



CITIZENS FOR A BETTER EASTERN SHORE

SHORELINE

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Rural Entrepreneurs – Their Greatest Challenge

By Mary Miller

The signs, social media postings, and ads are everywhere on the Shore. From the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel to tourist businesses in Chincoteague; from owner-operated restaurants in the towns to chain stores and service centers on the highway; from a mobile VDOT sign on Rt. 13 to offices and school districts in both counties – the message is the same. “We’re Hiring.” “Join Our Team.” “Help Wanted.” There are job fairs, sign-on bonuses, and even a sign at a large Rt. 13 highway stop: “Work Today, Get Paid Tomorrow.” The community was used to hearing the “We need jobs” rhetoric; in a very short time, that has changed to “We need workers.”

The Problem Is Nationwide

Three national studies,* researching the challenges rural entrepreneurs face while operating small businesses, found the same response: the #1 issue facing these business owners was the lack of employees. And other local businesses and institutions were dealing with the same issue. On offer were entry-level jobs, sales and public relations jobs, technology and administration jobs, health care and education jobs, and management positions – full-time, part-time, and flex-time.

But there were just not enough workers to fill the jobs. Business owners were competing for the same limited pool of workers as the large chain stores and local governments and health care facilities. This is a nationwide problem as rural-area populations become older, either through the aging of locals or the in-migration

of retirees. The residents willing and able to afford goods and services are outnumbering the workers who can provide them.

Other challenges mentioned in the studies included the lack of housing for employees, online competition, transportation, lack of affordable childcare, insufficient broadband, limited access to employee’s educational development opportunities, and business owners’ inadequate marketing skills.



Challenges and Remedies

Although all 3 studies came to the same conclusions about the greatest challenges for rural entrepreneurs, specific comments from the entrepreneurs and researchers, both about the challenges and possible remedies, are worth noting.

First, the challenges:

- In some regions, jobs are being created, but the local labor force does not have the skills to adequately fill those jobs.
- Job applicants often lack necessary skills in basic math, hands-on trades, information technology, and manufacturing.

- Additionally, there may be challenges with community resources such as transportation, childcare, health care, and housing.
- Adults 65 and older average 25% of rural populations.
- 58% of rural census tracts in the United States have limited or no access to quality childcare.
- There is not enough good housing.
- Usable buildings are as hard or harder to find than loans.
- The pandemic and economic crisis not only did not dominate the responses, but it also did not rank in the top 10 challenges.

And some possible community strategies:

- Connect youth and adult workers with education and training programs that relate directly to existing and burgeoning industry sectors.

See **Rural**, Cont’d on page 4

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In My Opinion

Short-term Rentals, Long-term Headaches

Submitted by Dr. David Dalessio

The lower Eastern Shore is increasingly a seasonal destination for vacationers. To accommodate these guests, Northampton County has encouraged the establishment of short-term rentals by allowing any and every property owner in the County to turn their residence into a short-term (1 to 30 days) rental “by-right.”

The zoning application for this use does not require a property owner or the County to notify neighbors of this change in residential usage, nor does it require a public hearing. Consequently, neighbors have no say in regulating the density of such rentals in their community. The operational regulation of these rentals does not yet exist. Often, the rental owner does not live on the property and may hire an outside manager to oversee the rental. There has recently been a marked increase in applications for short-term rental permits.

The county benefits from this arrangement by collecting occupancy taxes on such rentals. According to Northampton County finance director John Chandler, transient occupancy tax is expected to reach \$600,000 in Fiscal Year 2023. In comparison,

20 million dollars of local revenue is expected to be generated through Northampton County property taxes. The revenue benefit of short-term rentals is not without risk – if those who pay general property taxes are harmed in the process. Furthermore, such rentals decrease the incentive to

The one-size-fits-all approach to permitting short-term rentals by right needs to be re-evaluated.

build badly needed additional housing for a more permanent workforce on the Shore.

The one-size-fits-all approach to permitting short-term rentals by right needs to be re-evaluated by the County, especially for historically residential communities such as Hungars Beach. As a resident of Hungars Beach, I shared my own experience, and others expressed theirs, through letters to and attendance at the March 2022 meeting of the Northampton Planning Commission.

Hungars Beach is a traditional single-family residential subdivision created in 1965. All residents have ingress and egress to their property on a private road, paid for and maintained through annual road association dues. However, due to a permitted short-term rental, the County has usurped our right to own and regulate our private road by allowing its public use by guests of the short-term rental. Residents report feeling that this use has invaded their privacy, eroded their sense of safety, and increased their liability should an accident or injury occur. The owner of the rental reaps the profit and those adjacent suffer the consequences.

