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Executive Summary

This updated 2014 Eastern Shore of Virginia Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was initially developed from focus groups conducted between March and May 2012. More than 200 business leaders from the nine industry sectors were invited to participate:

- Agriculture/Nursery Stock/Vegetable Growers/Wineries
- Aquaculture/Fisheries/Seafood Market
- Federal government organizations and their contractors
- Tourism/Hospitality/Retail
- Manufacturers
- Healthcare providers
- Educators
- Service providers
- Real Estate

Industry leaders shared their perceptions of our region's economic needs and made suggestions to improve our prospects. Independent research was not conducted to verify if the industry leaders' perceptions were accurate. The Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission's (A-NPDC) Economic Development Committee (EDC) agreed that, if there is a perception, then there is a problem. Actual problems will surface during the course of the projects. The projects selected in this updated document were based on what the A-NPDC and its partners believed could be accomplished in 2014. New projects will be selected each year until 2017, when a new five-year CEDS will be developed.

Development of the CEDS is one of the A-NPDC's obligations to the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) to maintain that federal agency's designation of the Eastern Shore of Virginia as an Economic Development District (EDD) eligible for EDA funding. A-NPDC's public process included a public open house on November 7, 2012, and reviews by the A-NPDC's Economic Development Committee, which was formed in late 2010 to comply with EDA membership regulations. The EDC met March 31, 2014.

The CEDS is a roadmap to achieve economic development goals, and as such, reflects the region's intended implementation plans to advance its prosperity. Therefore, an implementation schedule is included to track progress against goals. More projects appear in the prioritized list than appear in the implementation schedule. The reason for this discrepancy is twofold: the project list includes some "placeholder" projects so that they are not overlooked in the future; and the implementation schedule includes projects and tasks that we believe can be accomplished in the next 12 months.

Questions or comments can be sent to the A-NPDC c/o Susan Simon, P.O. Box 417, Accomac, VA 23301, phone 757-787-2936 x115 or email ssimon@a-npdc.org.

Developing a Plan

The Research Phase

Between March and May 2012, nine focus group meetings were held with regional business and industry leaders. More than 200 invitations were sent, and participants shared their views on the challenges they face, and the potential solutions to address them. The results of the focus group meetings formed the basis of the 2012 CEDS.

To understand some of the region's issues and for the purpose of strengthening local prevention coalitions, the Eastern Shore Community Services Board hired the Planning Council using a grant from the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Development Services. The resulting report, completed in November 2011, presents a comprehensive demographic overview of economic conditions in our region and is included in its entirety as **Appendix C**.

In 2007, the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission obtained planning funds from the US Economic Development Administration and Accomack and Northampton counties to conduct research for that year's CEDS document. The resulting report was "Community Economic Development for the Eastern Shore: Summit Report" (www.a-npdc.org/Summit_Report_2007.pdf). The Summit Report provided demographics; an inventory and analysis of assets based on people, places, and industries; and key findings and implications.

Public Participation

Business leaders attended nine industry focus groups during the winter and spring of 2012. The draft CEDS was presented to the public for comments via the Internet, in the Clerk of the Court offices in each county, and in an open house held at the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission on November 7, 2012 from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Public comments were incorporated into the document where appropriate, or listed separately when a clear fit for them could not be determined.

Alignment of CEDS with Commonwealth Goals and Objectives

During the 2011 General Assembly session, the Center for Innovative Technology (CIT) was directed to create a Commonwealth Research and Technology (R&T) Strategic Roadmap. The Roadmap identified eleven sectors for investment in the Commonwealth. Three of those sectors, Aerospace, Energy, and the Environment are reflected in the CEDS projects in the coming year. Those sectors are also represented throughout the CEDS as "Issues/Challenges" to be addressed in the future.

A-NPDC Economic Development Committee (51% private business)

Name	Affiliation	Interest
Peter J. Bale, Chairman	Eastern Shore Defense Alliance	Stakeholder
Robert S. Bloxom, Sr.	Bloxom Auto Supply	Business
John Chandler, VP Finance	Bayshore Concrete Products Corp.	Business
Tommy Clark	Don's Seafood Restaurant/Tom's Cove Aquafarms	Business
Irene Davis, President	Chesapeake Outdoor Advertising, Inc.	Business
Kevin Dennis, Facilities Manager	Perdue Farms	Business
Ralph W. Dodd	Ralph Dodd & Associates	Business
Ava Gabrielle	New Road Community Development	Technical Advisor
Kay Lewis, Supervisor	A-NPDC	Elected Official
Charles Kellam	A-NPDC	A-NPDC
Oral Lambert, CEO	Bay Creek Resort & Club	Business
John LeCato, Chairman	Accomac County Econ Development Authority	Stakeholder
Robert S. Bloxom, Jr.	Virginia House of Delegates	Elected Official
Robert N. Marsh, Jr.	BB&T	Business
Andy Mason	Mason-Davis Co., Inc.	Business
Caroline Massey, Management Operations Director	NASA Wallops Flight Facility	Stakeholder
Jeff Middleton, Complex Manager	Tyson Foods, Inc.	Business
Steve Miner, County Administrator	County of Accomack	Technical Advisor
Lynwood Lewis, Senator	Virginia Senate	Elected Official
Katie Nunez, County Administrator	County of Northampton	Technical Advisor
Richard Hubbard, Supervisor	A-NPDC	Elected Official
Tom Rienarth	A-NPDC	A-NPDC
Charles Russell	WESR 103.3 FM	Business
John Tarr, Mayor	Town of Chincoteague	Elected Official
Linda Thomas-Glover, President	Eastern Shore Community College	Stakeholder
Genevieve Walker Switzer, President	T&W Block	Business
Dawn White	Dawn	Business

Location Advantages

The Eastern Shore of Virginia is adjacent to the Hampton Roads metro area across the Chesapeake Bay via the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel. The region has remained rural with an economy dependent on farming and seafood, and has emerged as one of the few places on the East Coast that has preserved its pristine marine environment and shoreline eco-system.

The Eastern Shore's relative geographic separation and its pristine natural environment are a huge advantage for the tourism and eco-tourism industry. Nature and heritage tourism expanded over the past eleven years to include kayaking on the bayside and seaside, bird-watching, sport fishing, and hunting, sailing, bicycling, and an increase in the number of charter boats, festivals, and tall ship visits.

Although separated from "mainland" Virginia by the Chesapeake Bay, our region also has the advantage of being close to large economic regions. For instance, we are within only one hour driving time from Norfolk and Virginia Beach; three hours from Richmond, Annapolis, Baltimore, Washington DC and northern Virginia, and less than six hours from cities in the great northeast such as Philadelphia and New York. Proximity was a distinct advantage in the past when our area was the breadbasket for those regions. All types of seafood, game, and produce were shipped from the Eastern Shore via the railroad. This location advantage endures and is still viable for farmers and seafood marketing. Additionally, our proximity to high-population and service-rich areas provides many benefits to our citizens.

Our location is tremendously valuable to NASA and Department of Defense (DOD) contractors at Wallops Island, and to our citizens for the jobs those agencies provide. Wallops Island will be resupplying the International Space Station because our global position enables the shortest trajectory to the International Space Station (ISS). Another unique location advantage is the high volume of through-traffic on U.S. Route 13 from states such as Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts, en route to the Virginia and North Carolina beaches. The highest number of travelers transit between June and August, with slightly fewer transit in May and October. Through-travelers spend money in our region on hotels, gas, restaurants, and shops. Travelers, as well as local citizens, support our region's many small businesses along the highway and in the small towns.

An increasing number of people from outside the region are purchasing vacation or retirement homes on Virginia's Eastern Shore. This influx was thought to balance the impact of young people leaving the area, and help support local retail and service businesses. Eastern Shore population declined slightly in 2013. At the end of 2013, Accomack County's unemployment was 6.1%; Northampton County's was 7.7%. The Virginia's unemployment rate is 4.8%, and national unemployment is 6.5%.

The real estate market is recovering moderately after the substantial slow-down in 2007. Sales for the Eastern Shore increased about 4.5% from 2012 through 2013. However, agricultural land values doubled on the Eastern Shore, attributed mostly to increased prices for corn, soy beans, and wheat.

Industry Clusters

Diversification of the Regional Economy

In past years, seven industry clusters were identified:

- Agriculture/food processing
- Aerospace
- Tourism
- Seafood/Aquaculture
- Education/Research
- Studio Businesses
- Retiree Services

Representative of these clusters are the employment figures by sector:

- Manufacturing 29%
- Wholesale Trade 2%
- Finance & Insurance 3%
- Administrative Support & Waste Management 3%
- Other Services 4%
- Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services 6%
- Construction 6%
- Forestry, Fishing, & Hunting (less than 1%)
- Accommodations & Food Services 11%
- Retail Trade 15%
- Health Care & Social Assistance 17%
- Other 5%

Partners & Resources for Economic Development

Many Hands Make Light Work

Regional Partners

The Eastern Shore of Virginia boasts numerous organizations that focus on economic development.

The **Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission (A-NPDC)**, the Economic Development District designee, coordinates and facilitates the CEDS process for the region, and focuses on regional planning, housing, and community development issues and challenges. The A-NPDC established a \$500,000 revolving loan fund for economic development purposes in 2009.

The A-NPDC created an economic development committee in 2010 to conform to new EDA regulations for a CEDS committee – 51% of the members are private business representatives at the highest organizational level (see list on page 2). The Economic Development Committee (EDC) met in February, June, August and November of 2012, and August 2013 to conduct business and to advance the 2012-2017 CEDS. Sub-committees moved projects forward as necessary.

The **Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce** strives to maximize its members' ability to attract and increase visitors to Chincoteague Island, and also provides referral services to Chincoteague residents. The organization's ultimate goal is to communicate the message that Chincoteague, the "Beautiful Land Across the Water", is the most desirable location to visit and/or vacation with family or friends.

The **Chincoteague Natural History Association** raises funds to restore the Assateague Island Lighthouse.

The **County of Accomack** is the leader for the Wallops Research Park (WRP) project, a prime location for aerospace and aviation operations offering 226 acres of property available for development adjacent to the NASA Wallops Flight Facility, and minutes from the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport (MARS) and the U.S. Navy's Surface Combat Systems Center. Accomack County formed the Wallops Service District to develop and help manage the WRP. In July 2013, Accomack County issued \$4 million in public bonds to finance the WRP development. The Wallops Research Park Leadership Council, a management body, was also formed to superintend and advise on park affairs. A progress report is part of this document.

The **County of Northampton** completed its Comprehensive Plan in 2009, with recommendations generated out of the 2007 CEDS process. Northampton County's plan focuses on the County's rich natural assets and the huge agriculture, seafood, and aquaculture sectors. Northampton is updating its Comprehensive Plan and expects it to be completed by Summer 2014.

The **Eastern Shore Community College (ESCC)** provides workforce training and business development services for our region. With its new facility completed in 2009, ESCC expanded its curriculum to respond to area business training needs. In 2013, the ESCC took initial steps to replace the existing academic building with a construction of a new building that supports “the way in which education is delivered in the 21st century”.

The **Eastern Shore Defense Alliance (ESDA)** is a group of business people and other citizens interested in supporting the missions of the Defense-related organizations on the Eastern Shore.

The **Eastern Shore of Virginia Broadband Authority** was formed by the two counties in 2008 to build, expand, and maintain a high-speed fiber optic network for the entire region. Federal and state funds were obtained to construct the fiber-optic backbone that connects NASA/Wallops in the north to the Tidewater region of Virginia, providing broadband redundancy for all federal agencies located in our region, and bringing affordable high-speed Internet access to our communities.

The **Eastern Shore of Virginia Chamber of Commerce** is a member-driven/directed organization that serves, promotes, and connects the businesses and communities of the Eastern Shore. The Chamber represents business, professional, agricultural, seafood, tourism, and community interests in order to advance economic and civic well-being through private-sector enterprise.

The **Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission** develops, promotes, and markets as a unified region, the tourism resources and advantages of both Accomack and Northampton Counties. The Tourism Commission receives regular funding from both counties, and has been busy developing strategy, researching tourism, and branding the Shore as a destination. By partnering with Northampton County and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel District Commission, the Commission established a visitor center in the rest facility at the northern terminus of the bridge tunnel. The Commission also helps organize artists’ studio tours and holds high-visibility events to attract visitors.

