

Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan: Phase II Appendix C: Engagement Summary

Engagement Summary

Department of Conservation and Recreation | Office of Resilience Planning

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A. Introduction

As part of Phase II of the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan (CRMP), the Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) Office of Resilience Planning (ORP) initiated a community outreach and engagement strategy by integrating guidance from lessons learned from the 2021 CRMP Phase I planning process and the Coastal Resilience Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Engagement with stakeholders was central to the development of the Phase II plan and emphasized the importance of a whole community approach.

Four key goals from the CRMP Phase II Outreach and Engagement Strategy guided efforts:

- **Understand end user needs.** Understand how the updated impact assessment and other products and tools can be used by local governments, planning district commissions, state agencies, and other key stakeholders to help them build coastal flood resilience.
- **Understand lived experiences with flooding.** Provide more context for the plan's content by including information on lived experiences with flood impacts.
- **Understand existing flood resilience efforts.** Provide more context for the plan's content by including information about planned and ongoing activities to address flood risk in the planning area.
- **Drive awareness.** Encourage a whole community approach toward coastal flooding.

Between 300 and 400 stakeholders participated in more than 50 Phase II engagement activities. These activities resulted in new information to inform the CRMP Phase II plan and provided participants with opportunities to learn about flood resilience activities and organizations participating in them. Meetings educated participants about the plan and leveraging its use in decisions to increase flood resilience in coastal areas and across the Commonwealth.

Key findings and insights from the outreach and engagement activities included the following topic areas:

- **Challenges and Barriers to Addressing Flooding**
- **Flooding Solutions**
- **Funding Insights**
- **Data Insights**
- **Flooding Insights**
- **Coordination and Outreach Among Stakeholders**

B. Engagement with Stakeholders

During the Phase II process, DCR was assisted by the consulting teams led by Stantec and AECOM to involve, collaborate with, consult, and inform primary and public stakeholders.

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Primary stakeholders for this outreach and engagement strategy included state agencies, planning district commissions, local governments, state and federally recognized Tribes of Virginia, universities, resilience-focused non-governmental organizations, critical infrastructure owners, federal partners, private sector industry flood resilience service providers (such as planning, engineering/design, and funding consultants), economic development partnerships, and flood insurance providers.

While many primary stakeholders were engaged on an ongoing basis through the Coastal Resilience TAC, DCR also led a variety of additional targeted engagement efforts to reach these stakeholders during 2024. For example, 43 local governments participated in engagement activities during the development of the Phase I and Phase II plans (see Figure 1).