Often, guests are unfamiliar with regulations protecting the Chesapeake Bay, and are unfamiliar with the measures taken by owners to prevent

erosion of their property. Despite signage “private no trespassing” and “no beach access,” guests of the rental frequently do trespass. Personally, I have witnessed guests walking on my breakwater, cocktail in hand, to watch the sunset. Other residents have reported seeing rental guests, seeking to enjoy the sunset, sitting on their beaches and sometimes on the decks of owners currently not present.

I and other residents of Hungars Beach respectfully ask that the Board of Supervisors re-examine the current “by-right” ordinance in terms of its fairness and equity, to ensure that all tax-paying property owners have a voice at the table. We offer the following suggestions:

- We recommend to the Board of Supervisors that an application for a short-term rental require a Special Use Permit, including notification to those affected, and a hearing.
- The license for a short-term rental should be limited to intervals of 3 to 5 years, thereby allowing for review of its occupancy-tax compliance and its “good neighbor” standing.
- The short-term rental should be the primary residence of the owner to ensure the owner’s ongoing commitment to the community where it is located.
- Only one short-term rental permit per owner should be allowed, to prevent a single individual or an LLC from buying up a residential neighborhood and turning it into a rental community.
- The ordinance should provide clear definitions of noise, light, and traffic impact.
- The ordinance should provide an enforceable mechanism to address complaints habitually ignored by the owner.



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Northampton 4-H: Engaging Students Through Embryology

Submitted by Erin Morgan, Northampton 4-H Agent

As things continue to get back to normal for students, Northampton 4-H partnered with schools and local agencies to provide hands-on learning experiences in classrooms across Northampton County. These experiences have provided students with a sense of normalcy, something many have longed for since COVID-19 shut everything down in 2020. Programs included the 4-H embryology project, farm field days, hand-washing lessons, and a real-world simulation, among other topics.


Things started opening up earlier this spring; that meant that 4-H would be allowed to return to the schools. This included the return of embryology to elementary schools. Embryology is the hatching of chicks in the classroom, providing students with hands-on learning of life cycles. This project targets second grade; it fits perfectly with Virginia Standard of Learning (SOL) 2.4 and 2.5: The Study of Life Systems. Teachers who conduct embryology report that students tend to be more engaged in their classes and they often see a reduction of absenteeism during the month they have the incubators in their classrooms. The students don't want to miss out on seeing the chicks hatch out!

As part of the program, we conduct a hand-washing lesson with all participating students. We teach them the proper steps to washing their hands, the length of time they need to wash their hands, and then have them practice the steps. We use a blacklight and a special lotion called Glo Germ™ that simulates germs, allowing students to see how effective they were at washing their hands. During the lesson, we explain to the youth that to reduce the risk

of illness to the chicks, as well as to the students, proper hand-washing techniques need to be used.

It takes 21 days to incubate a chicken egg, and during that time the eggs are left in an incubator for the students to observe at a distance. We go into classrooms at least once during the project to candle the eggs, a process that uses a light to see into the eggs, to determine if the egg is viable. During this process, we show the students what we are looking for in the egg, and point out signs of development. Eggs that are not viable are then taken out of the incubator. We also provide the teachers with the Learning Resources: Chick Life Cycle set, which is a realistic set of plastic eggs that show a chick's development for each day it is in the incubator. This provides the students the opportunity learn how the eggs are changing without touching the real eggs.

This year, 100% of public and private elementary schools in Northampton County participated in the 4-H embryology program. This activity reached approximately 170 students.

To learn more about the 4-H program or other programs offered by Virginia Cooperative Extension, call the Extension Office at 757-678-7946 (Northampton) or 757-787-1361 x16 (Accomack). Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments. Its programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, military status, or any other basis protected by law. 



Shining a light into an egg is called "candling," and is a way to ascertain the viability of the chicken embryo. Photo Erin Morgan



Some of the chicks from this year's embryology project. Photo submitted by Erin Morgan

Mammals of the Barrier Islands

By George Mapp

When we think of wildlife on the barrier islands, what comes to mind? Birds – yes, lots of them. Seafood critters – clams, oysters, and crabs, of course. But mammals? Outside of Chincoteague ponies, in the few times I've been out there, I saw a couple of rabbits, but that's it.