The **Northampton County Chamber of Commerce** promotes and develops the prosperity of the community and serves as the primary advocate and resource for its business members.

The **Small Business Development Center of Hampton Roads** has provided a part-time business analyst for the use of small businesses and entrepreneurs for many years. Help developing business plans and financing packages is especially important to small, start-up businesses in our region.

The Virginia Commercial Space Flight Authority is a creation of the Commonwealth of Virginia, with a focus is on the **Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport (MARS)** at Wallops Island (www.marsspaceport.com). The Spaceport has been and will be the scene of commercial rocket launches and will benefit the regional economy with spin-off manufacturing businesses.

The purpose of the regional organization, the **Eastern Shore Manufacturing Council (ESMC)**, is to support and grow manufacturing and advance manufacturing issues across the Eastern Shore.

Federal & State Resources

The **US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration** has provided generous financial support to the creation of business parks, the commercial spaceport at Wallops Island, the Eastern Shore Community College Business Development and Workforce Center, and economic development planning in the region for many years.

US Department of Agriculture Rural Development is very active in providing funding for wastewater treatment, revolving loan funds and a variety of other economic development programs in the region.

The **US Department of Interior Fish and Wildlife Services** which is working closely with localities to develop the Northampton Bicycle Trail and is collaborating with the Chincoteague Natural History Association to restore the Assateague Island Lighthouse.

The **Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services** represents the concerns and interests of agriculture and works in cooperation with Virginia State University, Virginia Tech, and the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service on research, education, and marketing projects.

The **Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development** has provided business financing, downtown revitalization, and business park development assistance to our region.

The **Virginia Department of Transportation** has provided much-needed funding over many years through the Transportation Enhancement Program for myriad projects involving museums, downtown revitalization, and community trails.

The **Virginia Economic Development Partnership** serves those seeking a prime business location and increased trade opportunities and fosters increased expansion of the Commonwealth's economy.

The **Virginia Employment Commission** supports our community in various ways, including tracking of availability of job opportunities to low- and middle-income residents to comply with Community Development Block Grant program goals, developing and updating economic and labor market data for Community Profiles, and conducting training with its partners.

The **Virginia Foundation for the Humanities** has provided grants and staff assistance for tourism-related projects on the Eastern Shore.

The **Virginia Marine Products Board** is the marketing arm of the seafood industry. In this capacity, the board conducts a comprehensive marketing program designed to upgrade and expand both domestic and foreign sales and markets to further the overall economic development of the industry.

The **Virginia Tourism Corporation** has provided tourism marketing grants and training workshop for business owners.

Goals

Landmarks on the Road to Prosperity

Taking information from previous plans, the 2007 ED Summit Report, the Economic Development Committee, and from nine focus group meetings held with our business and industry leaders between March and May of 2012, a new CEDS was developed for 2012.

It became apparent that certain issues and challenges were surfacing over and over again. These common concerns became the basis for the strategic goals. The goals are fundamental to the plan, for while this report offers specific strategies for implementation, the list is not necessary exhaustive. Sound goals provide a strong framework for future expansion of strategies.

Economic Development Strategies

Strategic Goals:

- *Create a positive environment for the growth of our seven industry clusters by providing the necessary public infrastructure (business parks, utilities, incubators) and by enhancing capital availability (revolving loan funds).*
- *Offer opportunities for lifelong learning and skill development related to our seven industry clusters, serving potential employees and entrepreneurs.*
- *Develop a regional identity that celebrates our competitive advantages and connects the communities of our region.*
- *Attract or grow businesses that provide living-wage jobs without harming the environment.*
- *Recognize the importance of our historic towns and villages to the overall economic health of the region and develop strategies to stimulate their revitalization.*

PEOPLE:

“The region must actively plan for and pursue opportunities to fully leverage the region’s existing and potential sources of human capital.”

- Recognize school quality as a prerequisite for successful community economic development and make school quality a priority in any agenda.
- Consider models for marketing programs matching workers who’ve left the Eastern Shore with current and potential employers.
- *Provide opportunities for high school students to focus on in-demand technical skills.*
- *Look for innovative outlets to engage the energy of the Eastern Shore’s growing community of retirees.*

PLACES:

“The region should carefully study market opportunities and constraints facing ideas to develop the region’s natural assets.”

- Undertake careful analysis of markets and organizing strategies for entering new and exciting markets for agriculture and aquaculture.
- Explore and implement appropriate best practices in e-commerce and new “niche” tourism marketing strategies.

INFRASTRUCTURE:

“Recognize the quality of infrastructure as important to both community and business/industry and act on it.”

- Support community clean-up programs and other efforts to improve the quality of the physical environment, especially roadside litter.

- Carefully examine capital investments in infrastructure, such as water and sewer, and recreational facilities, with recognition of their significance for community economic development.
- Recognize addressing the problems of substandard housing will be beneficial for community economic development.
- Promote expansion of commercial-speed broadband infrastructure options.

BUSINESS & INDUSTRY:

“Carefully study the commitments required to realize the potential for research and development activity in the region.”

- Encourage state support for activity at Wallops Island, including the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport (MARS).
- Pursue development strategies in aerospace/spaceflight and marine sciences, and conduct thorough research into the competitive picture in these areas.
- Recognize the distinction between the immediate economic impact of research and the long term commitment required to see the benefits of commercial development.

Projects List

1. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, RETENTION, AND EXPANSION

A. Wallops Research Park

- i. Accomack County funded new infrastructure identified in the master plan, including: a taxiway from the Wallops landing strip to the Wallops Research Park (WRP); a new road; water and wastewater facilities; and broadband. The Accomack County Board of Supervisors provided a \$4 million match for infrastructure and deed restriction removal, and received a \$4 million Transportation Partnership Opportunity grant from the state to construct the taxiway connecting NASA's runway with WRP. Construction of both the Infrastructure and taxiway is due to be completed by December 2014.
- ii. Eastern Shore Community College (ESCC) is establishing a presence in WRP in both its degree granting and Workforce Development programs, which will focus on the education and training needs of civilian and military. Additionally, coordination of continuing education modules for graduate studies for Wallops Flight Facility (WFF) employees will be considered. ESCC will continue to look for opportunities to coordinate offerings from an array of graduate-level studies from diverse sources. ESCC hosted a regional unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) Symposium in cooperation with VCCS, NASA and the International UAV professional association in spring 2014. ESCC works closely with the Education Department at NASA Wallops Flight Facility (NASA/WFF) to place students in various internships. Some internships led to full-time employment. In addition, ESCC students participate in experiential learning opportunities such as RockOn Workshops and RockSAT-C Programs at NASA Wallops Flight Facility.
- iii. The Wallops Research Park Leadership Council is developing a marketing plan for the research park.
- iv. The Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission (A-NPDC) and Accomack County submitted a \$500,000 EDA grant request for a feasibility and strategic planning study to optimize the Wallops Research Park build out. The study would define a market-based path for sustainability, self-sufficiency, significant business growth, and increased employment for the state and region.
- v. In 2013, A-NPDC's Economic Development Committee supported the Mid-Atlantic Partnership (MAAP) bid for the NASA Wallops Flight Facility (NASA/WFF) to be one of six Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) facilities nationwide capable of testing and deploying existing and future UAS technology, and UAS-based scientific instruments. MAAP, a regional consortium of several universities in Virginia, Maryland, and New Jersey, is one of six test sites the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) selected at the end of 2013 to

verify UAS air-worthiness, and to advance commercialization of unmanned aerial vehicles, payloads, and support systems. Throughout 2014, the site gained momentum, with the Commonwealth of Virginia budgeting to build a state-operated UAS runway on the WFF. MAAP continues to expand its footprint in the southern part of the state, with several Certificates of Authorization (COA) granted. MAAP and the NASA/WFF are attracting the interest of UAS companies around the country, and interest is expected to increase as access to the airspace increases.

B. Improve infrastructure

i. Ports

Deepen Cape Charles federal harbor and natural channel – Bayshore Concrete Products Corp., the town of Cape Charles, and Northampton County funded an economic impact study showing millions of revenue dollars would accrue to our region and state by deepening the federally-designated Cape Charles Harbor and natural channel. Harbor maintenance has been deferred until next year (2015) by the US Army Corps of Engineers, with work expected to be completed in 2015. Harbor deepening is deferred until a sustainable second business is located at Cape Charles with demand in excess of 18 feet draft clearance at low tide.

ii. Energy

1. A-NPDC hosted a presentation in 2013 by Somerset Utilities, a Salisbury, MD private natural gas company, to local businesses and government stakeholders exploring the possibility of building a pipeline down the main corridor of Virginia's Eastern Shore. In 2014, Somerset Utilities, working with Accomack County, began to pursue the engineering analyses and regulatory steps needed to bring natural gas to the large energy users located along or near the Route 13 corridor.
2. Eastern Shore Solar LLC, consisting of 20 property owners, submitted a permit application in October 2014 to develop and operate a large, utility scale, solar energy system on a total of 984 acres spread across 46 parcels near Oak Hall, VA. The project, pending approval at a Planning Commission meeting in early December, is expected to generate roughly 80 megawatts of electricity.
3. Work with the local community college to plan workforce development training for residents to secure jobs in the renewable energy field.

iii. Broadband – expand utilization of broadband infrastructure

1. A-NPDC considered a study of residential users to determine the level of service desired, price points, and to educate the public about the uses and benefits of high-speed broadband, but determined that a thorough survey was cost-prohibitive. A-NPDC prepared a report on broadband deployment to encourage an increase in residential and commercial connectivity. The Broadband Authority conducted a rate study and reduced rates.
 2. Solicit proposals and private sector partnerships for additional services.
- iv. Railroad - Upgrade railroad infrastructure
1. The six-year Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation statewide Rail Plan appropriated \$1.1 million in improvements to the Eastern Shore rail system. Under the State's Rail Preservation Program for short-line railroads, the \$1.1 million (70% state money and 30% match from the railroad) is spread over 6 years for tie replacement and track resurfacing on the mainline. The railroad is working on the 1st year grant now, putting in ties as money allows.
 2. Continue to seek funding to conduct a feasibility study of passenger/commuter service for the Shore.
 3. Bay Coast Railroad (BCR) consists of 68 miles of FRA track safety Class I and II mainline, and a 26-mile car float (ferry) operation from Cape Charles, on the Delmarva Peninsula, across Chesapeake Bay to Little ZCreek on the mainland. This car float operation, in continuous service since April 1885, is one of only two remaining in the Eastern U.S., and is the longest water route in the country. Today, a tug boat moves the 25-car capacity floats. BCR interchanges with NS; the Norfolk & Portsmouth Belt Line Railroad in Norfolk; the NS in Pocomoke City, Maryland; and with rail yards in Cape Charles and Little Creek. Although the barge float has seen slight use in the past two years, rail traffic on the Bay Coast Railroad was up 23% in 2013, and in 2014, those gains are holding with the potential for a slight increase.
- v. Water/Wastewater
1. Both Northampton and Accomack Counties seek funding to build wastewater collection and treatment systems for specific areas of need.
 - a. The Town of Exmore in Northampton County received \$30,000 in planning funds for the USDA to study sewer collection and treatment to address the need for additional capacity and to replace the existing, problematic wastewater treatment plant.

- b. The Town of Exmore is also engaging an engineering firm to prepare bid documents for the design and construction of two new wells with funds received from the Virginia Department of Health's Revolving Loan Fund.
 - c. Accomack County continues to negotiate with the Town of Onancock regarding a new contract for wastewater disposal with a reduced rate. Pending the outcome of negotiations, a County plant may or may not be pursued further. The County currently has a treatment plant designed and a drip (underground) irrigation system permitted by the Virginia Department of Health. In its current form, the plant would be located in the Industrial Park near the County Garage.
 - d. Meetings in Northampton by the Public Service Authority, which has some new members appointed, have re-examined the County's strategy for infrastructure development. Preliminary design is currently underway.
2. In late 2012, Chincoteague encouraged a private company to provide sewer services to several downtown businesses. The Town's Wastewater Advisory Committee (WAC) and developer worked out an agreement to make sewer connections available to businesses along an approximate 1 mile corridor in downtown Chincoteague.

