



Semi-Annual Success Story (“Section C”)
submitted to the
 Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management/NOAA
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CZMA Performance Measure Area: Coastal Habitat Protection, Government Coordination

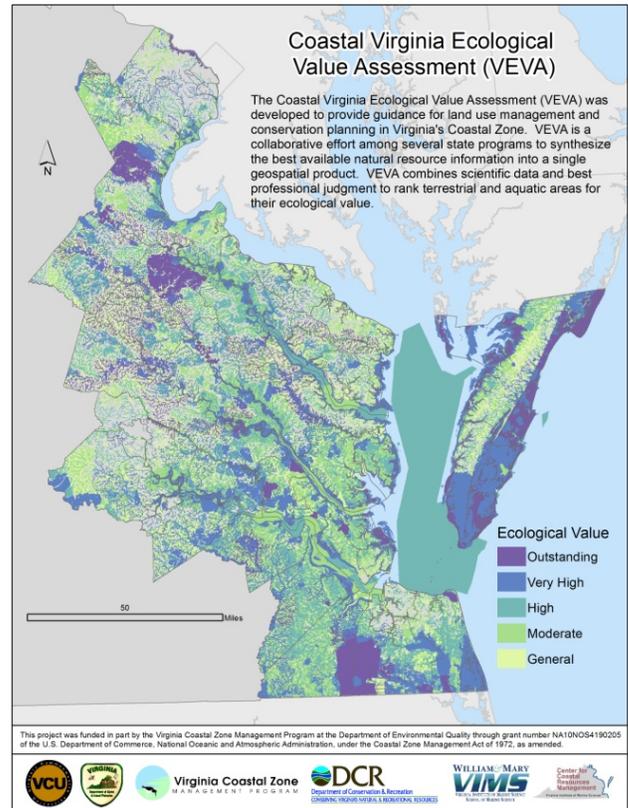
Identification & Description of Issue: Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation represent the most significant threats to effective conservation of wildlife species, natural communities, and the ecosystem services they provide. The Virginia CZM program led a collaborative effort among several state programs to synthesize the best available natural resource information into a single geospatial product developed to provide guidance for land use management and conservation planning in VA’s Coastal Zone.

Geographic Location: The Coastal Zone of Virginia as defined in the Code of Virginia 28.2-100, including all lands and waters therein, and out to the three-mile territorial sea boundary. (Congressional Districts 1-4, 7, 8, 10, 11)

How the Virginia CZM Program Was Involved:

Many years ago, the Virginia CZM Program envisioned a comprehensive planning tool that would streamline use of all state natural resource information into a single data set facilitating regional and local land-use management and conservation planning in the coastal zone. A collaborative effort led and funded by Virginia CZM culminated in FY 2010 (Task 11). This effort included key natural resource agencies and resulted in the Coastal Virginia Ecological Value Assessment (VEVA). Coastal VEVA integrates elements of more than 40 different data sets funded by the Virginia CZM Program alone, totaling approximately \$1.3M.

Research and data collection that ultimately became the foundation for VEVA began in 1988 with CZM funded conservation planning in Virginia’s Lower Peninsula (FY 1988 Task 13.b). Following this effort and throughout the 1990’s, CZM funded natural heritage inventories in Virginia Beach, the Albermarle-Pamlico Estuarine region and Northampton County as well as



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an interstate study of the Neotropical Migratory songbird corridor in New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia.

The idea of creating a synthesis of the multitude of this and other contributing state natural resource data layers was brought up at a 2001 Coastal Partners Workshop. Participants agreed that the Virginia CZM Program should create a map of the best remaining coastal lands and waters, in other words the best remaining “green” and “blue” infrastructure. In response, the Virginia CZM Program crafted a Section 309 strategy beginning in FY 2003 that focused on data collection and data synthesis. Grants were awarded to DCR/Natural Heritage for priority conservation areas, to VCU for instream assessments, and to VIMS for blue infrastructure maps. In 2008 work began on synthesizing the blue and green infrastructure layers. The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF), Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation – Division of Natural Heritage (DCR-DNH), and Virginia Commonwealth University – Center for Environmental Studies (VCU-CES) collaborated to combine conservation information and priorities into a unified dataset of priority conservation areas. While the PCA assessed priorities on land, incorporating both stream and watershed health, it did not include all ecologically valuable regions within Virginia’s tidal waters. Coastal VEVA builds on the PCA and incorporates an assessment of estuarine natural resources recognizing that ecological value of Virginia’s coastal lands and waters are inextricably linked—with land use decisions on the upland ultimately affecting water quality and habitat health in receiving waters. The estuarine component was produced by VIMS College of William and Mary Center for Coastal Resource Management through a series of grants. Coastal VEVA is defined as lands, aquatic resources and surface waters identified as important for conservation of Virginia's wildlife, plants, and aquatic and natural communities. The identified lands, aquatic resources and waters can be used to prioritize areas for preservation, protection or specific management action.

Qualitative Summary of Accomplishments and Outcomes: VEVA confirmed Virginia CZM’s initial inclination based on local knowledge about the ecological significance of Special Area Management Planning sites in the Southern Watersheds, Dragon Run and on Virginia’s Eastern Shore. VEVA also demonstrated the importance of military lands and the role they play in protecting Virginia’s most ecologically valuable lands. In addition, VEVA serves as a guide for future conservation action in areas not previously receiving focused conservation attention for their ecological significance, such as lands along the Chickahominy River.

Quantitative Summary of Accomplishment and Outcomes: These ecological assessments have been used by the Virginia CZM Program to identify and protect over 2,100 acres using Section 306A and Coastal and Estuarine Land Protection Program (CELCP) funds. In addition, these funds have leveraged protection of thousands more acres by our partners. For example, the Virginia CZM Program protected 250 acres in Stafford County at Crow’s Nest Natural Area Preserve using CELCP funds and our partners in that acquisition protected another 920 acres.

CZM Funds Expended & Other Funds Leveraged: Overall, Virginia CZM has funded more than 40 data development projects totaling just over \$1.3M to ultimately arrive at the Coastal Virginia Ecological Value Assessment. Although not presently calculated, this

effort has also drawn from many companion projects that collected and synthesized data. Coastal VEVA represents the capitalization of two decades of the CZM program's and its partners' investments.