



# CITIZENS FOR A BETTER EASTERN SHORE SHORELINE

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Culture on the Eastern Shore of Virginia*

TM

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## 2019 CBES Bike Tour Weekend – Economic Impact

Staff Report

The 2019 Between the Waters Bike Tour, sponsored by Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore and headquartered in Exmore, had 1,100 cyclists registered – the largest CBES Bike Tour ever. And 200 riders and volunteers enjoyed the sold-out Oyster Roast at Cherry Grove, a waterfront farm on Savage Neck near Eastville.

The Bike Tour is CBES main annual fund-raising event, and this year’s event was a great success. Tour proceeds support CBES work all year long – but the funds raised for CBES hardly begin to describe the additional economic impact of the Bike Tour on the Shore.

Cyclists visiting the area accounted for 92% of the riders. Many came from other parts of Virginia; others traveled from as

far as away as Maine, Tennessee, Montana, and Texas. More than half of the out-of-towners spent 2 or more nights on the Shore.

A survey that CBES sent to this year’s cyclists, with about a 50% response rate, estimated that expenses for lodging, food, shopping, transient occupancy/food and beverage/sales tax, and miscellaneous items amounted to about \$380 per person. A conservative estimate for total expenditures by all registered cyclists, not including Bike Tour fees, would be about \$385,000 spent in the community during the 2- or 3-day weekend.

### But Wait! ... There’s More!

The local “multiplier effect” is the additional economic benefit accrued to an area from money being spent in the local economy.

The multiplier effect explains, in its simplest form, how money spent circulates through a specific economy. It’s an economic principle that states that every dollar spent in an economy has a broader effect on the overall economic system.

This is significant when assessing the impact of outside dollars on a local economy by a special event, like the Bike Tour. And it’s even more significant if those dollars are spent at locally owned business and

service providers. The Bike Tour is a good example of how an event injects new dollars into the local economy – through lodging, food, shopping, tax revenue, and miscellaneous expenditures. Purchases at locally owned businesses support employment and provide operating capital for the owners.

Even if the businesses are not owned locally, like chain hotels, dollars spent there support local employment and services – and increase tax revenue for local governments. When additional dollars are circulated and recirculated in the local economy, and those dollars are from out-of-area visitors, the benefits increase because these are new dollars – and 92% of this year’s Bike Tour registrants came from off the Shore.

The event was a win-win-win – for the cyclists, for CBES, and for the local economy. 



*At the sold-out Oyster Roast, cyclists and friends enjoyed oysters, clams, she-crab soup, crab dip, fried chicken, cole slaw, and a dessert bar. Staff photo*

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# 2020 Community Unity Breakfast

Northampton High School - Photos by Cecil Watts of Watts Photography



On January 20, the Community Unity Day celebration of the life of Martin Luther King Jr. was estimated to have had the largest attendance in its 30-year history. The event, which was co-sponsored by the Northampton chapter of the NAACP, Northampton County Public Schools, and CBES, featured presentations by student choirs, adult musicians, and instrumentalists, as well as remembrances of Dr. King's words and uplifting messages for the community.



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### Editorial Advisor emeritus

F. Victor Schmidt

### Staff Photographer

Cecil Watts

### Editor/Design

Sarah Morgan, Savoy Studio

### How to reach CBES

P.O. Box 882, Eastville, VA 23347  
(757) 678-7157  
info@cbes.org • www.cbes.org

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*Clockwise from upper left, Pastor Dorothy Giddens; Master of Ceremonies Felton Sessoms with a Kiptopeke Elementary speaker; volunteers Bryan Peebles and Jim Lang from Pender and Coward with The Nature Conservancy's Danielle Simmons; Keynote speaker Linda Byrd Hedgepeth with event chair Jane Cabarrus; Kiptopeke's Guys with the Ties; CBES President Arthur Upshur; Occohannock Elementary singers.*

# Moratorium May Be Imposed on Menhaden

By Sue Mastyl

On December 13, the governors of 9 Atlantic states – including Virginia – of the 15 that make up the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) sent a letter to Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross, urging him to “uphold the integrity of this important body [ASMFC] and its legitimate science-based management process by imposing a moratorium on the industrial menhaden reduction fishery in Virginia waters, as Virginia Governor Ralph Northam has already requested.” The letter continued, “The coastal economies of our states depend on healthy ecosystems to support recreational and commercial fisheries that are worth tens of billions of dollars and responsible for hundreds of thousands of jobs. ... Allowing any one company to jeopardize that balance is simply unacceptable.”