C. Agriculture/Aquaculture

- i. Research model and data from Chesapeake Bay TMDL – data collection methods and results are suspect.
 - a. Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission continues to work with the Soil and Water Conservation District and to set up a successful and inclusive communication process between the state, EPA, and the farming community.
- ii. Conduct a survey of farmers to establish return on investment by comparing input costs to price increases for crops.
- iii. Virginia's designated offshore wind energy area (WEA), 23 miles off the coast of Virginia Beach, could have an impact on Eastern Shore commercial and recreational fishing. Dominion Virginia Power holds the commercial lease for this area and is developing a Construction and Operations (COP) to submit to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) by 2018. The Department of Energy recently awarded a consortium in Virginia \$47 million to construct two, 6 MW ocean-scale test turbines by 2017 in an area immediately to the west of the WEA. A-NPDC is part of a collaborative fisheries project to gather input directly from the fishing community and provide an opportunity to help design best

management practices for wind energy facilities offshore of Virginia. This approach is intended to maximize fishing opportunities for commercial and recreational fishers and minimize conflicts as the WEA is constructed and becomes operational.

- iv. VIMS completed a 2014 study of Northampton County's commercial aquaculture activity that showed Northampton County's aquatic harvesters unloaded \$42,496,494 of seafood products across the county's waterfronts. Those sales expand the county's economy, generating additional growth and economic impacts on households, businesses, and government. Initial farm sales and wild harvests multiply to provide economic growth throughout the community. The resulting total impact during 2013 is estimated to have been \$97.4 million in output supporting 987 jobs which generated household and business incomes of \$27.1 million.
- v. Continued access to high quality growing waters and important offshore fishing grounds is critical to maintaining the economic base which has developed to support this important industry and continue its export base for the county's future economic development.
- vi. Set a goal to have an Eastern Shore farmer appointed to the state's Best Management Practices Committee in order to have representation from two of the most agriculturally-important counties in Virginia. Virginia's newly elected Lieutenant Governor is from the Eastern Shore.
- vii. Northampton County is partnering with the state of Virginia to conduct a drainage study with focus on how to capture more storm water for irrigation without harming the aquaculture industry which requires clean water flowing into creeks. Accomack County is conducting its own study. In concert with the Soil and Water Conservation District office, Northampton County is enforcing regulations of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act with regard to farm encroachment into the buffer strip along the bay and creeks.
- viii. Expand school curriculums to include business and maintenance skills needed to farm the soil and the water such as fixing equipment, business management, and finance. Advise young people about available jobs, given proper training to attain them. The Eastern Shore Community College (ESCC) hosts the 25th Annual Virginia Tech Eastern Shore Agriculture Conference & Trade Show January 7-8, 2014. ESCC will survey conference attendees on training needs and inform attendees about internship possibilities through ESCC's Experiential Learning and Job Placement Coordinator service. Agriculture on the Shore will also be addressed at ESCC's second annual STEM Summit.

ESCC offered a revised curriculum in Industrial Technology during the 2013-14 academic year. Maintenance training for business and industry are a strong

component of this program. The faculty and students in this program work closely with ESCC's Experiential Learning and Job Placement Coordinator (EL/JPC) to prepare students for internships and employment. The EL/JPC attended several public events held at ESCC during the past year to provide information to employers and students on the advantages of work-based learning opportunities.

- ix. Promote the value of agriculture and aquaculture by holding special events to highlight it – maybe one crop at a time; organize an ES regional fair; support farm businesses with marketing, signage, partnerships; explore ways to involve 4-H. Compile statistics and the value to our economy and share with elected officials and other citizens.

On August 19, 2014, Virginia Governor McAuliffe announced the launch of the Virginia Oyster Trail. Numerous events, including two educational events, 15 oyster roasts or cook-offs took place around the Eastern Shore from September through December. The Annual Onancock Christmas Homes Tour and Music Festival featured an “oyster” motif in the prizes awarded.

- x. Protect water quality. Leverage our region's unique ability to control upland runoff into ANY water body. Almost no other community has this advantage. It means we can protect the seaside by enforcing vegetative buffers and enacting zoning to protect water quality.
- xi. The seaside barrier islands and channels moved drastically over the past 20 years. A bathymetric survey and accurate channel marking would be especially beneficial to watermen, recreational boaters, and aqua-culturists. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers may consider such a study for the seaside.
- xii. Landowner view-share and conflicts over aquaculture activity – apprise Virginia Shellfish Growers Association of problems and ask that it address this issue.
- xiii. Continue to seek innovations in agriculture and ways to diversify crops/methods i.e., more organic production, Kosher, Community Supported Agriculture (subscription farming), and value-added products on an industrial as well as small scale so that crops can be processed locally. Northampton County and the Virginia Department of Agricultural and Consumer Services (VDACS) hosted an open house for those interested in exploring setting up a local canning or bakery facility that can be commercially certified for food products made from locally grown ingredients. More than 30 attendees interested in learning more or getting started attended the event.

D. Revolving Loan Fund

- i. The Accomack-Norhampton Planning District Commission manages a \$500,000 revolving loan fund for economic development purposes. Its first loan, \$300,000 to Bay Coast Railroad, repaired the 25-railcar barge float that crosses the 26-mile wide Chesapeake Bay from Little Creek in Norfolk to Cape Charles. This loan matched a Commonwealth \$700,000 gift. The repairs were made in 2010, and it was back in operation in November. A-NPDC's second loan was made to a Northampton County telecommunication start-up business.
- ii. In on-going efforts to create a venture capital fund for start-ups by entrepreneurs and/or technology transfer opportunities, one new company, Declaration Networks, is working to obtain local investment.

E. Federal Designations

- i. Look for a way to get federal thresholds changed to reinstate the region's HUBZone designation. Northampton County was re-qualified for HUBZone due to unemployment. In Accomack County, HUBZone designation no longer applies to most parts of the county, with the exception of two Census Tracts, one which is grandfathered until October 1, 2015.
- ii. Activate more of the Foreign Trade Zone areas, especially in Wallops Research Park and for the Accomack Airport Industrial Park. Engage the Virginia Port Authority as a partner to get this accomplished.

2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- A. Begin efforts, via preparation of a white paper, to submit a project grant request to EDA to build an updated facility that expands the Eastern Shore Community College's ability to train students for future jobs.
- B. Eastern Shore Community College (ESCC) received a \$198,248 National Science Foundation grant to support the college's "Linking Employers and Academic Needs" (LEAN) project. The college is developing internship pathways to prepare students for entry-level science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) careers, or to complete certificates or AAS degrees in STEM-related fields. From spring 2011 through 2013, 17 ESCC students gained valuable experience in internships at Wallops. Five students obtained permanent employment at Wallops.

In 2014, ESCC expanded its internship program to include the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport (MARS) and Tyson Farms, Inc. Three ESCC students fulfilled the requirements of a 12 week internship at MARS this summer. Two of the three students who graduated in the spring were hired full-time by MARS. The other student is completing his educational program. Six students were placed at Tyson Farms, with one full-time hire to date.

- C. The Eastern Shore Community College (ESCC) is fostering on-site faculty professional development at the NASA Wallops Flight Facility and the Navy Surface Combat System to enhance understanding of aerospace and defense industry education needs. ESCC's faculty for electronics, welding, and industrial technology have attended professional development activities at NASA WFF this past year.
- D. More than 170 attended ESCC's Accomack-Northampton Economic Forecast 2014-15 held in October.
- E. Reapply to Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for funds to staff a full-time economic development organization for the Eastern Shore. Steve Miner originally sought a grant to fund a regional ED organization, but was unsuccessful.
- F. Promote mentoring of school children, and develop mechanisms to boost adults/parents involvement in and support for the school systems.
- G. Create a central information hub about all of the Shore's educational opportunities.
- H. Research the differences between our region's training and that of Worcester County, Maryland schools as well as Delaware Tech. ANPDC is helping the Eastern Shore Community College and community colleges from Maryland and Pennsylvania pursue a 2014 regional grant targeted at expanding training programs for unemployed workers, especially those affected by foreign trade through the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Program (TAACCTC).
- I. Public transit could contribute more to the prosperity of the Eastern Shore if routes were synchronized with workplace shifts. STAR Transit does not run after 6 pm or on weekends, making it impossible for many people to use the service to get to and from their workplace. Commuter rail on the Eastern Shore would also be a boon for getting around without a personal vehicle. STAR Transit could provide transport from the railroad stations to major workplaces, shopping venues, and healthcare facilities.
- J. Look for math skills applications to show students practical ways to use the math they learn, such as titration, or look for data that multiple groups collect to standardize it and put on the Web as a teaching tool.
- K. **Support for educational organizations:**
 - i. Encourage counties to lobby for increased Federal and State funding and for fewer unfunded mandates.
 - ii. Develop business partnerships with the school divisions to create co-op opportunities for students to expose them to various industries on the Shore. This will educate children about job opportunities and how to prepare for them.

- iii. Support local foundations such as the Eastern Shore Community College Foundation and Eastern Shore Community Development Foundation.

3. TOURISM

A. Create new venues and become a destination:

- i. Develop an interpretive meteor center in Cape Charles.
- ii. Expand the number of Historical Markers on the Eastern Shore and replace the broken ones; develop a list and map of all of them.
- iii. A-NPDC will continue to work with Virginia Coastal Zone Management to establish camping accommodations along Virginia's Seaside Water Trail that connects with existing trails and greatly expands/attracts kayaking tourism.
- iv. In addition, A-NPDC is working to significantly increase economic development, tourism, quality of life for residents, and nature appreciation for visitors by collaborating with the Eastern Shore of Virginia Natural Wildlife Refuge and VDOT to extend an existing, but limited, 2.65 miles bike trail from the Refuge into Cape Charles. A-NPDC applied in November 2013 to the Department of Transportation for a feasibility study grant to assess a 6 mile segment extension and won a feasibility study grant. The study is due to begin in 2015.

B. Improve Route 13 with landscaping and better signage.

- i. Plant locally-grown crops such sunflowers or native plants and wildflowers in the median or alongside the highway to enhance pride in our area and save money. Consider North Carolina's and other states' successful models.
- ii. Use branding to improve quality and quantity of signage to direct travelers to venues and into towns, including bike/hike, paddling, and nature trail signs to encourage transiting visitors to take advantage of the region's amenities and enjoy the bike, kayaking, and nature trails.

C. Chincoteague Island

- i. Support efforts by all partners to work with Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (CNWR). Explore how best to advance the study, information exchange, and project resources for adaptive management practices to sustain the resiliency of this unique barrier island system including Assateague, Wallops, Assawoman, and Metompkin Islands in the face of dynamic coastal processes and climate change. The Fish and Wildlife Service released its draft of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) in August 2014 to accept comments that will help coordinate and advance the organizations' efforts.
- ii. The Chincoteague Museum renovation was completed. Fundraising is on-going to continually update and showcase the Town's cultural heritage.

- iii. Continue efforts to extend and improve the bicycle trail connecting Accomack County and CNWR. The Town of Chincoteague is requesting a FLAP grant for a bike path along the causeway that leads into the town.
- iv. Downtown Chincoteague's Main Street and movie theater were revitalized with new sidewalks and street lights. Landmark Plaza's private owners await further improvements in the economy in order to update their shopping center.
- v. Work with Accomack County and VDOT to secure funding for gateway enhancements to Maddox Boulevard as noted in the Walkable and Livable Communities technical report "Healthy People, Healthy Places – Community Well-Being on Virginia's Eastern Shore," August 2012. In March 2013, the Town's committee reviewed the Chincoteague Bicycle Plan's priorities, modifying it to align with the Town Council's request to VDOT's Six Year Improvement Plan by establishing an urban system highway project to improve Maddox Boulevard for approximately 4,000 feet. Recommendations consist of adding sidewalks, bicycle paths, and drainage improvements.

