



CITIZENS FOR A BETTER EASTERN SHORE SHORELINE

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Culture on the Eastern Shore of Virginia*

TM

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Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Submitted by Karen Jolly Davis, Shore Delivery Corps

Arlene MacLennan felt uncomfortable going to the store for supplies. It spooked her when people didn't keep their distance. At 66, with diabetes and other health issues, she knew she risked death if she caught COVID-19, and didn't want to take any chances. So she called the newly formed Shore Delivery Corps, and a volunteer drove all the way out to Sanford to lay groceries on her doorstep.

"The person who answered the phone was very helpful, very polite, and very accommodating," she said. "I think it's a great service."

The Shore Delivery Corps' mission is to keep vulnerable people home and out of public places. Volunteers with a low risk of a serious COVID-19 infection bring groceries and medications to those who are over 65, or have health problems that may make the virus more deadly.

"If you're at high risk, don't fret," said Jeff Holland of Bayford, an early Corps organizer. "We're here to help."

The delivery service sprang up quickly after a local high school student reminded her employer that



Shore Delivery Corps volunteer driver Lauren Mears is ready to help when and where she is needed.

the entire senior class was home and bored. She thought they might be able to bring supplies to the vulnerable.

"I thought it sounded like a reasonable idea," said Pat Coady of Machipongo. "I called Jeff Holland, and that was all it took."

Holland used his energy and contacts to form committees to grapple with the logistics of a delivery service. The Eastern Shore of Virginia Community Foundation gave the Corps \$25,000, and the United Way of Virginia's Eastern Shore donated \$2,000 toward the mission.

"It literally snowballed," said Dr. Betty Bibbins, vice president of Eastern Shore Rural Health. "People called people. No one said no. We don't want a surge of illness to

See Neighbors, cont'd on p. 2

Census Alert!

Staff Report

Census Day has come and gone. Many households received Census forms by mail, with instructions for responding. But since forms were *not* mailed to PO boxes, only to street addresses, many households on the Shore never received census forms or information in the mail.

If the Shore population is undercounted, that means fewer federal dollars available for local government and key public services like libraries, education programs and schools, hospitals and healthcare, roads and bridges, and emergency and disaster response – an estimated \$20,000 per person over the next 10 years. If households fail to respond, the census count will not represent the Shore's true population figures and federal funds will be lost.

The census is required under the U.S. Constitution, and people are required under federal law to respond. Information given on census forms is confidential.

See Census Alert!, cont'd on p. 2

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To reach

**Shore Delivery Corps,
call (757) 801-9950, email
shoredeliverycorps@gmail.
com, or visit the website:
www.ShoreDelivery.org**

Neighbors, cont'd from p. 1

overwhelm our healthcare system.”

The newly formed committees determined local needs and supply chains, found transportation, established safety procedures, and created a logo and website. On April 1, a call for volunteers went out over Facebook. More than 90 people offered to deliver supplies, man the call center, or be dispatchers. One of them was Blake Johnson, 44, of Belle Haven, who eventually took groceries to Arlene MacLennan.

“I own the Island House restaurant in Wachapreague, which is closed,” he said. “I have a refrigerated Sprinter van, and I thought it might be useful. It feels good, knowing you’re able to help somebody.”

A huge challenge is getting word of the service to older people who don’t use the internet, or who don’t own computers. The “visibility committee” put information about the Corps in local newspapers and on the radio, distributed flyers in English and Spanish, and sent letters to local churches and other non-profits.

“On the Eastern Shore, word of mouth works,” said Dr. Bibbins, who noted that minorities suffer a

disproportionate number of COVID-19 deaths, in part due to unequal access to healthcare. “Sometimes people say, ‘this is something that’s supposed to save your life’ and you never see them again. But people listen to their friends, and their pastors.”

Jeff Holland guesses that the Corps will continue to function until late May, at least, depending on what the experts say.

“This war is a war that we can win,” he said. “The key to victory is keeping our citizens who are at high risk for COVID-19 at home. And we are able to do just that by providing the services of Shore Delivery Corps.” 