In response, the Commerce Department upheld the ASMFC finding of non-compliance against the Commonwealth of Virginia, and pledged to impose a moratorium on Virginia’s menhaden harvest if the fishery is not in compliance by June 17, 2020. The ASMFC will review 2 benchmark assessments of menhaden in February.

## Menhaden – Critical to the Bay

As described in the December 2017 issue of *ShoreLine* (“Bay’s History Depended on Menhaden; Its Future Will as Well”), the menhaden fishery is the largest in the Atlantic; it is also an important food source for rockfish (striped bass), bluefish, weakfish, ospreys, bald eagles, dolphins,

and whales. Menhaden migrate along the Atlantic coast; eggs hatch in the open ocean and then drift on currents into the Chesapeake Bay, where juveniles live for the first year.

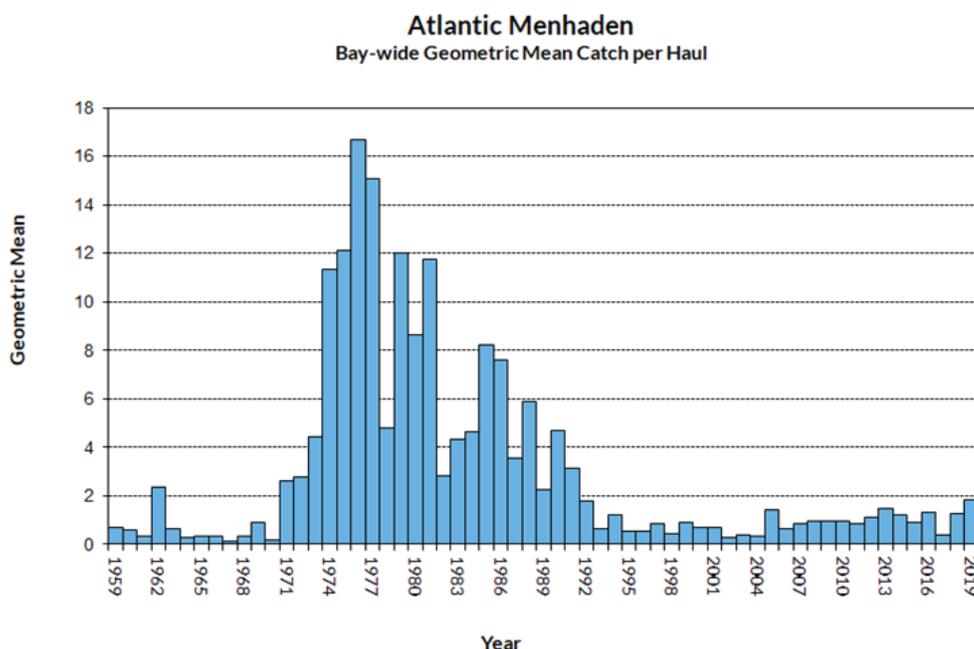
Since the 1990s, the abundance of juvenile menhaden in the Bay has been less than 12% of the high numbers seen in the 1970s (see graph). Historically, 70% of an adult rockfish’s diet consisted of menhaden; today, that number is 8%. According to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, “the rockfish population in the Chesapeake Bay is showing signs of malnourishment and increasing mortality.”

Omega Protein Corporation, a Canadian-owned company, operates the only menhaden reduction facility on the East Coast, in Reedville, Virginia. The menhaden is used to produce fish oil supplements, food additives, and feed for fish farms and livestock.

## The Numbers

Based on concerns that concentrated harvesting in the Bay could impact other species in the food chain, ASMFC first imposed a cap on Omega’s Bay harvest in 2006. In 2017, they reduced the cap from 87,000 to 51,000 metric tons, to more accurately reflect recent harvest levels. In 2019, Omega harvested 67,000 metric tons, more than 30% over this limit. The company argued that although in years past, more menhaden were found in the open Atlantic Ocean, this year the population was highest in the Bay.