D. Tourism Marketing/Projects

- i. Northampton County continues its intensive tourism marketing campaign for the lower Eastern Shore "Cross the Bay for a Day; Better Yet, Decide to Stay." The County's targeted media outreach and awareness campaign focuses on the Hampton Roads region, and more specifically, on the Virginia Beach area and the military market to promote the region. The program is a partnership of two government agencies, the local chamber of commerce, one non-profit, and three business entities in cooperation with the Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission.
- ii. Unify tourism-related businesses in both counties for cooperative marketing ventures that promote the Eastern Shore.
- iii. Clean up the roads. A local volunteer group, Waste Watchers, takes its "Trash Talk" message to schools and community groups and is working with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to encourage recycling and discourage littering. Waste Watchers also scripted "Bay Play in a Box" for school children to dramatize the effects of pollution on the fauna and flora of the Chesapeake Bay. Waste Watchers has coordinated litter clean-up efforts along Eastern Shore roads with the help of volunteers, including 125 college students, and Girl Scout troops accompanied by their parents.
- iv. The town of Cape Charles boasts a new major cultural center, and water recreation centers and amenities, such as a new restaurant and a facility to provide fuel for boats already in the water. A fuel facility planned for Oyster, VA has an investor and is undergoing a pre-installation review with the County's Building Department. In addition, Cape Charles harbor's new Southport project

is in Phase I to develop a new mega-yacht center to provide fuel, repair, refit, chandleries services, and boat manufacturing. The mega-yacht center is expected to boost the town's economic development and use of its other services and amenities.

- v. Promote increased collaboration across all sectors for the Tall Ships Initiative.

4. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

A. Housing Development

- i. Several focus groups identified a need for affordable workforce housing (defined as no more than 30% of household income) for middle income workers such as teachers, first responders, and healthcare providers. Our area has many expensive vacation or second homes, and many sub-standard units. To address a short supply of affordable, workforce housing, Northampton County rehabilitated the William Hughes multi-family facility, and Accomack County plans to build 21 new units. The real estate focus group attributed the lack of this housing type to restrictive zoning that prohibits guest houses or multi-family units by right (in Northampton County). A proposed change in Northampton County's zoning code would encourage affordable housing through the provision of smaller lot options and use of accessory structures for housing in buildings outside the primary dwelling.
- ii. The Northampton County Board of Supervisors is considering a new zoning ordinance that will encourage affordable housing through permission to build multi-family structures. Currently the Housing Board has had difficulty finding sites in Northampton.

B. Leadership Development Initiative

- i. Seek new ways to actively engage local leaders, businesses in regional economic development efforts. Northampton County Economic Development office has compiled an email list of key business leaders and is regularly publishing information on investment incentives available for business expansion. In addition, proposed local ordinances are being streamlined to reduce regulatory burdens on private sector participants.

C. Real Estate Industry

- i. Increase collaboration between local government and the real estate industry, creating strong, strategic alliances between the two sectors.
 - 1. Create a webpage of available sites, state, and other incentives. (Enterprise Zone, Foreign Trade Zone, etc).

2. Educate government leaders about the value of the real estate industry and how it advances economic development for our region.
 - a. Demonstrate to the public sector how the real estate industry economically benefits the area through its marketing to industrialists and others with the ability to bring jobs.
 - b. Show how advertising dollars help the whole region, not just the real estate industry.
 - c. Address the lack of affordable workforce housing on the Eastern Shore. Northampton County can begin by allowing guest houses and multi-family units. Northampton is still reviewing changes to its zoning code.

D. Recreational Facilities

- i. Find funding to conduct a feasibility study for a Northampton County Aquatic Center.

E. Healthcare

- i. Riverside Shore Memorial Hospital got approval from the state to move from Nassawadox to Onancock, broke ground in October, 2013, and is starting construction in late 2014. The Northampton County Economic Development office is working directly with the owners of the soon to be vacated hospital on ways to potentially reuse the facility.
- ii. Within four years, healthcare providers need to reduce the cost of care 30-40% in order to continue to serve the community. Healthcare providers strongly recommend convening a meeting of healthcare providers to identify issues and find ways to reduce costs, such as collaborating to buy supplies and services.
- iii. Rural Helath built a new \$7,500,000 patient care facility in Atlantic, VA that provides medical and dental care and employs 50 people.
- iv. Mentor grade school children about the many healthcare industry and family-wage job opportunities that will be available through proper training to meet the future need for nurses, pharmacists, therapists, etc., on the Eastern Shore.
- v. Continuously encourage supervisors to think regionally, not by county, and to set aside politics from the provision of healthcare.
- vi. A-NPDC helped the Healthy Communities organization secure a grant that awarded walking trail signs to five Eastern Shore towns to promote healthy lifestyles and economic development. A-NPDC also worked with VDOT to waive the sign installation fees for the towns.

- vii. A-NPDC serves on the Healthy Communities team to coordinate with schools, health care providers, the local YMCA, restaurants and other businesses in promoting healthy lifestyles for our region. Healthy Communities designated numerous Healthy Options restaurants (indicated by a special logo) throughout the Shore that feature locally grown produce, locally caught seafood, and nutritiously prepared items on their menu. Continue to encourage farm-to-school programs that serve local foods in schools and other institutions such as hospitals and nursing homes, espousing with Healthy Communities and other like-minded organizations, the importance of diet and exercise to good health.
- viii. Market the availability of, and promote under-utilized services such as home health care, oral health, and preventative medicine. USDA: Northampton County was deemed no longer eligible for grants because of the influx of people moving into Bay Creek.
- ix. Address the shortage of housing for healthcare workers.
- x. Use available influence to change how federal programs determine an area's eligibility for federal grants and loans. Most are based on median household or per capita income. However, the poverty index would be a more accurate measure to apply, because of the large influx of wealthy (mostly retired) people moving to the Eastern Shore. Their incomes skew median household incomes higher, without changing the poverty level.

5. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

- A. Explore synergies between R&D entities in the region such as the Marine Sciences Consortium, College of William and Mary Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences, University of Virginia Long-Term Ecological Research Project, Old Dominion University, NASA, Navy, NOAA, Coast Guard, and Department of Defense contractors. Organize a conference to show what they offer/do, explore synergies.
- B. Conservation could be a growth industry because of the scientific research conducted here (see A above), training for marine research, and restocking the oceans with wild fish species (by aquaculture).

Project/Task	Responsibility	Support	Timeline	Funds needed/ sought	Completion Date
1. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, RETENTION, AND EXPANSION					
A. Wallops Research Park (WRP) Development					
i. Accomack County secures \$4 million in state funding for the taxiway into the Wallops Research Park.	Accomack County	Timmons Group	January 2013	State funds	December 2014
ii. County completes additional steps to remove federal deed restriction on County land.	Accomack County	Timmons Group	January 2013	N/A	Nov 2013
iii. County Board approves \$4 million to finance WRP infra-structure.	Accomack County		March 2013	County funds	July 2013
iv. Develop a Workforce Development/Continuing Education presence in the WRP based on completed feasibility study.	Accomack County/ Educators	A-NPDC	Within 5 years		On-going
B. Improve Infrastructure					
i. Ports: Deepen Cape Charles Harbor and Natural Channel	Northampton County/Town of Cape Charles	A-NPDC	On-going	Seek additional harbor user then reapply	Request denied 7/13; Maintenance dredging 8/14
1. Request construction authorization and funding for construction through Congressional allocation.					
ii. Energy – Natural Gas Pipeline	Accomack County	A-NPDC	On-Going	Explore possibility for EDA or USDA funds	2016
1. Facilitate extension of natural gas pipeline from Maryland to Accomack County.					
2. Extend pipeline further to major employers	Same as #1	Same as #1	Same as #1	Same as #1	
iii. Broadband					
1. Conduct study of residential users to determine level of service desired and price point	A-NPDC	ES Broadband Authority	March/April 2013		Cancelled
2. Advertise RFP for service providers to take advantage of incentives offered by ESVBA	A-NPDC	Same	2012		July 2012
iv. Railroad					
1. Make improvements over the next six years – including cross ties, surfacing, lining, and ballasting the track.	Bay Coast Railroad	A-NPDC	On-going		
2. Explore feasibility of Shore passenger/commuter service	A-NPDC	Same	As requested		
v. Wastewater					
1. Seek funding for WWTx systems in Northampton County towns	Northampton County	A-NPDC	As requested		
2. Develop wastewater systems in Accomack County.	Accomack County	A-NPDC	As requested		

Project/Task	Responsibility	Support	Timeline	Funds needed/ sought	Completion Date
C. Agriculture/Aquaculture					
i. Set up a successful and inclusive process for communication between the state, EPA, and the farming/aquaculture community	A-NPDC	Extension Service	On-going		
ii. Seek a seat on the state's Best Management Practices Committee.	FSA/S&W Conservation	Counties	On-going		
iii. Look for funds to study of storm water collection, reuse for agricultural irrigation and industrial purposes.	ESVA Groundwater Committee	A-NPDC	On-going		
iv. Develop E. Shore Food Policy Council to promote, leverage agriculture and aquaculture for economic development.	A-NPDC	A-NPDC and VES Land Trust	May 2015		
2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT					
A. Create a central place to learn about ALL the educational opportunities on the Eastern Shore.	Educators	A-NPDC	2014		
B. Help Eastern Shore Community College get grant for new facility to address future workforce development educational needs.	A-NPDC and ESCC	A-NPDC	Summer or Fall 2014	EDA Public Works Grant	2016
C. Seek ways to expand transportation options for people without a personal vehicle to get to ESCC and/or their jobs.	ESCC and employers	A-NPDC/Trans Cmte /STARtransit	2015		
3. TOURISM					
A. Tourism Commission					
i. Support TC efforts to promote the region, including Bike Plan update	A-NPDC	Counties	On-going	VDOT/ DOT	
i. Suggest cooperative marketing ventures to unify tourism-related businesses in both counties to promote the region.	A-NPDC	Tourism Commission Tourism Commission	On-going		
ii. Educate community on value of tourism to economic development by providing quantification of benefits.	A-NPDC	A-NPDC	On-going		
iii. Promote "Health People, Healthy Places" to Tourism Commission to benefit tourists as well as citizens.	E. Shore Healthy Comm. Coalition	A-NPDC	On-going		
iv. Help Fish & Wildlife Services, NASA, Chincoteague explore adaptive management practices that sustain resiliency of Assateague, Wallops, Assawoman, and Metompkin Islands.	Accomack County Tourism Commis'n VES Land Trust	A-NPDC	On-going Ongoing		
v. Support agri-/eco-tourism development via all venues.					

Project/Task	Responsibility	Support	Timeline	Funds needed/ sought	Completion Date
4. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT					
A. Housing Development					
i. Middle income earners' workforce housing is in short supply. Look at zoning changes to allow for guest houses, multi-family units, and other development for workforce housing.	County Planning Commissions	A-NPDC	On-going		
B. Leadership Initiative					
Taylor-Murphy Center community discussions project was referred to the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP). VEDP plans to bring state resources and expertise to work with ESCC, County Administrators, regional Eastern Shore Economic Developers, and Chambers of Commerce, to develop a regional economic development infrastructure to discuss and plan, strategize how to maximize those resources through regional cooperation.	ESCC/VEDP	A-NPDC	On-going		
ii. Convene Eastern Shore leaders to discuss ways to effect cohesive regional economic development cooperation.	A-NPDC	Accomack and Northampton Counties	June/July 2014	VA Dept of Housing, Community Development	
C. Recreational Facilities					
i. Northampton County Aquatic Center – seek funds for feasibility study.	Northampton County	A-NPDC	2015		
D. Healthcare					
i. Organize healthcare conference for ES providers to identify issues, find solutions as 1 st step in helping reduce costs by 30-40%, as needed in next 3-4 years.	A-NPDC	Healthcare/Care-giver providers; VA Health Dept.	Summer 2014		
ii. Teach grade-school children about possible family-wage health-care jobs e.g., as nurses, pharmacists, therapists. Visit schools to talk about growing needs, how to prepare for these jobs.	Healthcare providers	Educators	On-going		
iii. Promote use of under-utilized services such as home health care, oral health, and preventative medicine.	Healthcare providers	A-NPDC	On-going		
5. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT					
A. Organize symposium with stakeholders (UVA, Virginia Tech, Old Dominion University, Marine Science Consortium, William and Mary, etc) to identify potential synergies, ways to collaborate on R&D based on natural resources, farming, and aquaculture. Compile, distribute symposium abstracts.	A-NPDC	Stakeholders	Fall 2014		

Comments from Public

A CEDS “Open House” was held at the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission on Wednesday, November 7, 2012 from 9:00 a.m. to 7 p.m. to allow the public to review the CEDS document and comment on it.