It turns out there are a variety of mammals, especially on the higher-elevation islands that have shrubs and maritime forests. There are opossums, moles, shrews, rabbits, squirrels, mice, voles, muskrats, rats, coyotes, foxes, raccoons, weasels, minks, otters, and 2 species of deer – this according to a recent report from the University of Virginia Coastal Research Center in Oyster.

It's surprising that mammals can survive on the low-elevation islands, with scarce vegetative cover and little fresh water. The animals fend for themselves, with 1 exception. The ponies on the Virginia portion of Assateague are managed – they are fed some hay in the winter and rounded up 3 times a year for minimal veterinary care, and foals are sold off at Pony Penning to keep the population at approximately 150.

Little is known of the time before English settlers arrived at the mainland, but when they did, they brought farm animals and they killed off wolves, bears, bobcats, and cougars. They inadvertently brought mice and rats. Sometime around 1650, when tobacco prices declined, they began to raise cattle, sheep, hogs, and horses on the barrier islands. Livestock raised on the islands was not taxed and there was no need for fencing.

When the last settlers left Hog Island around 1940, they left a few head of sheep and cattle that became feral, but have since been removed. The only remaining farm animals on any of the islands are the Assateague ponies, and they are a bit of a problem for wildlife officials, as they are not a part of the original ecosystem and can be harmful to native wildlife, like endangered birds and turtles.

South of Wallops, there are few buildings remaining of any kind; most of the islands are owned by The Nature Conservancy, state, or federal agencies, and have been designated a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The islands are important for nesting birds and as a layover stop in the Eastern Flyway. To protect the birds, on some islands raccoons and red wolves are removed.

English foxes were brought to the mainland by early settlers for sport hunting and have since interbred with native foxes. One of the authors of the UVA report, Ray Dueser, once watched a fox swim from Parramore Island to Revel Island. Another fox was seen walking across the ice from Chincoteague to Assateague, and there is a report of a fox heading out on the ice from the mainland near Machipongo.

We've been lucky so far on the Eastern Shore to avoid

nutria, the rat-like critter that has infested freshwater marshes to the north and south of us. Nutria were imported from South America back in the 1800s and raised for fur. Back in the day, Greta Garbo is said to have worn nutria fur coats. Animals that escaped or were released have spread out across the U.S., from Washington state to Maryland. They are a problem because they eat so much marsh vegetation that it can't recover. Nutria multiply rapidly and have few predators. In Louisiana, there's a \$6 bounty, and some hunters can make a modest living off them. In the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, there was a multi-agency, multi-year effort to exterminate the varmints, which so far has been successful. The main reason nutria have not made it to our area is that they prefer low-salinity marshes.

The full report is available at:

https://www.vmnh.net/content/vmnh/uploads/PDFs/research_and_collections/research_articles/moncrief/annotated_checklist_of_terrestrial_mammals_of_the_virginia_barrier_islands_and_the_adjacent_delmarva_peninsula_mainland.pdf



Rural, *Cont'd from page 1*

- Create clear career pathways from school to employment.
- Support community development efforts focused on reducing common rural barriers, including transportation, housing, childcare, health care, and broadband.

A Local Initiative

Cape Charles Main Street recently held The Northampton County Jobs Fair, combined with a food truck rally. According to organizer Patsy Harris, the event was a success. "We counted approximately 70 job-seekers who came to speak to the 35 businesses represented at the fair," she said. Large and small employers, from poultry processors to Cape Charles restaurants, "were looking for part-time seasonal workers as well as full-time permanent help."

As Shore communities attract retirees, second-home buyers, and tourists – the very demographic groups that can support rural entrepreneurs – rural businesses are often constrained by a lack of help.



Sources

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"Strengthening Workforce Development in Rural Areas," Federal Reserve System. <https://www.investinwork.org/-/media/70C24C40AC3C48E988C314CD82C9C180.ashx>

"Rural Community Challenges Ranked." <https://saveyour.town/articles/>


Gov. Youngkin Undoes Northam's Executive Order on Plastic Reduction

By Sue Mastyl

As reported in the June 2021 issue of *ShoreLine* ("General Assembly Makes Further Progress for the Environment"), then-Governor Northam signed an Executive Order in March 2021, directing all state agencies, institutions, and their concessioners to discontinue use of disposable plastic bags, single-use plastic and polystyrene food containers, plastic straws and cutlery, and single-use plastic water bottles by July 21, 2021. Exemptions would be made for medical, public health, and public safety uses, although all non-medical public health and public safety uses would be phased out by December 31, 2025.