In contrast, Virginia law set the cap at 87,000 metric tons, so Omega argued that they “did not break Virginia law.” Menhaden is the only fishery directly controlled by the Virginia General Assembly; efforts in 2018 and 2019 to align the Virginia cap with the ASMFC cap were unsuccessful. Several bills have been proposed for the current General Assembly session, to move management of the fishery from the General Assembly to the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and bring the fishery into compliance with ASMFC caps. Gov. Northam noted in his letter that the moratorium will “provide the motivation necessary to ensure that Virginia’s General Assembly puts in place new measures to ensure future compliance with ASMFC fishery management plans.” 



Average number of juvenile menhaden available (“abundance”). Durell EQ, Weedon C. Juvenile striped bass survey. 2019. Maryland Department of Natural Resources. <https://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/Pages/striped-bass/juvenile-index.aspx>

# ECONOMIC GOOD NEWS for Northampton County and the Shore ... ... Increased \$\$\$ – Income, Tax Revenue, and Employment

By Mary Miller

Northampton County Director of Finance John Chandler reviewed the county's financial achievements over the last 4 years, and the news was good.

- The average yearly unemployment rate dropped from 6.1% in 2015 to the current rate of 3.2% – unemployment cut almost in half.
- Although the real estate tax rate has remained constant (\$0.83/\$100 of assessed value), tax revenues have increased \$1.5 million – a 10.6% rise.
- Personal property tax revenue has also increased \$2.3 million – a 13.9% rise.
- Farm equipment taxes were decreased 16% – offering tax relief for farm operators.
- From 2010 to 2018, the median household income in Northampton increased 20% – from \$34,501 to \$41,468, outpacing increase figures for both Virginia and the U.S.
- The tourism hospitality industry showed a dramatic increase in transient occupancy tax – increasing from \$259,000 in 2015 to \$469,000 in 2019 – an increase of 81%. (See *Bike Tour* article on p. 1.)
- Sales tax revenue increased 24% over the same 4-year period – from \$1.1 million to \$1.35 million.

## Aquaculture Industry Shows Consistent Annual Growth

And there was more good news for both counties. The latest report from the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service ranked Virginia's aquaculture sales as #4 in the U.S.

A report<sup>1</sup> from Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) states that Virginia is:

- 1<sup>st</sup> in the U.S. for hard clam production
- 1<sup>st</sup> on the East Coast for oyster production.

A further extensive report<sup>2</sup> from VIMS indicates:

- 2018 Virginia shellfish production value was \$53.3 million.
- Prices and markets remain strong.
- Aquaculture directly employs hundreds of workers.
- Clams are the biggest economic value contributor.
- Oysters are the most rapidly developing sector of the industry.
- Production comes from a system of integrated private hatcheries.



*Oyster production and harvesting form an important segment of the Shore's aquaculture industry. Photo by Aileen Devlin | Virginia Sea Grant*

- Hatcheries are distributed throughout coastal Virginia on both the western and eastern shores, both bayside and seaside.
- Eventual sales to many out-of-state consumers will add important economic development to local coastal communities.
- Hard clam production occurs primarily on the Eastern Shore due to the higher salinity requirement for this shellfish species.
- Water quality remains a critical – and challenging – aspect for shellfish hatcheries.

## Community Asset-Based Economic Development

For at least the last 20 years, the advice from state and federal economic development agencies for rural, asset-rich counties, like Northampton and Accomack, has been: take care of your assets and they'll help take care of your community. Over and over in rural areas, this concept has been shown to be more successful than attempts to attract outside industry or lure companies with costly incentives. A recent EPA document<sup>3</sup> outlines how some small communities have used local natural assets to rebuild their economies, starting with 2 critical actions:

1. Identify and build on existing assets
2. Support a clean and healthy environment

Communities have recognized that conserving and restoring natural resources for outdoor recreation and

*See Economic Good News, cont'd on p. 5*

## Economic Good News, *cont'd from p. 4*

tourism can help build a stronger and more diverse economy – they have remade themselves as outdoor recreational destinations and have attracted new residents, visitors, and entrepreneurs, many of whom capitalize on their location by starting related businesses.

Once the community assets have been identified and their importance has been recognized – e.g., on the Shore, clean water for successful aquaculture, plus attractive natural and cultural locales for tourism – promoting and marketing the assets is the proven way to spur continued economic development. These industries provide jobs for local residents, sales for local businesses, and revenue for local governments.