The open house was advertised in the *Eastern Shore News*, the newspaper of record for our region, on Wednesday, October 27, and Saturday, October 31 2012. The document was also made available at the Clerk of the Court offices of both counties for public review and comment, and on the A-NPDC website at www.a-npdc.org. These locations were also printed in the advertisement. In addition, the open house was advertised on the local radio station on November 2, 5, and 6th.

Public comments were received in the form of emails and by citizens walking into the open house and commenting by putting sticky notes onto the large format copies of the Implementation Plan.

Email comments from the public are pasted in as they were received below (with names removed). Sticky note comments are noted on the Implementation Plan in yellow highlight.

Comment #1

Thank you and the rest of the Accomack-Northampton PDC for developing this 2012 draft and including proposals which would help restore clean water and improve quality of life on the Eastern Shore.

Upgrading septic systems, storm water control projects, and vegetated buffer zones are all wonderful steps in the right direction and can do a lot to help with water quality.

In regards to the WRP, I have a few concerns. I lived right next to the area that will be developed and used to frequently walk my dog along the forest trail and run around with him in the baseball field. When the county decided to build the WRP, they stopped maintaining that land. Since grass and bushes are overgrown and the streetlight near there is out, it has become an area where cars park late at night for hidden rendezvous. I now feel unsafe walking past that area any time after dusk. The county should be maintaining this land until development begins ... as delays are not guaranteed to end any time soon and residents live there now. I am also concerned what the new buildings will do for the water quality in Watts Creek, which runs through those woods. Natural buffers of plants help to keep those waters clean, and construction that would tear down that old growth forest would likely damage that ecosystem

considerably.

For the Chesapeake Bay TMDL and Watershed Implementation Plan, I agree that communication among farmers, the state and the EPA is critical. I also support the suggestion that farmers work with Soil and Water CD to set up that "successful and inclusive process for communication." While not all voluntary BMPs were included in the model, that does not mean that the model is flawed ... merely that it is lacking data. This is why communication between the state, EPA and farmers is so important. If farmers already have these BMPs in place, they need to report what they are doing and be open to have someone come in and look!

The Chesapeake Bay TMDL Blueprint will help, not harm the Eastern Shore's economic activity (p 35). Estuary restoration is a huge commercial investment and creates jobs that stay local (see attached report). Money spent on habitat restoration stays in the local economy because it requires that local workforce.

The Blueprint will also help to protect the Eastern Shore by insuring that communities that live upstream - in MD and PA and all the way up to Cooperstown, NY - are held responsible for cleaning up their own pollution rather than passing it to the Bay and those communities that live downstream.

Comment #2

I wanted to send you a quick email summarizing some of the points that I (and the Land Trust) feel could be included or strengthened within the CEDS 2012. We'd like to see agri-tourism and eco-tourism included in the tourism section of the plan. Both forms of tourism could draw on the wealth of natural resources we have here on the Shore. As I mentioned, there was a Farm Tour Day this past Saturday. This could be a much bigger event with a much larger draw. We'd also like to see the workforce development section consider small-scale and alternative agriculture as potential training programs and future employment for young people (high school and community college). The average age of farmers is 57 in the U.S. Training young farmers and showing them that there is support for them here on the Shore, will continue to bolster our region's identity as an agricultural community. Additionally, as we talked about, we think the formation of a food policy council for the Shore would further our ability to leverage agriculture and aquaculture on the Shore for economic development.

Comment #3

In regard to the Agriculture/Aquaculture section:
I strongly support the points made in parts v.,vii. and x, especially where they can support small local farmers and watermen supplying local markets. As has been shown in many studies,

money kept in the local economy in this way has a multiplier effect and spreads money and jobs throughout the community.

All local initiatives, including the formation of a cooperative for sustainable local food, should be endorsed and supported by both counties. Local seafood markets, with accurate labeling and dating of seafood, could keep our prized seafood here and would appeal to all who value healthy food, including tourists. Wachapreague and Chincoteague might be good locations.

Tourism section:

A. Another idea for tourist attraction: stargazing. More and more people are interested in finding places where the sky is dark enough for stargazing. The Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge still is such a location. They have done a great job by staying open all night for the Perseid Meteor showers in August. I don't think this has been promoted as a tourist attraction, however, but it could be. I believe there is potential here for much more to be done. Other places on the Shore still have relatively dark skies too: Kiptopeke State Park, the ES of VA National Wildlife Refuge, the Department of Fish and Game Natural Area Preserves, and the Nature Conservancy lands. I'm sure there are other locations as well that should be identified, kept dark, and advertised to tourists--with educational programs it could be an important draw.

B. I like all the suggestions, especially ii. regarding better signage and branding; branding should be specific regarding which foods being sold are truly local.

Regarding the Chesapeake Bay TMDL and Watershed Implementation Plan (the Clean Water Blueprint)-

It is good to see proposals for restoring clean water on the Projects List. I would like to see the following points added to insure that the Strategy's references to the Blueprint are accurate:

1. Make sure that the Blueprint is accurate "on the ground". To the extent the Model used for the Blueprint in 2010 does not include all voluntary BMPs on the Eastern Shore (p. 33), farmers can help the process by reporting their voluntary BMPs.
2. The Blueprint will help, not harm, Eastern Shore economic activity (p.35). The Chesapeake Bay is vital to the Eastern Shore economy. It's good for tourism, and supply's habitat for 75% of our nation's commercial fish catch and 80-90% of the recreational fish catch. It's restoration can create jobs; money spent on Bay restoration stays in the local economy.
3. The Blueprint will protect the Eastern Shore by helping to ensure that all communities- including those upstream, clean up their own pollution instead of passing it down to the Shore.

Comment #4

It's obvious that a lot of people have had a hand in the plan, as it has many different ideas, in fact it probably has too many ideas and not enough focus. To be an actionable plan, it really needs to get slimmed down and be prioritized. The ideas are so numerous that some actually conflict with each other. When prioritizing the actions, each proposal should be backed up / accompanied with a business case demonstrating its cost / payback.

Documenting the objectives of the plan up front should help set the criteria for prioritizing the ideas. You need to ask what is the objective of the plan: to provide a better work force for the

industry that is here, to provide more jobs for the people who live here, to provide better jobs, or create jobs to attract new people? Clearly stating the objective will help narrow down the ideas. For example, on page 39, the implementation plan calls for “NASA or other entities to provide a car for workers to use to get home if they carpool.” Proposals like this really don’t have an impact on the economy of the area, and are a distraction in terms of too many ideas. There are a number of similar proposals that should be eliminated to give more focus. It is also very important that if the county supervisors do not support the objectives, the plan will never get implemented. Any strategic plan that does not have buy-in to the objectives will never go forward. Getting buy-in to your objectives is probably the most difficult task you have to tackle.

One thing that came out in many different ways and places was the need for better education and skill sets for local people looking for jobs. It sounds like there are jobs, but not enough qualified people to fill them. Tackling this problem should probably be the number one priority. This is in large part due to the lack of school funding and the resultant quality of the local schools. This has a larger impact that was also hinted at in several places, one being page 37/38 that states it is difficult to recruit people to come to this area due to services, shopping, and *schools*. It further states that NASA people choose to live in Maryland because of better schools even though there are higher taxes. People are willing to pay more taxes for better schools, so maybe we should do a better job of funding our schools. If you can’t get good people to move here on account of the schools, businesses pick up on this and won’t come here either. Something needs to be done about the school system. People need to be convinced the higher school taxes have a payback.

Employment in this area has traditionally focused mostly on the agricultural / seafood industry. This has been positive in that we have a lot of open land, but these industries do not provide good paying jobs. In fact, few people other than migrants will take the jobs they offer. None of the proposals for these industries seemed to come up with ways to improve the jobs being offered in this industry, so their impact on jobs is somewhat marginal and probably not a priority. We can do all we want to develop farming, but if it is good jobs we want, this isn’t going to provide the answer.

To set priorities, business cases or cost benefit analyses need to be done. For example, on page 13, it talks about funding for a taxiway to be built at taxpayer expense to a hanger to be built by BaySys. If I recollect correctly, this project had a payback period of 21 years. This is a ludicrous undertaking if that is what the payback period is, and that has proven out by the fact the BaySys is now on the verge of bankruptcy. If this is the case, the proposal doesn’t have a valid business case the proposal should be dropped.

Another idea that was put forward is the development of the railroad. What is the payback to the taxpayers for spending money on this private business? It will never become a commuter line, our population is too small. What is the cost/benefit of this project, what is the reality of it ever coming to fruition? People want the independence that automotive transportation brings. Projects like this that are not supported by a business case should not be included.

The plan really needs to focus on our assets. The plan stated right up front that our location is a big advantage, supporting eco-tourism, but the analysis of the problems needs a little more insight. The plan calls for cleaning up the roads. While this is needed, there are other bigger problems... if we want to attract more people we need to make it easier to get here. The \$24 bridge toll is a big deterrent to get people from the Hampton Roads area or many other areas to come here. The bridge is a costly bottleneck. We need another set of tunnels to more safely accommodate more traffic and we need a more tourist friendly toll scheme. Traveling here is also restricted by Route 13, *the most dangerous road in Virginia*. It is hindered by numerous cross roads, many stop lights, and some well-known speed traps that are used to generate income from out of state drivers. If we are promoting tourism, we also need to think about ourselves, as we work to attract more tourist traffic. Route 13 is the only backbone route on the peninsula, when it is backed up, we all have a hard time. (Just speak to the people in Smyrna Delaware if you want to find out the problems the locals had on Route 13 until Route 1 was completed.) We need to look at a safer limited access highway to facilitate through traffic so locals can get around and tourists can get here conveniently. We need Route 1 extended as a limited access highway parallel to Route 13.

If we want eco-tourism, we need to look at our attractions. We have a lot of beautiful beaches but no public access to them. We have some beautiful wildlife preserves, but they are poorly advertised, have limited directional signage, and some have very limited parking. We need to expand kayak launching sites and boat launching sites. We need to expand marinas with both slips and moorings and provide better facilities for visiting boaters (pump out facilities, shower facilities, laundry facilities, etc.).

We need to give better information to attract people to watch NASA launches. We need to better advertise all our attractions.

And if we want more eco-tourism, we need to take more care of our assets. We need to support the efforts to reduce Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) so we can have a healthier bay. The plan smears the TMDL as "a model that is flawed at best". This is an emotional issue, where is the proof that it is flawed, the model is probably the best there is, but people have to do their homework to feed it better data. This is a popular sentiment made by the people who are contributing most to a pollution problem that they would just as soon ignore. The truth is that for more eco-tourism, we need a clean bay.

Along the same lines, we get a lot of tourism for fishing, but the fishing business is hurting due to over fishing menhaden. If we want more fishing tourism, we need to be more environmentally friendly supporting menhaden restrictions and pushing for less pollution of the bay.

The plan has also ignored a big gorilla in the room, off shore drilling. While it's not here yet, where do we stand with off shore drilling? If we are basing our plan on eco-tourism, we need to think about the risk of becoming another victim like the Gulf as a result of Deep Water Horizon oil blowout.

As you noted, the one big advantage we have is our unique location and our pristine environment. Our location is extremely fragile and if we want to preserve it, we need to take a proactive position on environmental concerns.

Comment #5

We need value added on an industrial scale so that our crops can be processed here locally.

We should add state and federal programs.

We need to add at the end of the sentence "volunteer practices".

Would like to add that we need to teach at the elementary school level where food comes from and the importance of agriculture. (Similar to Ag in the Classroom administered by VA Farm Bureau).

Add that we need to educate the public and our county leaders the value.

"Vegetative buffers need to be enforced". I feel these comments are more appropriate in the Ag section than in the aquaculture section.

Any agricultural BMP programs should be addressed in the Ag section.