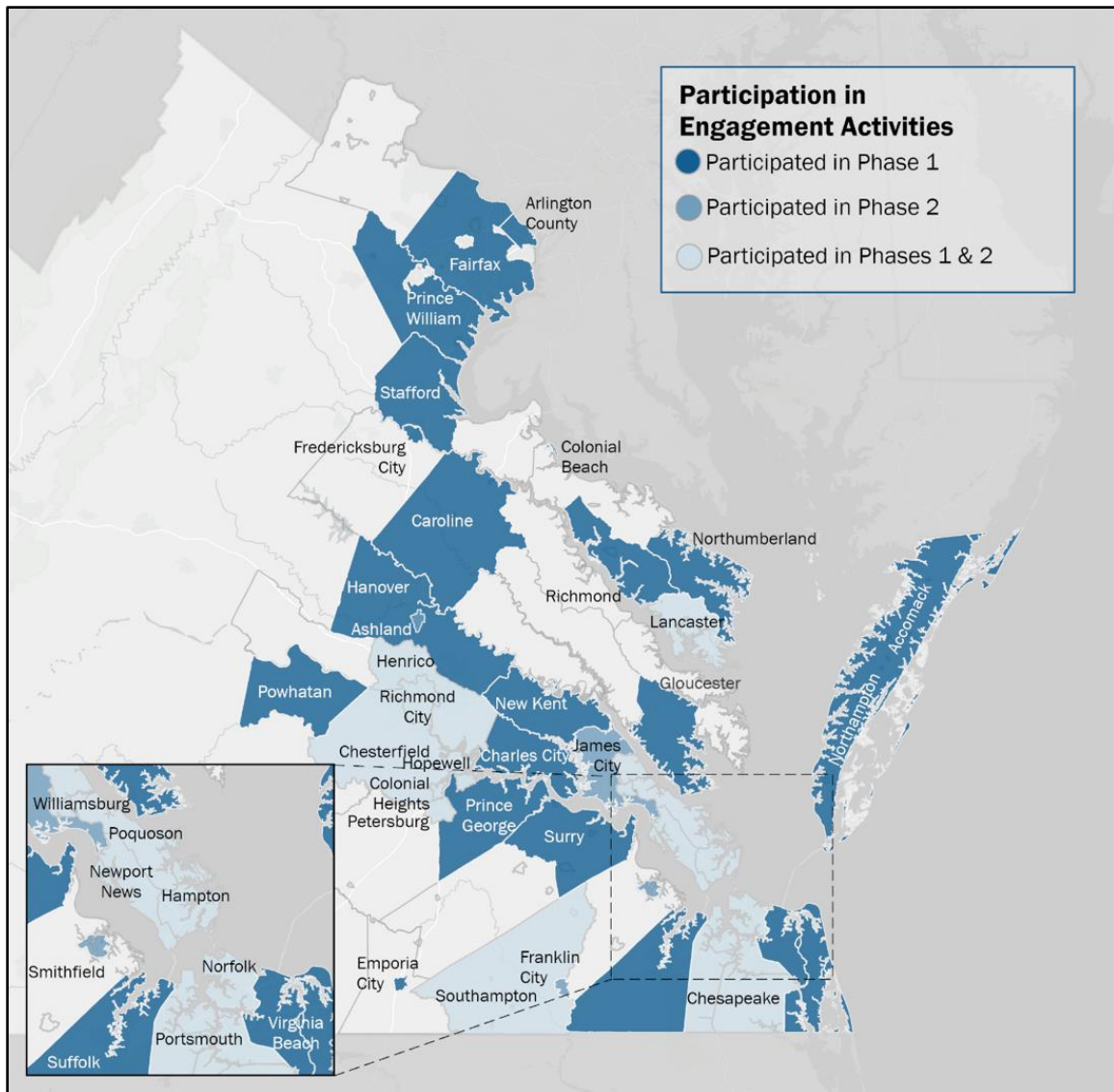
Additionally, the following partner organizations hosted information tables at community meetings as part of Phase II:

- Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (CBNERR-VA)
- Wetlands Watch
- Old Dominion University (ODU) Institute of Coastal Adaptation & Resilience (ICAR)
- Historic Virginia Land Conservancy (HVLC)
- Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Office of Environmental Justice
- Virginia DEQ Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Program
- Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS)
- Friends of the Rappahannock
- Northern Neck Land Conservancy
- Northern Neck Soil & Water Conservation District
- Virginia Dare Soil & Water Conservation District
- City of Chesapeake, Office of Emergency Management

Public stakeholders for this outreach and engagement strategy included Virginia coastal residents, other private sector entities, other non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations.

These public stakeholders were engaged to ensure their voices, experiences, and priorities were reflected in the planning process. Broad outreach activities were designed to reach wide audiences across coastal Virginia, raising awareness about flood resilience planning and inviting public participation.

Figure 1. Map of Locality Participation in Engagement Activities¹



¹ Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. Coastal Resilience Master Plan Phase I and Phase II Engagement Findings. 2021, 2024.

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C. Engagement Activities

During Phase II, outreach and engagement activities included meetings, surveys, and webinars, including quarterly meetings of the Coastal Resilience Technical Advisory Committee and its subcommittees. Public webinars about the plan were conducted before its release, and additional webinars will be provided after its release. There will also be a public comment period on the plan follow its release.