### Tourism and Aquaculture Have Made Their Own Markets

Participants in the shellfish industry have worked for years to make a regional market for the clams and oysters grown in local waters. Tourism industry businesses, especially in Cape Charles and Chincoteague, have created area-specific vacation, holiday, dining, resort rental, and second-home destination markets. Promotional outreach efforts have been largely funded by the industries and individual businesses themselves, and have targeted each segment's slightly different demographic market. These efforts have recently been recognized by the Virginia Tourism Commission – as it selected Cape Charles as the cover for the 2020 Virginia Travel Guide.

But neither Shore county has a funded, professional marketing outreach program. Several rural Virginia counties, competing in the same tourism market, have established, and funded, in-house marketing and promotional offices that stress outreach as part of an economic development plan: from Rockingham County, “The overarching goal of the Tourism Department is to develop



*The Violet Jane returns to home port in the village of Oyster, which has an active working waterfront and hosts many participants in the Shore's aquaculture industry, including a hatchery and a seafood company. Staff photo*

and implement a tourism strategy with an economic development component that promotes the county as a premier travel and tourism destination”; and “This (Tourism) division is responsible for Orange County's tourism promotion efforts, committed to raising awareness of the county as a tourism destination, and promoting its interest and name recognition – locally, nationally and internationally.... A marketing and promotion-driven operation...”

### Marketing Is the Key

Northampton and Accomack Counties, the Tourism Commission, and the Chambers of Commerce have attractive websites and publications. The next step, however, as other counties have demonstrated, is to promote those efforts through paid cooperative advertising and constant editorial outreach in regional and national commercial markets to augment the private marketing efforts of the tourism and seafood industries.

Now the numbers are in: community assets do indeed support the growth of both aquaculture and tourism. The consistent patterns of growth over the past several years confirm the value of the assets that support those industries. Publicly funded, robust marketing and promotional initiatives to spread the word about each counties' assets and attractions would go far to supplement the self-funded promotional efforts of the growing industries of aquaculture and tourism. 

<sup>1</sup> The values are according to the 11th annual Virginia Shellfish Aquaculture Situation and Outlook Report, a survey of shellfish farmers in the state conducted by the Marine Advisory Services program at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (Aug 2019), [www.vims.edu/research/units/centerspartners/map/aquaculture/index.php](http://www.vims.edu/research/units/centerspartners/map/aquaculture/index.php)

<sup>2</sup> Virginia Shellfish Aquaculture - Situation and Outlook Report (Results of 2018 Virginia Shellfish Aquaculture Crop Reporting Survey), [www.vims.edu/research/units/centerspartners/map/aquaculture/docs\\_aqua/mrr-2019-8.pdf](http://www.vims.edu/research/units/centerspartners/map/aquaculture/docs_aqua/mrr-2019-8.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-05/documents/competitive\\_advantage\\_051215\\_508\\_final.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-05/documents/competitive_advantage_051215_508_final.pdf)



*Cape Charles is enjoying a booming tourist industry, with many visitors taking photos with the iconic LOVE letters, made of (L-R) shells, a tractor tire, kayaks, and crab pots. Staff photo*

## RECYCLING CORNER

### Just How Bad Are Those Cigarette Butts?

Of the 18 billion cigarettes consumed every day around the world, only one third of the remaining butts are disposed of properly, in the trash. Cigarette butts are “the last acceptable form of littering,” according to Tom Novotny, Professor of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at San Diego University School of Public Health. But they’re biodegradable, right? As anyone who’s participated in a beach cleanup knows, that’s not true.



Cigarette filters are made of a plastic fiber called cellulose acetate; they retain nicotine, heavy metals, and other chemicals that go into the environment. Studies have shown that cigarette butts inhibit plant growth; in the water, they are hazardous to wildlife, since they look “like a morsel of food on a sea surface,” noted Cindy Zipf, Executive Director of Clean Ocean Action. And, like all plastics, they take years to break down and turn into ever-smaller microplastics. Novotny cited his research on effects of these microplastics and toxic chemicals on marine life: “one cigarette butt in a liter [of water] kills half the fish.”

What about e-cigarettes? This product is used by more than 10 million Americans. E-cigarettes include 4 components – the cartridge (or pod) that holds the solution, a heating element, a battery, and a mouthpiece. And, with a mix of electronic components, nicotine, and other chemicals, they may not be safe in the landfill. Although initially everything was disposable, plastic replaceable pods are now available – which are also being tossed, like cigarette butts, into the environment.