ShoreLine Comment: CBES has partnered in Shore Delivery Corps



Shore Delivery Corps volunteer Paul Bibbins created its website. Photo by Paul Bibbins.

efforts, helping with outreach on social media, developing visual materials, and setting up radio interviews and public service announcements. For more information, see the box on page 1.



Census Alert!, cont'd from p. 1

- Census Day was April 1 – but as of April 17, local and state response rates were: Accomack – 26.7%; Northampton – 28.7%; Virginia – 55.4%
- Want to see your town’s response rate? Go to <https://my2020census.gov>, click on top left “Get the facts” drop-down menu, and select “Response map.” Choose Virginia, then either City or County.
- There are no paper census forms available for pickup – anywhere.
- Even if no census form is received in the mail, an online form is available at my2020census.gov or 2020Census.gov – be sure to enter the household’s physical address instead of a PO box number.
- Census responses can also be made by phone: (844) 330-2020.
- Census enumerators will try to contact non-responsive households over the summer – but the COVID-19 virus has complicated the process, so it is subject to change.

The Accomack County and Northampton County Complete Count Committee has mailed a bilingual census information postcard to every postal customer on the Shore, including to PO box addresses. The notice urges households to go online or phone to complete 2020 Census information. It explains that answers are confidential, and information will be used by the Federal government “to allocate funds for schools, libraries, and many other agencies.”

Everyone can play a role in the 2020 Census by sharing information on their social media channels about the importance of responding and how shaping your future starts with the census. Encourage people to respond online at <https://my2020census.gov/> 

Sources: Eastern Shore Regional Complete Count Committee Census 2020 (<https://www.co.accomack.va.us/residents/census-complete-count-committee>), U.S. Census Bureau (<https://2020census.gov/>)

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Informal Educators Provide Opportunities for Environmental Learning at Home

Submitted By Cora Johnston, Site Director, UVA Coastal Research Center and Virginia Coast Reserve LTER, and Hali Plourde-Rogers, Executive Director, Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust

In March, the order to close schools threw the education community for a loop. Since then, educators have been scrambling to pull together learning materials for these completely unexpected circumstances. At the same time, public programs were cancelled by universities and organizations for the next few months. Stay-at-home orders have left informal educators – those who reach learners in non-school settings – scrambling to provide meaningful experiences for the community while staying socially distant. In these parallel education struggles – formal and informal – an opportunity has arisen for informal educators on the Shore to help enrich at-home learning.

Local Environmental Organizations Adapt

Many local organizations have educational outreach components. The Nature Conservancy takes students on field trips to the barrier islands and local marshes. The Barrier Islands Center provides first field trips for the youngest students. The Soil and Water Conservation District provides instruction on soils and leads the annual high school Envirothon competition. The educators of many organizations – most focused on environmental education – meet regularly to discuss local program-sharing and coordination.

Local program development and coordination have taken a new direction as our local informal educators adapt their programs to at-home learning. We usually work to bring the community together – often outside. Now we are seeking innovative ways to send individuals exploring on their own, including students who would have attended field trips.

Each organization is finding inventive ways to move programming into a remote format. The Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust (VESLT) adapted their second-grade nature walk into a set of nature journaling and scavenger hunt activities that encourage students to make observations and enjoy the natural world. The Barrier Islands Center has made all 5 of their Eastern Shore documentaries available for free on YouTube (<http://www.barrierislandscenter.org/>), bringing their heritage programs to the public. The University of Virginia/Long-Term Ecological Research Center in Oyster is working with VESLT, Master Naturalists, and other members of the Eastern Shore Environmental Education Council to gather lessons and teacher resources on <https://www.coastaleducation.virginia.edu/>. This coastal learning website was due to be launched later in the year, but has been opened in an abbreviated form to meet the current need.



Children engaged in hands-on learning developed by the LTER and Cape Charles Memorial Library. Photo by Sharon Silvey

The Strength of Partnerships

Teachers are being flooded with ideas for at-home learning, but ideas are only a start. Informal educators are working with teacher-partners to help bring structure and support to those ideas, by linking general lessons to the natural world that surrounds Shore students. Informal education partners help pique curiosity and ground lessons in our surroundings; school partners are critical to getting learning materials to students, because inequitable access to the internet limits the use of online resources.