Most importantly, I strongly disagree with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation email that is circulating about the TMDL model. They are aware that volunteer participation is not being accounted for in the model. Only acres that receive cost share, which is a very small percentage. I will use my farming acreage as an example on Friday if necessary.

Comment #6

First, regarding the statements in the farming section regarding EPA TMDL's: I am not surprised that our farming community discounts the studies and recommendations of the EPA regarding TMDL's, as that industry is a leading source of the pollution that is degrading the Chesapeake Bay. The science behind that program is not flawed and is widely recognized by experts and laymen alike as true studies evaluating the problems affecting the Bay. On the DelMarVA, nearly all of the soybeans, wheat and corn grown here are used as animal feed for the chicken industry, one of the worst industries polluting the Bay. Further, the use of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides to support the growth of those crops is far more cumulative than what would be used on crops grown for direct human consumption. These chemicals end up in the Bay. For our plan to state that the TMDL program of the EPA is flawed and to discount the same is a blatant and outright claim that cannot be supported and only sustains the harmful industrial effects to our most precious resource, the Chesapeake Bay. I insist that the language be dropped or significantly altered in the plan to reflect support for the TMDL program of the

EPA.

Second, regarding the Tourism portion of the Plan, there is absolutely no mention of an effort to attract the Tall Ships industry to our shores. This year Northampton County and Cape Charles devoted \$60,000 of public funding, and the private sector contributed another \$15,000 towards our first concerted effort at attracting that industry. Around the world, communities that are able to accommodate tall ships have recognized the incredible economic gains realized in education, tourism and infrastructure that effort can bring. It is well demonstrated. In fact, Northampton continues to support this effort in this new year's budget. At least some mention of this focus should be mentioned in your plan.

Comment #7

The out-of-hand dismissal of the Chesapeake Bay TMDL model is premature. The ESVA development plan must articulate explicitly how the Chesapeake Bay TMDL is either: A) incomplete, or B) inaccurate. Before the ESVA development plan perpetuates the very error of which it is criticizing the Chesapeake Bay TMDL, it must identify specifically what numbers are incorrect **and** supply the correct numbers. To say data is incomplete is like saying corn isn't ripe yet -- we cannot ignore it nor can we dismiss it; we must nurture it as we would any growing movement. If the hardworking farmers of the Eastern Shore have not been given due credit, we should outdo one another in good. If we listen to them, they will listen to us; if we ignore them, they will ignore us. We do not have to swallow anything whole-cloth, but we should at least chew on it.

The Blueprint will help -- not harm -- the economy on the Shore. Estuary restoration can create 30 jobs for every million dollars invested; this is twice as many as gas and oil exploration and road development *combined*.

If the Eastern Shore has indeed remained below the N and K levels, include comprehensive voluntary BMP data in your development plan *alongside* the Chesapeake Bay TMDLs. If the voluntary BMP data is *not* included, then the assertion that local workers have in fact done their part is not represented enough. Show their hard work in detail! If the laborers on the Shore are indeed making sincere efforts to conserve resources on the peninsula -- and I know countless farmers who are -- then the inclusion of the voluntary BMPs *alongside* the Chesapeake Bay TMDLs will only increase the profile of these conscientious farmers.

We think that it is extremely important to improve communication between the State, the EPA, and farmers. We support the effort of farmers to work with the Soil and Water Conservation District to "set up a successful and inclusive process for communication between the state, EPA, and the farming community" (page 33).

The voluntary efforts of the farmers on the Eastern Shore were not given nearly enough credit. Expose the good work of these workers with cold, hard data! As it stands, the voluntary efforts of these farmers is not exposed any better in the ESVA development plan than they are in the Chesapeake Bay TMDLs.

Ignoring the TMDLs because the Eastern Shore wasn't included will appear petulant and will lead neither the EPA nor the Commonwealth to include local producers in further conversations. The decision to include the TMDLs in the ESVA development plan must be pragmatic, not dogmatic. Belittling the TMDLs will not bring honor to the voluntary BMPs of farmers on the Shore. Farmers can help complete the Bay TMDL by reporting their BMPs.

Please include the TMDLs *and* include complete data on voluntary BMPs.

Comment #8

1. Firstly, I applaud Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission for developing the draft 2012 Eastern Shore Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and for including on the Projects List proposals which should help restore clean water and improve the quality of life on the Eastern Shore:
 - Upgrading septic systems to modern waste water treatment facilities for the Town of Chincoteague and other areas;
 - Agricultural storm water control projects for Northampton County;
 - Protecting water quality by enforcing vegetative buffers and enacting zoning that protects water quality
2. I appreciate Focus Group members' comments on the Chesapeake Bay TMDL and Watershed Implementation Plan (the Clean Water Blueprint) And
 - agree that better communication among farmers, the state and the EPA concerning the Blueprint is critical and strongly support the suggestion that farmers work with the Soil and Water Conservation District to "set up a successful and inclusive process for communication between the state, EPA and the farming community."
 - In connection with the Focus Group question on use of oysters to remove nitrogen, we note that the Blueprint mentions the possibility of using oysters to help reduce nutrient pollution pursuant to an approved state nutrient trading program.
3. To ensure that the Strategy's references to the Blueprint are accurate, the Strategy should also include the following points:
 - State and federal government representatives are working right now to ensure that the Blueprint is accurate "on the ground," and they have committed to making adjustments and corrections as necessary every two years. To the extent the Model used for the Blueprint in 2010 does not include all voluntary BMPs on the Eastern Shore, farmers can help the process by reporting their voluntary BMPs
 - The Blueprint will help, not harm Eastern Shore economic activity. The Chesapeake Bay is vital to the Eastern Shore and national economies. As described in the attached reports, estuaries like the Chesapeake Bay supply habitat for over 75% of our nation's

commercial fish catch and 80-90% of the recreational fish catch. Estuary restoration can create more than 30 jobs for each million dollars invested. That's twice as many jobs as the oil and gas exploration and road construction combined. And estuary restoration jobs are local – they require on the ground machinery and local workforce. Money spent on habitat restoration stays in the local economy. Find out more from the attached reports.

- The Blueprint will protect the Eastern Shore by helping to ensure that all communities – including upstream and out-of-state localities like the Susquehanna Valley – clean up their own pollution and do not simply pass it on to the Bay and then to the Eastern Shore.

APPENDIX A
Focus Group Questions

Focus Groups – Spring 2012

Nine focus group meetings were held between March and May 2012. More than 200 business leaders were invited to participate in their specific industry group. Each group was asked the same questions.

The nine groups were:

1. Agriculture/Nursery stock/Vegetable growers/Farmers markets
2. Aquaculture/Fisheries/Seafood Markets
3. Federal government entities and contractors
4. Hospitality/Tourism/Retail businesses
5. Manufacturers
6. Healthcare providers
7. Educators
8. Service providers of all kinds
9. Real estate – residential and commercial

Following are the “Issues/Challenges” and “Projects” identified by each group.

Focus Group questions asked of each group:

1. How is your business or industry doing compared to four years ago (2007-2008)? (please score between 0 -10, with 0 being the worst and 10 being the best)
2. What challenges does your business/industry face in expanding its market?
 - a. Competition
 - b. Lack of capital
 - c. Labor issues (what are they?)
 - d. All of the above.
 - e. Other challenges – please list.
3. How are you addressing growth opportunities? Do they exist now?
4. What resources or tools would be helpful in expanding your business/industry? Circle all that apply.
 - a. Easier access to capital
 - b. A better workforce
 - c. Zoning changes
 - d. Cheaper access to high-speed broadband
 - e. Others?
5. What do you feel are the essential building blocks of a healthy economy? Which of these do we have, and which are missing?
6. What are the Eastern Shore’s economic strengths?
7. What are the Eastern Shore’s economic weaknesses? What remedies can you suggest to reduce/eliminate weaknesses?
8. What are the impediments to economic development on the Eastern Shore?
9. What are the Eastern Shore’s greatest economic development opportunities, or how could the Eastern Shore better use its assets to stimulate economic growth?
10. What collaborative initiatives can you imagine that would enhance economic gains in the county/region? Do you have examples of such?

Name _____

Contact info: _____

Would you like to receive the final document? _____

APPENDIX B
Notes from Focus Groups

Agriculture

Agriculture is a largest industry on the Eastern Shore of Virginia with a value \$243 million (2007 Census of Agriculture).

Accomack County has 93,764 acres in farms, with 76,576 acres of cropland that produced a market value of \$153,040,000 in agricultural products. It is the #1 producer of soybeans and corn, the #2 producer of wheat and vegetables, the #3 producer of aquaculture, and the #4 producer of poultry in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Accomack County ranks 3rd in the state for total value of agricultural products sold, but it ranks #2 if nursery crops are included.

Northampton County has 63,760 acres in farms with 58,230 acres of total cropland that produced a market value of \$90,969,000 in agricultural products. It is the #1 grower of snap beans, wheat, aquaculture, and vegetables, the #2 grower of soybeans (after Accomack County), and #7 in corn in the Commonwealth. Northampton County ranks 6th in the state for total value of agricultural products sold, but ranks #1 if nursery crops are included.

Issues/Challenges:

1. Cost of inputs
 - a. Nitrogen costs three times what it did just a year ago.
 - b. Potash has gone up 400% from \$150/ton to \$650/ton
 - c. Bean and corn seed have doubled in price in five years.
 - d. Soybean seed has doubled in last 10 years
 - e. Land rent has doubled as well.
 - f. Ammonium nitrate very expensive for our area because of lack of natural gas.
 - g. High cost of diesel fuel has cut into profits.
2. State and federal programs often have conflicting regulations – i.e. cost share program – some farmers won't participate because of not being able to put N onto the fields until after March 1 – too late by then. Most regulations seemed to be geared towards farming in western Virginia, not here. No one from the Eastern Shore sits on the State's Best Management Practices (BMP) Committee.
3. Water is a huge issue – we are not capturing the water needed for agriculture. Ponds don't refill quickly enough because they are on Bojac soil that drains quickly. Standing water is also an issue – the drains have not been maintained for years.
4. Chesapeake Bay TMDL – data is not accurate, or at best is incomplete. This issue shows that EPA and the State need to do a better job of communicating with farmers. We were never consulted

about how or what was sampled. There was no communication at all. It appears that no credit was given for volunteer practices.

5. Labor Issues/Challenges – the best workers are the ones we train ourselves. Also, the immigration mess is a huge issue. Undocumented workers should be provided a path to citizenship. Most US citizens don't want to work at low paying and very hard agricultural jobs anyway, so undocumented workers aren't taking jobs from them. Young people leave the area to find work, but there are ag jobs here. They just need to be trained to do them.

Projects/Opportunities:

1. Conduct a survey of farmers to establish return on investment. Compare input costs to price increases for crops.
2. Find out how we might get an Eastern Shore farmer onto the State's BMP Committee.
3. Conduct a drainage study for Northampton County with focus on how to capture more stormwater for irrigation without harming the aquaculture industry, which needs **clean** water to flow into the creeks.
4. Chesapeake Bay TMDL – model is flawed at best.
 - a. Challenge the process and methods of sampling.
 - b. Voluntary BMPs were not considered – the regulations were based on speculation. Farmers on the Eastern Shore have kept below thresholds for N and K for years, but this was not credited.
 - c. Work with the Soil and Water Conservation District and the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission to set up successful and inclusive process for communication between the state, EPA, and the farming community.
5. Labor – train local young people to work in ag – expand school curriculums to include skills needed such as fixing equipment (mechanical skills), and business management and finance, which is essential to successful farming today. In addition, elementary school level classes should teach children where food comes from and how important agriculture is for a stable society.
6. Innovation – look for additional crops/methods to diversify the agricultural economy such as organic, Community Supported Ag (CSA), niche markets (Kosher), value-added products, etc.
7. Promote agriculture –
 - a. Educate public and county leaders to value
 - b. Conduct events to promote – maybe promote one crop at a time.
 - c. Organize an Eastern Shore Regional Fair.

- d. Explore how to involve 4-H more closely.
- e. Support farm businesses with marketing, signage, partnerships.

Aquaculture

Aquaculture of clams and oysters is a \$40+ million business on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. This includes raising and selling more than one **billion** clams per year.