Table 1. Phase II Engagement Activities

Activity	Description	Participants	Date	Location
Phase I End-User Survey	The end-user survey gathered feedback from primary stakeholders about how they have used the Phase I CRMP, as well as barriers and opportunities for enhancing flood resilience. The DCR planning team used the results to inform the presentation of data in the plan and presented findings to the Coastal Resilience TAC to inform recommendations development. Survey Results	49 primary stakeholders	December 2023- January 2024	Virtual
Projects and Initiatives Data Call	Primary stakeholders provided direct input to the plan by submitting their projects and initiatives to the Coastal Resilience Web Explorer (CRWE) database. Stakeholders were encouraged to participate via meetings, events, webinars, and electronic communications to both general and targeted audiences. Additionally, PDCs received funding from the Virginia DEQ CZM program to support their participation in submissions.	70 primary stakeholders	December 2021- July 2024	Virtual

Activity	Description	Participants	Date	Location
Asset Data and Impact Metrics Coordination	The planning team communicated with primary stakeholders to gather their feedback on the asset data leveraged for the plan, as well as the metrics presented to quantify impacts. For example, the planning team presented the asset data catalog to the VDEM Critical Infrastructure Program Working Group to gather feedback on datasets to be leveraged for the plan. The team also met with federally recognized tribes of Virginia at their monthly Regional Tribal Operations Committee meeting hosted by the Environmental Protection Agency to request feedback on incorporating flood impacts on Tribal resources in the plan.	20+ primary stakeholders	September 2022 – April 2024	Virtual and In-Person
Coastal Resilience Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Subcommittee Meetings	The TAC, chaired by the Director of DCR, supported DCR in the development of the CRMP. Members included representatives from various state agencies, research institutions, non-profits, and industry groups. The TAC convened quarterly in meetings open to the public from September 2022 until November 2024. Four TAC subcommittees were convened quarterly beginning in Q3 of 2023. Sessions were held for the next six quarters, in which 125 initial ideas for recommendations were developed (Appendix D) and then finalized into 20 recommendations featured in Chapter 3 of the plan.	The TAC consisted of 35 organizational members (primary stakeholders), all of whom were invited to participate in meetings.	September 2022 – November 2024	Virtual (Zoom) and In-Person in Richmond.
Locality Meetings	The DCR planning team met with 40 staff from local governments and PDCs, and their key flood resilience partners during 4 meetings (two in-person and two virtual). These meetings focused	8 primary stakeholders at HRPDC Peninsula meeting: James City County, City of	May – June 2024	In-Person in Williamsburg

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Activity	Description	Participants	Date	Location
	<p>on reaching localities in the coastal region with relatively high flood risk and low participation rates during Phase I.</p> <p>During the meetings, the planning team shared information about the Phase II plan and engaged with participants to better understand their local flood challenges and needs. Additionally, the planning team gathered information on projects and initiatives to incorporate into the Coastal Resilience Web Explorer. Many participating localities expressed interest in becoming more involved in DCR flood resilience planning efforts. Over 20 projects and initiatives were discussed.</p>	Williamsburg, and York County		
		9 primary stakeholders at HRPDC Western Tidewater meeting: City of Franklin, Town of Smithfield, and Southampton County		Virtual (Zoom)
		9 primary stakeholders at PlanRVA meeting: City of Richmond, Town of Ashland, Chesterfield County, and Henrico County		In-person in Richmond
		14 primary stakeholders at Crater PDC meeting: Friends of the Lower Appomattox River (FOLAR), City of Colonial Heights, City of Hopewell, City of Petersburg, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Chesterfield County, Wetlands Watch, and Department of Forestry (DOF)		Virtual (Zoom)