While the struggle for resources and access will continue, informal educators are leveraging opportunities that arose with program cancellations to help build meaningful learning experiences for students stuck at home. This challenging time presents an opportunity to leverage project-based, question-driven, and curiosity-based learning. Each of these approaches has been shown to increase student engagement and learning. As informal educators, we are seeking ways to salvage public programs while lightening the load on teachers by helping to identify opportunities to capture student curiosity and support learning through environmental exploration.

Find our budding initiatives and follow student work by searching #DiscoverEEonESVA and by following the Eastern Shore Environmental Education Council on Facebook. Informal educators on the Shore can always use help with this effort. To find out how you can help – or to offer your skills and time – please contact Cora Johnston at coraj@virginia.edu or (757) 620-7016, or submit a request on the Coastal Education Learning at Home page (https://www.coastaleducation.virginia.edu/wp/?page_id=882). 

Public and Private Funds Combine for Living Shoreline Project

By Sue Mastyl

The Francis Makemie Society has created a partnership with Accomack County for a shoreline stabilization project at Makemie Monument Park on Holdens Creek in Sanford. The 5-acre property includes a monument to Rev. Francis Makemie, thought to be the founder of Presbyterianism in the U.S, and a north-facing shoreline on Holdens Creek, which is a popular fishing site. The Society has had to move their benches and signage back several times due to erosion, which has worsened in recent years.

Working with the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Shoreline Erosion Advisory Service (SEAS; <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/soil-and-water/seas>), the Makemie Society developed a plan for the 100-foot stretch of shoreline, which currently has a 4- to 6-foot bank.

SEAS was established in 1980 to provide technical assistance, free of charge, to private landowners and localities with erosion problems. They also provide resources for state and federal programs to help fund up to 75% of these projects. Further information on the SEAS program can be found in the April 2019 issue of *ShoreLine* ("Coping With Sea Level Rise"). Information about living shorelines, including decision tools for specific sites and best management practices, can be found at https://www.vims.edu/ccrm/outreach/living_shorelines/index.php.

As noted on the SEAS website, erosion removes tidal wetlands, endangers property, and also contributes to sediment and nutrient pollution. An erosion rate of 1 foot per year along a 100-foot stretch of shoreline can release 46.8 tons of sediment, 34 pounds of nitrogen, and 22.5 pounds of phosphorus. As mentioned in the April 2020 issue of *ShoreLine* ("General Assembly Wraps Up"), the General Assembly approved legislation this year that makes living shorelines the default option for addressing shoreline erosion.

The Makemie Living Shoreline Project

According to the Project Summary submitted to the

County and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, the SEAS team "indicated that erosion appears to be

caused by elevated water levels and [storm-driven] waves." Foot traffic to the water's edge may have also contributed to the erosion. Rick Hall, who represented the Society at the Wetlands Board meeting on February 27 (at which time the Board approved the plan), noted that the erosion "wasn't as bad in the 1940s to 1960s."

The plan includes removal of trees and shrubs, construction of a riprap marsh sill and filling behind the sill with sand, planting marsh grasses, and regrading the remaining bank at a 3:1 slope (from the toe of the bank at a 2-foot elevation, to the top of the bank at a 5.5-foot elevation). It will also include installing a new pier over the living shoreline to provide fishing access without disturbing the shoreline and new marsh. The total depth of the project from the sill to the top of the bank will be 40 feet. Chris Guvernator, Environmental Programs Director for Accomack County, noted at the Wetlands Board meeting that a 2:1 slope is the "minimum necessary to stabilize the bank," but a 3:1 slope is the state minimum for stormwater runoff, and "a good slope for stabilization."

The Project Summary notes that the Society "considered building a bulkhead but believes a living shoreline to be a better alternative," and that "it will add tidal wetlands."

Funding the Project

Because the project will be creating new tidal wetlands, Accomack County is contributing to this project. "This is the first time the County has spent money for a living shoreline," Guvernator noted, adding that the County "had been looking for a location to create tidal wetlands using the County's Wetlands Mitigation Fund." The County's portion (up to \$30,000) will be used for project costs that directly create wetlands. The Wetlands Mitigation Fund, authorized by the Board of Supervisors



Eroding shoreline in Gloucester County, 2015.



