



Virginia Coastal Zone
MANAGEMENT PROGRAM



Final Project Summary

Your final project summary is an important contribution to the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program's communication efforts and will be used to produce accomplishment reports, fact sheets and **Virginia Coastal Zone Management Web Site** information.

Please submit this form electronically to: april.bahen@deq.virginia.gov.

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NOAA Grant #:	NA 14NOS4190141	Grant Year:	2014	Task #:	10.01
Agency/Locality:	George Mason University, Fairfax/Arlington Virginia				
Project Title:	Socio-Economic Impacts of Conserved Land on Virginia's Eastern Shore				
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PROJECT SUMMARY: Please confine your summary to the space provided below. Remember to:

- write for the public
- do not use first person
- include an abstract of project results
- provide a brief description, and titles, of publication(s) and/or dataset(s) produced
- describe how products will be distributed and if available on-line, please give the **Web address!**

Report Title: Socio-Economic Impacts of Conserved Lands on Virginia's Eastern Shore

The primary objective of this report is to provide decision makers at the State of Virginia, Accomack County, and Northampton County with a high-level analysis of the fiscal and economic impacts of conserved land on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The findings shown in this report are based on existing land-use and fiscal conditions in each county as of fiscal year end 2016. The results of this analysis provide a fiscal baseline against which any future development policy, strategy, plan, or project approval can be tested. Consequently, the fiscal baseline that is reported herein provides local government officials and others involved in the land conservation and economic development process in both Accomack and Northampton counties the starting point for asking and deriving answers to critical questions about the future of land acquisition and conservation in each county.

The economic impact analysis considered three sources of economic activity related to conserved lands: organizations involved in land conservation including non-profit conservation organizations, park operations, and eco-tourism operators who would not locate on the Eastern Shore but for the presence of conserved lands; aquaculture industries supported by improved water quality that can be, at least in part, attributable to land conservation; and tourism that is specifically focused on outdoor recreation. The economic activity associated with organizations involved in land conservation on the Eastern Shore generated \$21.88 million in economic activity in 2016. Economic activity associated with aquaculture industries boosted Eastern Shore economic activity by \$156.7 million. Tourism spending associated with conserved land created \$51.38 million in economic activity for 2016.

The fiscal impact analysis conducted in this study found that total real property taxes paid to Accomack County, Virginia in 2016 from land with conservation easements is estimated to be \$303,653; and total real property taxes paid to Northampton County, Virginia in 2016 from land with conservation easements is estimated to be \$322,694. Estimated real property taxes foregone reflects the "lost" tax revenue to each county as land with a conservation easement has a lower use-value tax assessment recorded on the books of each county. Foregone real estate tax revenues were estimated to be \$79,095 in Accomack County and \$283,611 in Northampton County in 2016.

To estimate the fiscal impacts of conservation easements in both counties, the study assessed revenues from real estate taxes, local sales and uses taxes, and hotel and motel taxes compared against public service expenditures for general government administration; public safety; public works; and parks, recreation and culture. For every \$1.00 spent in Accomack County annually to provide public services to support land with conservation easements, revenues to Accomack County were estimated to be \$2.38. In Northampton County, for every \$1.00 spent annually in the provision of public services to support land with conservation easements, revenues to Northampton County were estimated to be \$1.15. The findings of the fiscal impact model indicate that lands with conservation easements do not place a fiscal burden on either county.

The report is available for download at www.cra.gmu.edu

The information and data developed in this report will be distributed in report form, in an executive summary briefing paper, and an infographic summarizing the research findings. Presentations of this research will be presented to county boards and at professional conferences.