Activity	Description	Participants	Date	Location
Local Government Staff Practitioner Meetings	<p>DCR organized virtual sessions with practitioners from Hampton, Portsmouth, Newport News, Norfolk, and the Eastern Shore. Meetings included staff practitioners from fields such as planning, community development, public works, and research universities.</p> <p>The purpose of these meetings was to better understand existing efforts led by local governments and other local actors to engage underserved communities at flood risk in local flood resilience planning and response activities.</p>	11 primary stakeholders	July – August 2024	Virtual (Zoom)
Community Meetings	<p>DCR hosted four interactive community meetings in Southside Richmond, Tappahannock, Chesapeake, and Warsaw. Public stakeholders attended and had the opportunity to learn more about the CRMP, interact with DCR staff regarding updated flood data, share flood stories, and discuss flooding impacts.</p> <p>In addition, 15 partner organizations attended one or more of the community meetings to share information on resilience programs across the Commonwealth. Seven of those partner organizations attended all four meetings. Partner organizations hosted tables and interacted with attendees to provide resources and information.</p>	<p>62 public stakeholders</p> <p>15 partner organizations</p>	September 2024	In-Person in Tappahannock, Richmond, Warsaw, and Chesapeake

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Activity	Description	Participants	Date	Location
Federal Facility Owners Meeting	DCR hosted a virtual meeting to update federal facility owners on the CRMP Phase II plan and its associated products and tools. During the session, participants received an overview of draft flood hazard exposure data relevant to their operations, along with an inventory of resilience projects and initiatives. Interactive polls conducted throughout the meeting enabled DCR to gather valuable feedback on specific flooding challenges and opportunities for future collaboration.	30 stakeholders	October 2024	Virtual (Zoom)
Business, Industry, and Economic Development (BIED) Webinar	DCR hosted a webinar to update the BIED sector on the CRMP Phase II plan and its associated products and tools. During the session, 53 BIED professionals received an overview of draft flood hazard exposure data relevant to their operations, along with an inventory of resilience projects and initiatives. Interactive polls conducted throughout the meeting enabled DCR to gather valuable feedback on specific flooding challenges and opportunities for future collaboration, as well as engage in a Q&A session.	53 stakeholders	October 2024	Virtual (Zoom)

Activity	Description	Participants	Date	Location
Public Webinars	DCR shared insights on the CRMP, the Phase II update, and how to get involved during two separate public webinars. Attendees engaged in a live Q&A session with the DCR planning team and 40 submitted a post-meeting survey to provide feedback on the usefulness of the webinar and the CRMP products and tools.	85 individuals	September 2024	Virtual (Zoom)

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D. Engagement Outcomes

The engagement activities provided the following information to inform the plan:

- Input regarding locations and details of localized flooding impacts identified by local residents during the four community meetings.
- Additions and revisions to the projects and initiatives inventory in the Coastal Resilience Web Explorer (CRWE) user portal.
- Information on 20 new flood stories during the four community meetings that the planning team then added to the Flood Story Web App.

Participants communicated that they appreciated:

- The opportunity to strengthen relationships with community-based organizations (CBOs) and government partners, including with DCR.
- Information provided during the public webinars. Attendees expressed appreciation for the clear and relevant content, the emphasis on community outreach, and the opportunity to contribute. Some requested further details on topics such as tribal engagement and relocation due to sea level rise.
- Information on how to subscribe to the DCR Office of Resilience Planning newsletter. Nearly all attendees of the locality and community meetings chose to receive the newsletter, and 21 webinar attendees also requested it.

E. Key Findings and Insights

With each outreach and engagement activity, the planning team identified findings and insights. These are organized by common topic areas. The following provides key findings from locality meetings and local government staff practitioner meetings. Detailed information summarizing findings and insights from different engagement activities is available on DCR's [website](#).

Challenges and barriers to addressing flooding:

- Staff shortages, lack of coordination, and funding constraints.
- Pluvial flooding and data scarcity are common issues across localities.
- Localities face difficulties filling critical positions related to flooding and resilience.
- Localities need support from leaders and decision-makers for flood mitigation projects.
- Funding limitations and challenges in grant management further hinder flood response efforts.
- Localities face challenges in applying for grants due to limited staff capacity.

