesapeake Bay. A university researcher describes studying the fish assemblages here something akin to looking into a 100-year old time capsule. The Nature Conservancy declares it a uniquely functioning eco-region of biodiversity and ranks it as a high priority for protection.

Bald Eagles, 13 species of rare plants and animals, and approximately 2,330 people call the Dragon Run Watershed home. Five rare natural communities flourish, including the northernmost example of cypress-tupelo swamp in Virginia. Plants and animals you might encounter include the Northern purple pitcher plant, Virginia's largest population of Featherfoil, the prothonotary warbler, the Cypress Sphynx moth, and two rare dragonflies - Selys' Sunfly and Robust Baskettail. The last sighting of the Sphynx was only the second time this rare species was found in Virginia

Integrating Economic Development & Environmental Protection...

Northampton County Special Area Management Plan...



Northampton County's position as a key **migratory bird stopover area** provides it with a conservation challenge as well as an economic opportunity. Ecotourism based on birdwatching can bring in millions of outside dollars to this County which is desperate to create jobs and living wages. The Eastern Shore Birding Festival, initiated through the SAMP, draws about 1,000 birders to the County every October. As income from ecotourism increases, County residents realize the importance of protecting the wildlife and natural areas visitors come to see.

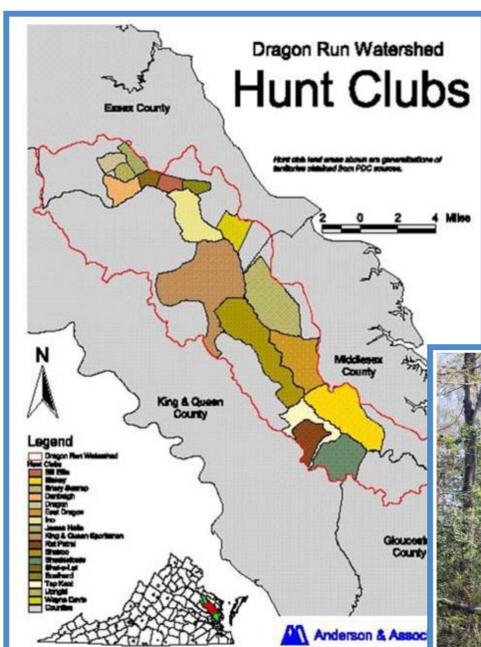
Encouraging sustainable industries in an area where development is gradually increasing is another goal of this SAMP. Northampton County is the site of the nation's first eco-industrial park, the **Cape Charles Sustainable Technologies Park**. Centered on brownfields, the park is a showcase for innovative companies in renewable energy, clean water technologies and industrial symbiosis. Park tenants agree to covenants and sustainability criteria aimed at zero emissions of pollutants, maintenance of native vegetation and wildlife habitat, and social equity.

Southern Watersheds Special Area Management Plan...



The **Strategic Plan of Agriculture in the Southern Watersheds Area** outlines several strategies to improve the economic viability of agriculture in the Southern Watersheds Area and also to improve environmental stewardship. The **Rural Area Preservation Program** outlines a strategy to protect the agricultural and natural areas in the Southern Watersheds as residential development takes place. Urban designer Randall Arendt has provided a set of recommended modifications to the development controls currently employed by the two cities to improve natural resource conservation during development. In addition, Mr. Arendt developed site plans for two conservation subdivisions in the Southern Watersheds Area. Finally, the **Multiple Benefits Management Program MOA** provides a framework for continued economic development and environmental protection. The Program identifies a corridor of critical lands for protection which will offset development impacts outside corridor system by linking mitigation sites to existing protected lands in corridor.

Dragon Run Special Area Management Plan...