Living shoreline 2 years later. Photos courtesy of VIMS Shoreline Studies Program.

COVID-19: Is the Shore Ready?

Staff Report

A report issued in April uses data, technology, and on-the-ground reality to come up with a way to assess every U.S. county's level of preparedness for the COVID-19 pandemic. STAT, a Boston-based science- and health-centered media company, partnered with Applied XL¹ and the Center on Rural Innovation² to produce the dashboard model. The aim was to anticipate which specific areas of the country were most susceptible to the dangers of the pandemic, and highlight the looming challenges for rural communities, which often have particular vulnerabilities. Rural areas already have issues with medical care access, older populations, and more chronic diseases.

The resulting preparedness model was based on 5 variables: the number of licensed hospital beds within a 40-minute drive; the number of critical care staff within a 40-minute drive; the percentage of the population 65+; the county's score on the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index,³ and data from the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation's COVID-19 model.⁴

The link cited below leads to an interactive national map showing every county in the US. The color codes indicate level of preparedness, ranked from 1 to 100, low to high. Red areas, low numbers, indicate those least ready to deal with a high incidence of critical COVID-19 infections. Red areas appear in every state – especially in rural locations. Accomack County is in the red zone and ranked “low” preparedness, at 21 – physical capacity at 29 and human resources at 11. Most of the rural, lower Eastern Shore counties in Maryland are also designated as low preparedness. Northampton County does not appear in a red zone and is ranked at 58, “medium” preparedness – physical capacity at 96 and human resources at 88. This may be partly due to Northampton's proximity to health-care facilities in Hampton Roads.

https://www.statnews.com/feature/coronavirus/county-preparedness-scores/?utm_source=STAT+Newsletters&utm_campaign=38bcfbc731-breaking_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8cab1d7961-38bcfbc731-149951285 

The map will be updated as more data become available.

¹ www.appliedxl.com

² <https://ruralinnovation.us/>

³ Social Vulnerability Index, CDC: Measures resiliency to natural disasters and disease outbreaks; the score takes into account such factors as poverty, access to transportation, and housing. Scores range from 0 to 1, low to high vulnerability – Northampton County, 0.7911; Accomack County, 0.8319. Rural ES counties in MD had similar high scores.

⁴ Model uses the estimate of ICU bed shortage to assess severity of a pandemic and its consequences. STAT writer Andrew Joseph indicates this is the most influential model used by the White House, and its projections are much “rosier” than most other models.

Planning Underway for Bike Trail

Submitted by George Mapp

In these uncertain times, it's hard to make plans for ourselves and our families, but in some cases, workers are able to continue projects that have already been funded. The Virginia Dept of Transportation (VDOT) continues to work on a detailed plan for a trail along the rail corridor from Cape Charles to Hallwood, a distance of 49 miles. The route will be subdivided into sections, to allow separate funding to be pursued for phased construction of the larger project. The study will identify potential spurs to connect to towns, water-access points, and other points of interest. It will estimate costs for construction and ongoing maintenance, along with funding sources and suggestions for a management structure to maintain the trail. The study will also address other uses of the corridor, in particular, current and future utilities such as broadband, sewer, and natural gas. The final report is anticipated in November.

This summer, VDOT has plans for a public hearing, possibly online, as well as an online survey, to get feedback from residents and businesses. “VDOT is looking forward to working with our partners as we study the potential conversion of the previously used rail into a trail that promotes safety, healthy living and tourism on Virginia's beautiful Eastern Shore,” said Chris Isdell, VDOT Accomack Residency Administrator.

“As owners of the existing rail corridor we are excited to work with VDOT to study implementation of a trail to provide healthy living to citizens and visitors on the Eastern Shore,” said Donald Hart, Chairman of the Accomack-Northampton Transportation District Commission. 

Living Shoreline Project, *cont'd from p. 4*

in 2009 to create more tidal wetlands, derives money from previous private shoreline projects to offset, at \$12.00 per square foot, unavoidable impacts to vegetated wetlands. The project will establish 2,000 square feet of new tidal wetlands.