Issues/Challenges:

1. Environmental
 - a. Chesapeake Bay TMDL viewed as flawed model and will negatively impact our industry.
 - b. Sheet flow off farm fields kills clams and oysters in the creeks – vegetative buffers need to be enforced. This comment could also apply to the agriculture section.
 - c. Wastewater contamination is a threat, especially to the bayside, and the Exmore/Willis Wharf/Belle Haven area due to septic tank contamination. However, the two counties do not seem to have the ability to work together to solve wastewater issues and challenges at all, which may in future endanger this major seed growing area.
 - d. Some farmers plow right up the saltbush line or to the edges of ditches – heavy rains wash soil and chemicals into the water. This comment applies to the agriculture section as well.
 - e. Clam growing can't be expanded because the market is mature and planting capacity is already reached. There is no more acreage available at this time for clam production on the bayside, and there is a 90% mortality rate north of Nassawadox Creek. Submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) has taken some areas out of production, and the Baylor Grounds (public shellfish harvesting areas) take more out of production. But oyster production has increased by 10 fold over the past four years which are more tolerant of differing salinity levels.
 - f. Sea level rise and climate change are already affecting the barrier islands and channels – they are moving rapidly. This will impact the industry by changing water depths and growing areas.
2. Zoning
 - a. Counties need to zone to support the industry. Agriculture is supported with zoning, but not aquaculture, which is really another form of agriculture according to tax laws.
3. Landowner view-share
 - a. Conflicts between landowners and watermen related to marking growing zones and tending cages.
4. Public education needed about how important the industry is to the economy of the Eastern Shore and how necessary it is to keep the water pristine for aquaculture.

Projects/Opportunities:

1. Chesapeake Bay TMDL
 - a. Research nitrogen loading – compare TMDL numbers to Best Management Practices records and also Department of Conservation and Recreation watershed management plans.
 - b. Find out if the N removed by oysters and clams was factored into the model. If it wasn't see if it can be considered now.
2. Look for a way to have a bathymetric survey done on the seaside and mark channels accurately.
3. Enforce vegetative buffer installation and maintenance. This can be addressed in agricultural BMP programs in the agriculture section.
4. Landowner View-Share – apprise Virginia Shellfish Growers Association of problems and ask that it address this issue.
5. Public Education/Promotion of the Industry – this industry is hard to see.
 - a. Advertise benefit of aquaculture to the local economy; i.e. a pallet of clams is \$4-5 thousand.
 - b. Explain need to protect water quality. Promote our region's unique ability to control upland runoff into **ANY** water body. Almost no other community has this advantage. It means we can protect the seaside by enforcing vegetative buffers and enacting zoning to protect water quality.
 - c. Research statistics for number of jobs and average incomes in the industry and value to counties in revenue.

Government and Contractors

NASA contractors were the only attendees at this focus group. Therefore, the issues and challenges expressed do not necessarily include those of the Department of Defense or NASA itself. The views of those agencies will be sought through interviews and added to this document as an addendum.

Issues/Challenges:

1. Funding reductions for facilities and infrastructure have resulted in delayed maintenance being seen on roads, buildings, sidewalks, etc. Runway maintenance would be an issue if BaySys was not paying rent to use it, which helps defray costs. But the Wallops Flight Facility (WFF) is getting more funding for the rocket programs.
2. Competition from other NASA facilities can be intense, as with the phase-out of the Shuttle program at Cape Canaveral and the loss of more than 8,000 jobs there. NASA may need to move some operations there as a result. There are many trained people available there.
3. NASA press releases don't always identify the location of a program, so WFF is not identified as the site of the work and progress.
4. The public and particularly the politicians need to know the value of NASA/WFF and other government agencies to the economy of the region. This is not publicized enough.
5. Growth opportunities. NASA's commercialization initiative is huge now:
 - a. Re-supply of the International Space Station
 - b. Minotaur rocket launches
 - c. Antares rockets
 - d. Sounding rockets
 - e. Not having the Wallops Research Park developed has resulted in some contractors setting up operations in Pocomoke, Princess Anne, and Salisbury.
6. Workforce:
 - a. Difficult to recruit people to come to this area, and often, if they do take a job, they don't stay long because their families don't like it – too rural for many people, not enough services or shopping.
 - b. Schools are viewed as inferior to Maryland schools so many people live in Maryland instead of Virginia, even though the taxes are higher.

- c. An intern program through the colleges does work, but not enough people qualify. Local people need to be trained better in drafting, calculus, and aircraft mechanics. Worcester County (MD) supplies people with the best training.
 - d. Another issue is that often we do find qualified people, but, if we have no current openings, they move on to other jobs, and we can't get them back later.
 - e. Many WFF employees have 40-45 mile commutes, and there is little to no carpooling probably because people need a car to drop small children off at daycare or leave immediately in the event that a child is sick in daycare.
7. Wireless service at the WFF base is abysmal. Verizon wireless signal doesn't penetrate the buildings on base, and high-speed service is also needed at people's homes as many work at home as well. There is also opportunity for other service providers, as high-speed fiber optic cable is there through Eastern Shore of Virginia Broadband Authority.
8. Loss of HUBZone designation has hurt the region and ability of local contractors to get government contracts. If it hasn't been already, the Foreign Trade Zone designation should also be activated somewhere in the Wallops Research Park.
9. Energy – natural gas would be more economical. Also, there are problems with electricity. Interad (in Accomack Airport Industrial Park) experiences outages of one leg of its three-phase system. They have a generator, but it can't make up the difference. They need to shut down when this happens and start up again after power is restored. Power is unreliable on Assateague Island at the 60 foot radio frequency tower as well. (Note: According to ANEC, the problem at Assateague has been corrected since this focus group met).

Projects/Opportunities:

1. Education/Promotion – Publicize value of NASA WFF and other entities to the regional economy.
 - a. Look up study done by University of Maryland Salisbury.
 - b. Ask hoteliers what percentage of their business comes from NASA WFF
 - c. Look for ways that the Eastern Shore Defense Alliance could help with promotion
 - d. Need to develop our story to explain the uniqueness of the facility
 - e. Perhaps a centralized event planning entity could be identified to promote WFF and the Wallops Research Park.
2. Workforce

- a. Discuss need for better training with public school systems and Eastern Shore Community College. Research why Worcester County Maryland schools produce better candidates than Virginia schools do. What makes the difference?
 - b. Could NASA or other entities provide a car for workers to use to get home if they carpool? That way they could leave when necessary and still carpool.
 - c. A daycare center at the Wallops Research Park could resolve various issues with childcare for WFF employees and others in the area.
3. Wallops Research Park –opportunities slip by the longer Accomack County waits to build this out.
 - a. Accomack County should move aggressively to construct infrastructure and roads. Without WRP buildout, NASA may be forced to move work to Florida that could be done here.
 - b. A continuing education module for graduate studies would be heavily used by WFF employees. Look for opportunities to build a large offering of graduate level studies from diverse sources.
4. Broadband – needs further deployment especially for wireless service. Accomack County, the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission, and the Eastern Shore of Virginia Broadband Authority should be actively marketing to service providers.
5. Federal incentive programs
 - a. HUBZone designation needs to be reinstated if at all possible.
 - b. Foreign Trade Zone status should be activated in Wallops Research Park if it hasn't been already.
6. Energy
 - a. Continue to support Chesapeake Utilities efforts to extend a natural gas pipeline into Accomack County.
- b. Work with A&N Electric Cooperative to resolve any power problems.

Tourism/Hospitality/Retail

Only one person from the hospitality sector attended this focus group meeting. Additional research is underway to augment the list of Issues/Challenges and Projects/Opportunities to address them.

Issues/Challenges:

1. Route 13 carries thousands of automobiles, but most of it is through traffic that stays on the highway. The goal is to get people to drive into the towns not located on the highway and to explore our region. We need to do a better job of advertising what is available here. The new Visitor Center at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, staffed by enthusiastic volunteers, has made an impact already.
2. We lack tourism infrastructure, especially in lower Northampton County. We do have B&Bs in Cape Charles, but no other options for quality rooms or large numbers of lodgers. The Bay Creek development plans had originally included a conference center, but that has not yet come to fruition.
3. Labor Issues/Challenges– B&Bs and other businesses need quality handyman services. These are difficult to find in lower Northampton County.

Projects/Opportunities:

1. We need additional venues to get people off Route 13 and into our countryside by making our region a tourist destination:
 - a. Historic trails development – such as the old Stagecoach Route with period costumes.
 - b. An exhibit in Cape Charles about the meteor that hit the Bay. An interpretive center would draw people in.
 - c. The Historical Markers program could be expanded. It needs a “home” on the Shore – an agency to coordinate applications for new markers, maintain the old ones, and provide a list and map of all of them.
2. Capital – a venture capital fund for the Eastern Shore would be beneficial for entrepreneurs and for development of tourist infrastructure.
3. Route 13 signage and landscape improvements
 - a. Planting locally-grown crops such as cotton and sunflowers in the median or alongside the highway would show pride in our area – especially now that mowing has been drastically reduced, and the highway looks shaggy for much of the year. This has been done successfully in North Carolina.
 - b. Improve signage along Route 13 to direct travelers to venues and towns.

Manufacturers

Issues/Challenges:

1. Struggled over past couple of years as inputs have doubled in price, and markets are saturated. We are up millions of dollars in cost (chicken producer).
2. Too much protein on the market now – including beef, pork, all fresh meats.
3. Nexus taxation Issues/Challenges in states such as New Jersey, Michigan, and Washington.
4. Sluggish economy.
5. FDA label regulations that continually change.
6. Education, dollars, and access regarding social media marketing expertise and opportunities.
7. Growth opportunities
 - a. Value-added products that will increase margins with pre-seasoned products that are convenient for consumers to cook
 - b. Adding new products to kitchenware line
 - c. Looking for new opportunities through social media, blogging, etc.
8. Workforce
 - a. The newest graduates out of Eastern Shore of Virginia schools don't have adequate math skills or business and accounting training, but they are computer literate. Adequately skilled workers come from schools like Del Tech and Sussex Tech in Delaware.
 - b. Many Hispanic workers apply to us, but most are ineligible for hire because they can't supply documents.
 - c. We've actually had people come to interviews barefoot!
 - d. A large percentage of our employees are getting ready to retire, and we are concerned that we won't be able to replace them with adequately skilled younger people. We have a new HR recruiter working with the Eastern Shore Community College to perhaps put a training program in place that will include the skills we need for new hires.
 - e. Drugs are still a huge issue in our workforce. Years ago the problems were caused by marijuana, cocaine and alcohol. Now, prescription drugs such as Oxycontin (oxycodone) and Vicodin make workers fail drug tests. These are addictive drugs, but people tend to think that if a doctor prescribed the drug, it's OK to use it indiscriminately. If they can't

be gotten from a doctor, people are buying them off the street, and they can be very expensive. We've seen an upsurge in heroin use, as people are addicted to prescription drugs, can't afford them, and find that heroin is cheaper.

9. Public confidence in government is low – political polarization is hurting the Eastern Shore as well as the nation. Our politicians need to learn how to work together for the greater good.
10. Environmental
 - a. Environmental constraints are costly on the Eastern Shore. The sole source aquifer and the permeability of the soils create problems not encountered in other areas.
11. Tourism could be expanded, but:
 - a. Trashy roadsides and lack of concern about litter and rundown buildings along the highway hurt our image.
 - b. Tourism infrastructure and development of venues to showcase our unique assets are not being adequately pursued.
 - c. There is a lack of understanding about tourism's potential for economic development in our region.

Projects/Opportunities:

1. Education – we need better training programs to prepare people for the many jobs that are available.
2. Energy – the cost of energy goes up every year. We need to find a way to cut costs such as substituting natural gas for the fuels we now use.
3. Public transit could contribute to the prosperity of the Eastern Shore if it synchronized its routes to our shifts (chicken producer). Many people miss work because of unreliable vehicles, or they don't own a personal vehicle and must rely on others for transportation.
4. Tourism:
 - a. Unify tourism-related businesses in cooperative marketing ventures to promote the Eastern Shore.
 - b. Get the roads cleaned up. Teach a "Beautification 101" class to kids in school and take them out to clean up roads. Maybe they would then teach their parents not to litter.