Efforts have been made to eliminate cigarette filters or change their makeup, and Juul Labs is experimenting with a deposit-and-return system for their pods and cartridges. However, Novotny notes that these avoid the “root of the problem: people’s proclivity to litter cigarette butts.”

So what should you do?

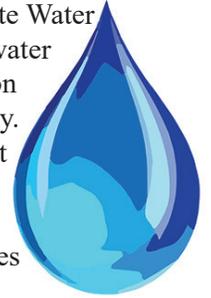
- If you can, quit smoking.
- Dispose of all cigarettes and tobacco products in the trash.
- Rinse e-cigarette pods before throwing in the trash.
- Look for deposit programs for pods and cartridges for e-cigarettes.

Source: Root T. Cigarette butts are toxic plastic pollution. Should they be banned? *National Geographic*. Aug 9, 2019. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/08/cigarettes-story-of-plastic/#close>

## Groundwater for Poultry Farms: Stronger Mandate to Investigate Shallow Aquifer

By Sue Mastyl

At their December 13 meeting, the State Water Control Board approved the groundwater withdrawal permits for 45 poultry farms on the Eastern Shore, all in Accomack County. Permits are required for any operation that withdraws more than 300,000 gallons in any month from the Shore’s sole-source aquifer. For poultry operations, that equates to about 100,000 chickens, according to Scott Kudlas, Director of the Department of Environmental Quality’s (DEQ’s) Office of Water Supply. Kudlas also indicated that an additional 6 poultry farms have applied for groundwater withdrawal permits.



Since early 2017, DEQ has been working with poultry farmers on the Shore, since none of these operations previously had permits for their groundwater usage (*see the June 2019 issue of ShoreLine for a history of the permit process and a summary of DEQ’s analysis of the draft permits*). One of the key issues in these permits was a Special Condition, added to 26 of the draft permits, to investigate an alternative source (i.e., the shallow aquifer) for their groundwater. Although the Eastern Shore Ground Water Committee has been encouraging use of the Columbia (shallow) aquifer to relieve pressure on the sole-source aquifer, and Tyson Foods had committed in February 2018 that their contractors would use the Columbia whenever possible, none of the 45 poultry farms had wells in the Columbia.

John Coker, Chairman of the Ground Water Committee and Northampton County Supervisor, spoke to the Board, noting that although “we’ve been promoting the Columbia for 50 years, it hasn’t happened.” He argued for “prudent resource management,” since we’re “at a precipice with our recharge versus withdrawal rate.” The priority for the aquifer must be for human consumption, he added, and noted that the draft permits “don’t go far enough to push the Columbia. ... Although I’m not against chicken farming,” he said, the poultry industry “has not been compliant with existing laws, and the cost [to drill wells in the Columbia] is minimal compared with the size of the business.”

In response to Coker’s comments, the Board revised the permits, to require the Special Condition to investigate the Columbia aquifer for all 45 operations, rather than the 26 proposed. Kudlas noted that the original time frame of 5 years for the Special Condition will need to be expanded, to account for additional staff time and resources.



# Keeping Track

## Upcoming Primary Election

The Democratic presidential primary election is Tuesday, March 3. There will be 14 candidates on the ballot (3 of whom have already suspended their campaigns); the list of candidates can be found at [https://www.elections.virginia.gov/media/castyourballot/candidatelist/List\\_of\\_3\\_3\\_20\\_Democratic\\_Presidential\\_Primary\\_Candidates.pdf](https://www.elections.virginia.gov/media/castyourballot/candidatelist/List_of_3_3_20_Democratic_Presidential_Primary_Candidates.pdf). Virginia Republicans will choose their delegates at the state convention.

Key dates for this election are:

- Jan. 16 – Absentee voting begins.
- Feb. 10 – Deadline to register to vote, or update an existing registration.
- Feb. 25 – Deadline to request an absentee ballot to be mailed to you. If you mail your absentee ballot, it must be received by 7 PM on Election Day, March 3.
- Feb. 29 – Last day to vote absentee in person (by 5 PM).

For more information, and details on polling locations, visit the Registrars' websites for Accomack County (<https://www.co.accomack.va.us/departments/registrar>) and Northampton County (<http://www.co.northampton.va.us/gov/registrar/index.html>).