- Localities report conflicts between state regulations and local needs. Regionally, local governments face challenges with grant funding and a siloed approach to addressing flooding, making coordination with state agencies more difficult.
- Many cities are grappling with deteriorating and undersized stormwater infrastructure. Extreme rainfall events, combined with a high groundwater table, are further straining stormwater systems.
- Development pressures and infrastructure constraints compound flooding issues. Additionally, development in flood-prone areas is increasing, making it difficult to ensure new projects meet floodplain and zoning regulations.

Flooding solutions:

- Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is working with localities to incorporate resilience assessments into The Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (Bay Act) programs, particularly for coastal development and redevelopment. The focus is primarily on coastal areas rather than inland regions and aims to improve resilience in the face of tidal flooding and sea level rise.
- Many localities are currently developing neighborhood and watershed-level resilience plans, including incorporation of outreach to high Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) areas.
- Many localities are working with consultant teams to develop disaster plans that include floodplain management and climate action plans.

Funding insights:

- It is crucial to include flood projects in Hazard Mitigation Plans for better access to FEMA funding sources.

Data insights:

- Pluvial flooding and data scarcity are common issues across localities.
- Localities are interested in leveraging flood exposure models and impact assessments to guide flood resilience planning, evacuations, stormwater management, and address infrastructure upgrades.
- Key datasets for impact assessments identified by localities include critical infrastructure and vulnerability indices.
- Combining pluvial flood models with storm surge data could provide clearer insights into flood risks. This data is also crucial for updating county comprehensive plans and policies.

Flooding insights:

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- There is an increase in tidal flooding in the Hampton Roads area necessitating weekly high-water watches. Ongoing tidal flooding is a significant concern as the region continues to experience more frequent and severe flood events.
- Crater PDC raised concerns about the impact of utility-scale solar farms on flooding and erosion. The removal of vegetation during the development of solar farms can lead to increased flooding and erosion risks during heavy rains, highlighting the importance of considering land use and flood management in these projects.

Coordination and outreach among stakeholders:

- The Flood Story App is seen by stakeholders as a valuable tool for community engagement and flood reporting.
- Many private and public stakeholders expressed interest in expanding resiliency in their communities and regions, as well as sharing their personal or professional experiences in the region.
- Public awareness of flood risks is insufficient, especially for homebuyers in flood-prone areas. The City of Franklin highlighted the need for better education to ensure citizens understand the risks when purchasing homes. Similarly, the Town of Smithfield lacks resources to educate residents on flood risks and the growing threats posed by local topography and development.
- Localities are interested in educating and equipping the public on actions they can take to mitigate flooding on their properties as well as spreading awareness about how development is driving flooding challenges and the projects needed to mitigate its impacts.

F. Lessons Learned

Several lessons emerged that can help guide future public community meetings hosted during state-led planning processes.

- Reaching community members through community organizations strengthened the number of attendees at community meetings.
- The expanse of outreach must continue to be multimodal. Outreach approaches for meetings include virtual, in-person, hybrid variations, educational sessions and webinars.
- Coordination and scheduling required a minimum of 1 month between advertising community meetings and conducting those meetings so that participants had time to incorporate the meetings into their calendars.
- One community meeting was advertised on the sign board in front of the Fire Station, and this meeting had attendees who learned about the meeting through that sign.

- Some localities have had higher participation rates by attending existing community events or partnering with local non-profits. These events are often better attended than locality-hosted workshops or open houses.
- Coordination with the PDCs helped to ensure meeting locations were accessible to a broad audience of stakeholders and that participants accurately represented a range of local practitioners from whom to collect feedback and insights.
- The importance of community member outreach was evident, through the personal anecdotes collected in the Flood Story format at the Community Meetings.
- Reaching a broad range of participants, especially historically underrepresented participants, is a challenge best met by coordinating with local organizations.