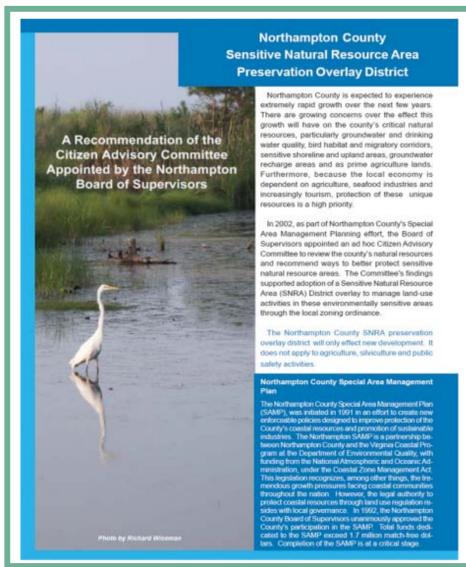


The Dragon Run watershed is dominated by forestry and farming. Hunting is traditionally the most popular form of recreation. **Hunt clubs** lease forest and farm land for hunting, using nearly half of the watershed (or 42,000 acres). These clubs **often manage the land for wildlife**. Hunting leases provide access to many acres of private lands and **generate income for rural landowners**, defraying the cost of property taxes and reducing the pressure to convert the land to other uses.

Together with other hunting expenditures, hunting leases generate more than \$300,000 annually in the Dragon Run. Hunting helps to preserve the rural and natural character of the watershed, and supports the foundation of the region's traditional resource-based economy.

Providing Long-term Continuity and Stability...

Northampton County Special Area Management Plan...



**Total Funding
1991-2004 = \$1.9 million**

Long term funding has allowed the Northampton SAMP to progress from a research phase to a consensus building phase and finally to an informed decision-making phase. Most importantly, stable funding over time has allowed the Coastal Program to maintain a presence through several political climates. When the political will for coastal resource protection was strongest (in the early 90's and the present), we were still there with funding to keep the effort going. The **Sensitive Natural Resource Area (SNRA) District Ordinance**, being considered by the County's Board of Supervisors and recommended by a citizen advisory committee, will focus on protecting the County's groundwater recharge areas and drinking water quality, as well as the remaining natural habitat communities around the shoreline of the County. The ordinance requires that new development comply with Best Management Practices (BMPs) designed to minimize site disturbance impacts.

The SAMP has inspired local citizens to participate with their elected representatives in important land use decisions. Northampton County is now in the process of proposing an update to its comprehensive plan.

Southern Watersheds Special Area Management Plan...



**Total Funding
1992-2002 = \$1.9 million**

Long term funding from the Virginia Coastal Program has allowed the Southern Watersheds Special Area Management Plan to progress from an initial consensus building between the communities of Virginia Beach and Chesapeake to **completion of a conservation plan and two Memoranda of Agreement** protecting the county's natural resources, **a conservation subdivision** to help offset the impact of the area's growing residential communities, and finally, the **integration of the efforts of the SAMP into planning policy**.

The presence of the SAMP project over the course of many years has influenced the thinking of and approach to urban planning in the two cities. For example, when this effort began, Chesapeake's main concern was drinking water. As a result of the cooperative SAMP effort and all the data gathered, the City is now considering a Purchase of Development Rights program. Now as both cities update their comprehensive plans, they have vastly more data and planning tools they can employ.

Dragon Run Special Area Management Plan...



**Total Funding
1986-2006 = \$758,025**

Over the years, considerable local and Coastal Program resources have focused on protection of the Dragon Run watershed, resulting in the evolution of the SAMP. Today, **long-term, stable SAMP funding supports continued regional and local coordination** through the Dragon Run Steering Committee, which represents the counties and landowners in the watershed. Their goal is to unite all the watershed's communities and citizens in a common vision: preservation of the watershed's natural resources and traditional uses through enforceable policies and voluntary efforts.

The SAMP also **exemplifies the focus on conservation and preservation of this unique rural watershed**. The Coastal Program recently funded the purchase of 121 acres along the Dragon, the Nature Conservancy purchased 452 acres adjacent to the Coastal Program site, and the Friends of Dragon Run hold fee simple ownership and easements on 360 acres. These combined efforts have created a conservation corridor.