The remaining funding will be split between a grant and private donations. Hall added that the Society is “happy to have the County as part of the team.” According to Governor, the County will provide construction inspection services, erect interpretive signs about living shorelines and key features, and provide long-term maintenance of the tidal wetland plantings. The County will use the location to direct residents who may be considering living shorelines for their own properties. The Society will continue to provide public access, execute perpetual easements, and provide long-term maintenance of the riprap sill and the pier. 

RECYCLING CORNER

General Assembly: Progress on Plastics and the Litter Tax

During the legislative session that wrapped up in March, the General Assembly made progress on eliminating plastic bags from our environment:

- SB11/HB534 (disposable plastic bags; local tax) authorizes any county or city, beginning January 1, 2021, to impose a tax of 5 cents per bag on disposable plastic bags provided to consumers. Plastic bags exempted from this tax will include reusable bags; plastic bags used for ice cream, meat, fish, poultry, and produce; dry cleaning bags; and packaged trash bags. Retailers will retain 2 cents of the tax; the revenue accruing to the locality will be used for environmental cleanup and the provision of reusable bags.

The General Assembly also made progress with the litter tax, raising the tax for the first time in 43 years, and holding businesses accountable who do not pay the tax:

- HB1154 (litter taxes; amount of tax) increases the annual litter tax on manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors, and retailers from \$10 to \$20, and the additional annual litter tax for specific categories (groceries, soft drinks and carbonated waters, and beer and other malt beverages) from \$15 to \$30.
- HB502 (litter tax; penalty) adds \$100 to the existing penalty for litter tax delinquency.

Another effort, to eliminate polystyrene food containers, will need to be reenacted next year to remain in effect:

- HB533 (expanded polystyrene food service containers; prohibition; civil penalty) prohibits the use of single-use expanded polystyrene food containers by July 1, 2023, for certain chain restaurants, and by July 1, 2025, for all food vendors. Nonprofit organizations are exempt. The locality or the Attorney General can impose a civil penalty up to \$50 per day for violations.

The litter tax and penalties collected by the state are deposited in the Litter Control and Recycling Fund. Although it is critically underfunded, in fiscal year 2019, \$1.7 million was dispersed to 190 localities and programs, providing an economic value of \$22 million and helping to fund 5,500 community cleanups, with 45,000 volunteers removing 75,000 cubic yards of litter.

SOURCES:

Litter Free Virginia, Legislation Tracker. <https://litterfreeva.org/legislation-tracker/>.

Richmond Sunlight. <https://www.richmondsunlight.com/>.

Waste Watchers of the Eastern Shore of Virginia. <http://www.wastewatchersva.org/>. April 2020 GreenNews.

Keeping Track

Upcoming Elections

Primary Election

The **Republican primary election** for U.S. Senate and 2nd Congressional District is **Tuesday, June 23** (this was changed by Governor Northam from the original date of June 9). The Democratic incumbents (Senator Mark R. Warner and Representative Elaine G. Luria) are running unopposed, so no Democratic primary will be held for our district. The following Republican candidates will be on the ballot:

Senator:

- Daniel M. Gade
- Thomas A. Speciale II
- Alissa A. Baldwin

Representative, 2nd Congressional District:

- Ben Loyola, Jr.
- Scott W. Taylor
- Jarome Bell

Key dates for this election are:

- **May 8** – Absentee voting begins.
- **May 18** – Deadline to register to vote, or to update an existing registration.
- **June 16** – Deadline to request an absentee ballot to be mailed to you. If you mail your absentee ballot, it must be received by 7:00 PM on Election Day, June 9.
- **June 20** – Last day to vote absentee in person (by 5:00 PM).

Town Elections: COVID-19 Update

Although Governor Northam had recommended that the **local elections** scheduled for May 5 (see April 2020 *ShoreLine*) be moved to the November 3 general election, the General Assembly rejected this suggestion during their Special Session on April 22. On April 24, the Governor used his executive authority to move the election back 2 weeks, to **Tuesday, May 19**.

NOTE: *In-person absentee voting is no longer available in Cape Charles or Exmore.*

For more information on both elections, and details on polling locations, visit the Registrars' websites: for Accomack County (<https://www.co.accomack.va.us/departments/registrar>, or call 757-787-2935); or for Northampton County (https://www.co.northampton.va.us/government/departments_elected_offices/voter_registration_and_elections, or call 757-678-0480).