Healthcare Providers

Issues/Challenges:

1. There have been dramatic changes in our industry in the past five years. We need to figure out how to reduce the cost of care by 30-40 percent within a timeframe of 3-4 years. To do this, we'll need to have in place seamless integration between all healthcare providers.
2. To maintain a functioning hospital, a minimum of 50,000 people must live in the area. We barely have that here, and the 2010 Census indicated that we actually lost population. However, we aren't sure that is accurate.
3. One patient/one record – problems with a single record involve maintenance, responsibility and medical/legal liability for accuracy and privacy. Getting reports between agencies and specialists is unreliable. In Virginia, the ownership of the record belongs with the healthcare provider. The “Connect Virginia” goal of one patient record is still in the future, but it could be a powerful tool for integrating healthcare between providers.
4. Workforce
 - i. Shortage of LPNs, RNs, pharmacists, and all therapists – physical, respiratory, rehab, and speech on the Eastern Shore.
 - ii. Need training programs accessible to people who live here.
 - iii. Recruiting is difficult because of housing shortages and the rural nature of our region (lack of services and shopping).
 - iv. Lack of jobs with health insurance. There are many uninsured people on the Shore. Eastern Shore Rural Health System has seen a 1,900 increase in uninsured patients in the ten-month period between June 1, 2011 and March 2012. This will create an internal problem for the agency, as they are already at 125% of grant funds.
 - v. The hospital experienced higher losses from people who have health insurance but have high deductibles that they can't now pay. This is not unique to the Eastern Shore, but the economics here have thinner margins.
 - vi. Schools are not producing adequately skilled young people, and they aren't teaching kids early enough to prepare for a career. There ARE jobs in our region, and kids should be taught to prepare for them.

Projects/Opportunities:

1. Plan a meeting of all healthcare providers – a symposium or forum where all providers' problems can be identified and solutions sought as a first step in reducing the cost of healthcare
2. Prepare a message for our supervisors to influence them to think regionally, not by county. Leave politics out of the provision of healthcare.
3. Market availability and promote underutilized services such as home health care, oral health, preventative medicine.
4. Address weight/exercise/nutrition issues by getting involved with the Eastern Shore Healthy Communities Coalition (Danny Vestal, YMCA, and Patti Kiger, Eastern Virginia Medical School).
5. Healthcare agencies could collaborate in purchasing supplies and services to reduce costs.
6. Use whatever influence is available to change the criteria for federal funding eligibility to the poverty index instead of median or personal income.
7. Facilitate a Farm to School program to get healthy, locally-grown food into our schools and out into the community.
8. Teach children from grade school on to prepare for a career. Healthcare professionals could visit schools to talk about this. Let school-age kids know that there are many needs in the healthcare industry that they could fill with proper training—nurses, pharmacists, therapists, etc. will be needed here in future, and they are all family-wage jobs.
9. Create a dialogue with those who develop housing to talk about the needs of healthcare providers in our region.

Educators

Issues/Challenges:

1. Unfunded Federal and State mandates coupled with decreases in funding from all quarters have reduced budgets substantially.
2. Field trips for Northampton County high school have been discontinued due to transportation issues and the time needed for SOL training and testing.
3. Higher education venues have had difficulty engaging local high school teachers.
4. Virginia Institute of Marine Science did not have its annual research trip to Wales as not enough students had the funds.
5. In an economic downturn, enrollment is usually up as people realize they need to get better educated to compete in the job market. Also, more people are taking advantage of the GI benefits.
6. Special programs have been dropped, and graduate programs have gotten more competitive, as there are more applicants.
7. Labor issues: Northampton County Public Schools (NCPS) has low pay for teachers coupled with years of no pay raises. Also lack support staff in revising curriculum.
8. NCPS is facing level-to-decreasing enrollments which will reduce its state funding further.
9. Physical plants need updating at Northampton High School and at Eastern Shore Community College. Both are now showing symptoms of deferred maintenance.
10. Funding is needed for Pre-K programs as well as technical and career programs so that the schools can offer two tracks at high school – career/technical and college-bound.
11. Lack of affordable housing (apartments, townhouses, condos, etc.) especially for entry level jobs. New teachers have the most difficulty in finding affordable housing.

Projects/Opportunities:

1. Need an economic development authority with fulltime paid staff to bring jobs to the Eastern Shore.
2. Promote mentoring of school children and figure out a way to get adults/parents more involved and supportive of the school systems.
3. Support full funding of the school divisions' budgets.
4. Lobby for increased Federal and State funding and less unfunded mandates.
5. Create a central place to learn about all the educational opportunities on the Shore – Brochure? Catalog? Could include giving opportunities as well. “How you can help” and volunteer opportunities.
6. Look for applications for math skills to show students how they can use the math they learn in a practical way; i.e. titration or look for data that multiple groups collect and standardize it and put in on the Web as a teaching tool.
7. Develop business partnerships with the school division to create co-op opportunities for students to expose them to various industries on the Shore. This will educate student in job opportunities on the Shore and lead them to gaining employment and stimulating the economy.
8. Support local education foundations, e.g. the Northampton County Education Foundation. These foundations offer support (financially and physically) to teachers through grants, students through scholarships, and the total community through day-long events that focus on health issues and healthy lifestyles.

Service Providers

Issues/Challenges:

1. There has been a downturn in business in the last two years.
2. Labor issues: not many motivated or qualified people for the IT industry on the Shore – i.e. Eastern Shore Community College had only 3 IT graduates out of 140 this year.
3. For Telecommunications companies such as broadband, right of way issues for towers, wire, road and railroad crossings are expensive and time-consuming to obtain. Also, permitting/regulations are a mess and are a definite barrier to growth at all levels.
4. Zoning for towers is difficult to work with in both counties. Rules are different between the counties as well. In Accomack County, if the tower is under 150 feet, it is easy to get a permit. In Northampton County, anything over 35 feet is a problem. How/why are these heights chosen? FAA rules cite 20 feet above surrounding obstructions.
5. There were complaints about Eastern Shore of Virginia Broadband Authority's pricing structure, which is perceived to compete with service providers by creating thin margins for them by lowering the IP price but not the transport price.
6. RFPs for service providers to compete for business have not been advertised – only trials have happened so far. Someone needs to take over this function to make it fair.
7. The two counties' inability to work together and to actually compete with one another is a lose/lose situation. It seems that if one county gets a good thing, the other one feels like it was robbed. Turf battles cost all of us – no matter what county you live in.
8. Town taxes can contribute to loss of business as well – i.e. Hinckley Yachts in Cape Charles – the double taxation there ultimately kept them in Oxford, Maryland.

Projects/Opportunities:

1. Conduct a residential survey for existing connections, speed, and pricing, and desired speed and acceptable pricing. This will help broadband service providers determine what level of debt they can handle for the level of service required.
2. Reduce or eliminate the Chesapeake Bay Bridge & Tunnel toll. Our location between Virginia Beach and points north might become more fully utilized with a lower or no toll.
3. Education/promotion of the uses and benefits of true high-speed broadband.

4. Try to get the two counties to see the benefits of REGIONAL economic development—that we all win when progress is made.
5. Research how each county chose heights for permitted telecommunications towers.

Real Estate

Issues/Challenges:

1. Our industry was worse in 2010 than it was in 2007/08. 2012 is picking up because things are so cheap – 30/40 cents on the dollar. Our industry has rolled back to the 1998 level volume. We expect the market to bottom out in 12-16 months, and no one knows what will happen after that.
2. Residential: Unless people have really good credit, they can't get loans. There are a lot of "traps" in applications and in credit scoring. Not sure if this is the reason that some brokers are seeing more cash sales, or if people are moving money out of other investments and putting it into real estate.
3. Commercial capital is difficult to obtain for start-ups. Banks want to see income before they will make a loan. We have many vacant properties, but operational vs. speculative is the problem. Buildings with income probably need to be on the highway, or at least need high volume traffic to survive.
4. Litter is a major inhibitor to economic growth. The back roads especially are a mess and make a bad impression on people looking for real estate. This is a socio-economic problem related to poverty and the fact that many people don't own homes or property. Also, the "convenience centers" are few and far between which makes it difficult for people without personal vehicles to get to them. They have odd hours and are often not open when people go to them, and they won't take anything except household waste. For instance, if a gang of volunteers cleans up litter on a section of road, you must take it to the landfill when it is open. It can't be deposited at a convenience center. There was less litter in Northampton County under the old green box system, probably because there were many more locations for them, and they were placed near communities.
5. Zoning: In Northampton County zoning is positive for residential growth, but economic development is difficult because of the way zoning and the Comprehensive Plan are written. We need more commercial development on Route 13, and equitable highway development needs to be established possibly through the use of special tax district overlays or some other mechanism. We need a balance between growth and safety on Route 13.
6. Tourism: We have a lack of tourist destinations with economic substance (other than Chincoteague), which includes major hotels with destination assets, significant (million \$ plus

level) facilities, water/recreation-oriented activity centers, more public access to beaches and waterways.

7. Impediments to economic development are perceived to be uninformed leadership, unrealistic political attitudes, overzealous conservation interests, poorly crafted zoning regulations, and elitist attitudes about commercial enterprises.

Projects/Opportunities:

1. Increase collaboration between local government and the real estate industry. Create strong strategic alliances between the two sectors:
 - a. Create webpage of available sites, state and other incentives (Enterprise Zone, Federal Trade Zone, etc.)
 - b. Educate government leaders on the value of the real estate industry and how it advances economic development in our region.
 - i. Perhaps be involved in selecting new economic development director in Northampton County.
 - ii. Be involved in decision-making for the Old Cape Charles High School – at least be consulted by the Town. An example of this type of collaboration is Waterside in Norfolk. The City invited real estate professionals to give them ideas on how to redevelop that area. It became a win/win for everyone involved.
 - iii. Show the public sector how the real estate industry collaterally benefits the area economically by marketing to industrialists and others that have the ability to bring jobs here.
 - iv. Show how advertising dollars benefit all (not just RE industry).
 - v. Job creation should be included in dialogue with the public sector. The RE industry is not only about residential, but we do need workforce housing – guest houses, multi-family, nice developments for middle class workers.
 - vi. Educate the public as to the value of the RE industry – Why are our ideas suspect? Just because we make a living from selling real estate, it doesn't mean that we are dishonest or that we don't have the community's best interest at heart. We live here, too!

2. Move the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission to the county line and establish an industrial park that straddles the line somewhere near Exmore/Belle Haven. That way the counties would cooperate with each other on economic development!
3. Tourism:
 - a. We need to work together to develop a major cultural center, water recreation centers /amenities (it is even difficult to buy fuel for a boat in the water), and more regional efforts to recruit industry and share the wealth.
 - b. Tall Ships Initiative – need more collaboration between all the sectors.
4. Energy:
 - a. The Eastern Shore could be a green energy center. Fossil fuels will be taxed heavily in future and will get more expensive over time if world oil production continues to drop as it has over the past five years. Unfortunately though, the tax credits for alternative energy are sunseting and probably won't be reinstated. Also, Maryland has undercut Virginia's efforts by writing regulations that keep facilities in their state.
 - b. There is the possibility of servicing offshore wind farms from the Eastern Shore. Could provide good jobs with special training programs in place.
5. Conservation:
 - a. Conservation could also be a growth industry because of the scientific research conducted here (VIMS and LTER), training for marine research, and restocking the ocean with wild fish species (aquaculture).
6. Agriculture:
 - a. Opportunities for diversification of our agricultural base will need to be pursued, especially as inputs become more expensive due to increased prices for fossil fuels.
 - i. Increase organic production – farmers get better prices, but more labor intensive, provides more jobs.
 - ii. Expand Community Supported Agriculture (subscription farming) so that more food is grown locally and farmers make better profits.
 - iii. Develop value-added products from local crops.

7. Litter:

- a. Northampton County needs to look for ways to make the “Convenience Centers” more convenient perhaps by extending hours or by accepting litter that’s been picked up from the roads. Consider establishing additional centers for household trash that are closer to communities where there are residents without a personal vehicle.
- b. Educate families through “anti-litter” programs in the schools.

APPENDIX C
Eastern Shore Needs Assessment
November 2011