***Remember, all elections matter, and every vote counts – including yours!***

### CBES Membership 2020

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\_\_\_\_\_ 1 yr. Regular Membership (includes ShoreLine) \$25

\_\_\_\_\_ Life Membership (includes ShoreLine) \$500

\_\_\_\_\_ Optional add'l tax-deductible contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Gift subscription to ShoreLine for a friend: \$25

Please provide recipient's name, email, and mailing address so we can send a welcome card; otherwise, we will welcome them via email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Volunteer for our community-building opportunities:*

Bike Tour \_\_\_\_\_ Community Unity Day \_\_\_\_\_

Oyster Roast \_\_\_\_\_ Clean the Bay Day \_\_\_\_\_

ShoreLine reporter \_\_\_\_\_ Hospitality \_\_\_\_\_

Fundraising \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate Forums \_\_\_\_\_

Administrative \_\_\_\_\_ Where needed \_\_\_\_\_

Send to CBES, PO Box 882, Eastville, VA 23347

Join online at [www.cbes.org](http://www.cbes.org)



## Chocolate Bark

Valentine's Day means chocolate treats – containing important minerals, antioxidants, and even some vitamins. Chocolate really is good for you. This is a classic home-made candy, spiced up a little with ginger and hot pepper. Easy, fast, and delicious!

### INGREDIENTS

18 oz bittersweet baking chocolate, broken into pieces

1 tsp butter

½ tsp ground allspice

1/8 tsp cayenne pepper (optional)

Dried mixed fruit (berries, cherries, cranberries)

Handful of toasted nuts (cashews, almonds, pecans, walnuts)

2-3 slices candied ginger, sliced into very thin strips

¼ tsp Barrier Island sea salt

### DIRECTIONS

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Place 2/3 of the chocolate in a microwave-safe bowl and microwave in 30-second intervals, stirring in between, until melted and smooth. Add the butter as well as the remaining chocolate and stir until combined, then stir vigorously until smooth and shiny.

Spread the still-warm chocolate mixture 1/4-inch-thick on the prepared baking sheet, then sprinkle with a dusting of allspice, and the cayenne, if using. Spread the fruit, ginger strips, and nuts on the chocolate. Use your fingers or spatula to press the fruit and nuts into the soft chocolate. Sprinkle on the salt, then chill until firm. To serve, break into pieces. Store in airtight container.

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Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore  
P. O. Box 882  
Eastville, VA 23347-0882

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To Our Members, Donors,  
Sponsors, and Volunteers!



**Opening Soon!**  
**Onancock Winter**  
**Farm Market**  
**Saturdays, 9 - 12**  
**February 8 – April 25**  
**Market Street**

## Community Calendar

*Note: Please verify times and places prior to traveling to meetings.*

### Accomack County

757-787-5700

[www.co.accomack.va.us](http://www.co.accomack.va.us)

- 1st Wed **Board of Zoning Appeals**  
10 AM, Accomac
- 2nd Wed **Planning Commission (PC)**  
7 PM, Accomac
- 3rd Tues **School Board**  
6:30 PM, Accomac
- 3rd Wed **Board of Supervisors (BOS)**  
5 PM, Accomac
- 4th Tues **PC Work Session**  
7 PM, Accomac
- 4th Thur **Wetlands Board**  
10 AM, Accomac

### Northampton County

757-678-0440

[www.co.northampton.va.us](http://www.co.northampton.va.us)

- 1st Tues **Board of Zoning Appeals**  
10 AM, Eastville
- 1st Tues **Planning Commission (PC)**  
7 PM, Eastville
- 2nd Tues **Board of Supervisors (BOS)**  
6 PM, Eastville
- 3rd Wed **Wetlands Board**  
Meets as needed, Eastville
- 3rd Wed **PC Work Session**  
5 PM, Eastville
- 4th Tues **BOS Work Session**  
5 PM, Eastville
- 4th Tues **School Board**  
6 PM, Machipongo

### CBES and Other Activities

- 1st Wed **VIMS Public Seminar**  
7:30 PM, Wachapreague
- 3rd Tues **ES Ground Water Committee**  
10 AM, Accomac
- 3rd Tues **CBES Board Meeting**  
7 PM, Eastville or Belle Haven

**For membership and other**  
**CBES information:**  
[www.cbes.org](http://www.cbes.org)