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

More Opportunities for Environmental Learning at Home

As the article on page 3 highlights, local groups are working hard to provide high quality environmental learning while keeping children and families safe at home:

- Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) offers their *Ask an Expert* series, with short videos about the importance of oysters to the Bay, freshwater mussels, regenerative agriculture, blue carbon, ospreys and eagles, and the importance of trees in the ecosystem, at <https://www.cbf.org/news-media/multimedia/video/ask-an-expert/>.
- CBF has a series of self-led Student Action Projects at <https://www.cbf.org/join-us/education-program/student-leadership/student-project-resources.html>, plus a Student Leadership Program in environmental stewardship at <https://www.cbf.org/join-us/education-program/student-leadership/student-leadership-application.html>.
- CBF has launched *Learn Outside, Learn at Home*, with active learning resources for students, teachers, and adults that can be done at home or in your local neighborhood, at <https://www.cbf.org/join-us/education-program/resources/learn-outside-learn-at-home.html>. Activities include student investigations, nature journaling, graphics, water quality investigations, osprey tracking, and storm drain stenciling.
- The National Park Foundation has launched a new site, *Parks from Home*, with park activities you can do from the comfort of home, at https://www.nationalparks.org/connect/blog/park-activities-you-can-do-comfort-your-home?utm_source=goparks&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=goparks4-20. You can take a virtual tour of several National Parks with park rangers and Sesame Street characters, download an activity map, learn how to become a Junior Ranger, and explore baby animals, park photography, and historical and national parks by video.
- The *Bay Journal* has made several of its documentary films available online at <https://www.bayjournal.com/films/>, including *An Island Out of Time*, *High Tide in Dorchester*, and *Beautiful Swimmers Revisited*.
- The Ecological Society of America offers resources at <https://www.esa.org/events/the-esa-weekly-water-cooler/water-cooler-chat-2/water-cooler-1/>.
- We Are Teachers offers resources and ideas at https://www.weareteachers.com/things-to-do-during-covid/?fbclid=IwAR0Jfb6Iqj_YZ7a0oeiz_HZguZ-hj5K99PVP3-HpgC77XEQV_Dkx6FdveWs.
- Resources are also provided on Northampton County's website at https://www.co.northampton.va.us/news/what_s_new/online_activity_links_for_c_o_v_i_d_times?fbclid=IwAR3YhhIUUt16grZ-UE_2A3TisC-czKAJKUH51gJ-9lZE6sZ6TeYw4bRxvksA.



28th Between the Waters Bike Tour

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**October 24, 2020
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*Share the Excitement
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**More info:
www.cbes.org**

*The 2019 CBES Bike Tour provided
an estimated \$385,000 economic
impact to the Shore!*

Community Calendar*

**NOTE: As of press time, all in-person public meetings in both counties have been cancelled until further notice. Some are available to view or join online; for current status, go to the appropriate website or contact by email or phone.*

Accomack County 757-787-5700 www.co.accomack.va.us		Northampton County 757-678-0440 www.co.northampton.va.us	
1st Wed	Board of Zoning Appeals 10 AM, Accomac	1st Tues	Board of Zoning Appeals 10 AM, Eastville
2nd Wed	Planning Commission (PC) 7 PM, Accomac	1st Tues	Planning Commission (PC) 6 PM, Eastville
3rd Tues	School Board 6:30 PM, Accomac	2nd Tues	Board of Supervisors (BOS) 6 PM, Eastville
3rd Wed	Board of Supervisors (BOS) 5 PM, Accomac	3rd Wed	Wetlands Board Meets as needed, Eastville
4th Tues	PC Work Session 7 PM, Accomac	3rd Wed	PC Work Session 6 PM, Eastville
4th Thur	Wetlands Board 10 AM, Accomac	4th Tues	BOS Work Session 5 PM, Eastville
CBES and Other Activities		4th Tues	School Board 6 PM, Machipongo
1st Wed	VIMS Public Seminar 7:30 PM, Wachapreague	For membership and other CBES information: www.cbes.org	
3rd Tues	ES Ground Water Committee 10 AM, Accomac		
3rd Tues	CBES Board Meeting 7 PM, Eastville or Belle Haven		