



## THE VIRGINIA COASTAL MASTER PLANNING FRAMEWORK

---

The Commonwealth of Virginia is pleased to present the Virginia Coastal Master Planning Framework (Framework). This Framework details the core principles of Virginia’s approach to coastal adaptation and protection, and the process by which the Commonwealth will develop and begin implementing Virginia’s first Coastal Resilience Master Plan (Master Plan) by the end of 2021.

The year 2019 was the fifth consecutive year in which the United States suffered 10 or more weather and climate disasters, at an average of 12.6 events per year - more than twice the 40-year average. In 2018-2019, Virginia experienced impacts from nine such events with a total cost of approximately \$1.6 billion.<sup>1</sup> It is clear that much is at stake and significant resources must be allocated to improving resilience across coastal Virginia.

The primary objective of the Master Plan will be to improve the Commonwealth’s resilience and ability to adapt to rising seas, increased nuisance flooding, and more frequent and intense storms that result from climate change and threaten our coastal communities. The Master Plan will include specific projects vetted by resilience experts and prioritized according to state policy goals and regional and local needs.

Specifically, the Framework will guide development of the Master Plan based on guiding principles, goals, regional distinctions, and immediate actions as:

### MASTER PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Framework lists five guiding principles that will influence the Master Plan and related resilience initiatives:

- Acknowledge climate change and its consequences, and base decision making on the best available science.
- Identify and address socioeconomic inequities and work to enhance equity through coastal adaptation and protection efforts.
- Recognize the importance of protecting and enhancing green infrastructure like natural coastal barriers and fish and wildlife habitat by prioritizing nature-based solutions.
- Utilize community and regional scale planning to the maximum extent possible, seeking region-specific approaches tailored to the needs of individual communities.
- Understand fiscal realities and focus on the most cost-effective solutions for protection and adaptation of our communities, businesses and critical infrastructure.

---

<sup>1</sup> “U.S. Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters.” (NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI), 2019), <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/billions/events/VA/2018>

## FRAMEWORK GOALS

The Framework identifies four primary goals that must be achieved prior to the completion of a Master Plan.

- Identification of priority projects to increase the resilience of coastal communities, including both built and natural assets at risk due to sea level rise and flooding
- Establishment of a financing strategy, informed by regional differences and equity considerations, to support execution of the plan
- Effective incorporation of climate change projections into all of the Commonwealth's programs addressing coastal zone built and natural infrastructure at risk due to sea level rise and flooding
- Coordination of all state, federal, regional, and local coastal adaptation and protection efforts in accordance with the guiding principles of this Framework

## COASTAL VIRGINIA RESILIENCE PLANNING REGIONS

The Framework divides coastal Virginias into four master planning regions. The Master Plan will identify priority projects within each of the four regions, which reside within the boundaries of the eight coastal Planning District Commissions and Regional Commissions (PDCs/ RCs).

- Hampton Roads (Hampton Roads PDC)
- Rural Coastal Virginia (Accomack-Northampton PDC, Middle Peninsula PDC, Northern Neck PDC)
- Fall Line North (George Washington Regional Commission and Northern Virginia Regional Commission)
- Fall Line South (Crater PDC and PlanRVA- formerly Richmond Regional Planning District)

## IMPLEMENTATION – SCALING UP TO CREATE A COASTAL MASTER PLAN

The challenges of sea level rise and coastal flooding are clearly bigger than any one state or federal agency, regional body, or locality can address alone. The Commonwealth must add guidance and capacity, while continuing to encourage the resilience work of coastal communities that have a head start on planning and implementation. To meet that challenge, the Commonwealth will take the following immediate steps as ordered by Executive Actions from Governor Northam:

### **Establish a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)**

Coastal-wide resilience planning requires coordination among the Commonwealth, local and regional leaders, scientist and engineers, and stakeholders. To facilitate such coordination, and develop recommendations for specific, place-based coastal adaptation and protection strategies, Governor Northam will appoint a Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan Technical Advisory Committee. The TAC will assist in the development of Master Plan updates, including a more robust and refined funding and financing strategy.

### **Elevate the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program (CZM)**

The nature of the TAC's work will require significant administrative and technical support. This will include: decision option identification; stakeholder and advisor input management; data collection and synthesis; and performance monitoring. To meet these needs, we will utilize the CZM Program. The CZM Program is currently housed within DEQ, an appropriate arrangement given the conservation and restoration focus of much of the Program's work. However, CZM also has professional coastal planning expertise that should be applied directly to the master planning process. Therefore, Governor Northam has instructed the Director of the CZM Program to report directly to the Secretary of Natural Resources on matters of coastal adaptation and protection, pursuant to the Secretary's role as Chief Resilience Officer.

### **Community Engagement Roundtables**

Development of the Framework included close coordination with coastal planning districts and regional commissions, conversations with individual localities, and significant input from scientists and an engaged group of stakeholders. In the coming months, the Northam Administration, with assistance from state agencies, will hold a series of community roundtables to introduce the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Planning Framework. The goal of the roundtables is to gather input on primary issues for citizens who live and work in vulnerable coastal areas.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

- Website: [www.naturalresources.virginia.gov/initiatives/resilience/](http://www.naturalresources.virginia.gov/initiatives/resilience/)
- Public Comments and email: [ResilientCoastVA@governor.virginia.gov](mailto:ResilientCoastVA@governor.virginia.gov)