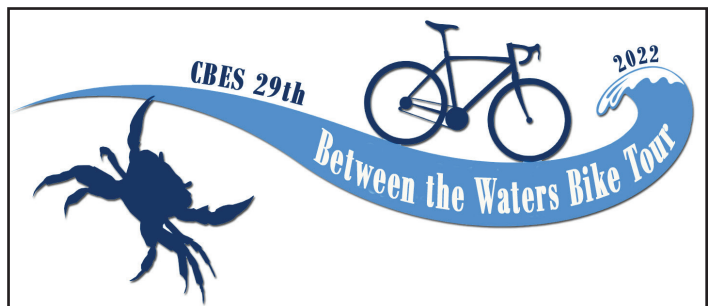
On April 7, Governor Youngkin signed an Executive Order, reversing this plan. Executive Order 17, "Recognizing the Value of Recycling and Waste Reduction," effectively immediately, rescinds Northam's Executive Order 77, and focuses instead on encouraging recycling, including:

- Increasing awareness of recycling, encouraging the use of post-consumer recycled (PCR) products, and a plan for a Virginia State Parks Campaign to increase recycling
- Asking the Department of Environmental Quality and their Waste Diversion and Recycling Task Force to identify ways to encourage new recycling-related businesses, including PCR companies
- Stopping food waste, including asking DEQ and the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to identify strategies in partnership with manufacturers, grocery stores, and large-scale facilities to reduce food waste "by encouraging donations to needy individuals, [and] food for animals or for composting purposes"
- Requiring an annual report from the Department of General Services, tracking the metric tonnage of the state's recycling program

In response to the Governor's Executive Order, Kate West, Director of the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter, noted that "The notion that recycling is a sustainable solution is a false promise promoted by polluters. Youngkin's decision to reverse the state's plan to phase out single-use plastics is a clear step in the wrong direction. ... Only a tiny fraction of the plastic created is recycled." 

Community Call for Information

ShoreLine is gathering information for an article on Shore-grown produce and honey for sale by various farmers and home gardeners. Please email us at info@cbes.org and let us know the location of the farm stand or market, when open, and the types of produce available. We and our readers will much appreciate it!



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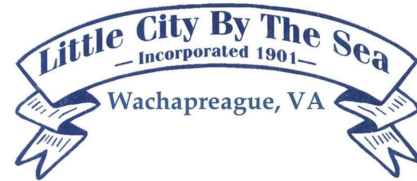


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RECYCLING CORNER

By Sue Mastyl

What's Wrong With Paper Bags?

The old refrain was “paper or plastic?” Then everything seemed to switch to plastic bags. Now that we’re trying to ban plastic bags, are paper bags a viable alternative to reusable (preferably cloth) bags?

Although on the surface, paper bags would seem like a good alternative, since they can be recycled, the environmental footprint of paper bags is huge. Producing paper bags requires more raw materials and energy, and produces more waste, than producing plastic bags. Specifically,

- Paper bag production results in 70% more air pollutants and 50 times more water pollutants than plastic bag production.
- Approximately 14 billion trees are cut down each year for paper packaging.
- Paper bag production uses 4 times as much electricity and 4 times as much water as plastic bag production.
- Paper bags don’t break down any faster than plastic in landfills, due to the lack of light and oxygen. And they take up more space in landfills.
- Paper bags require 91% more energy to recycle than plastic bags. And once paper bags get soiled with food or oil, they can’t be recycled.
- With more weight per bag, paper bags cost more to ship than plastic bags.
- Paper bags are usually made from new, not recycled, paper, with longer, stronger fibers.

But plastic bags aren’t the solution, either – globally, we produce the weight of the human population, about 300 million tons, in plastic waste each year. Most is never recycled. Four out of 5 grocery bags in the U.S. are plastic, made from approximately 12 million barrels of oil. And 70% of us don’t know that plastic is a petroleum product.

So stick with your reusable bags – the answer to the question, “Paper or plastic?” is “Neither!”

Sources:

Labre L. Stop celebrating your plastic bag ban. Paper bags are so much worse. Independent, March 5, 2020. <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/paper-bag-bad-environment-plastic-bag-ban-recycling-waste-a9380316.html>

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Thompson C. Paper, plastic, or reusable? Stanford magazine, Sept. 2017. <https://stanfordmag.org/contents/paper-plastic-or-reusable>

Asparagus Amandine With Roast Tomatoes



There’s often a week in the spring when the need for fresh local asparagus becomes overwhelming – and fortunately, that week coincides with asparagus a-plenty. When you want to put a big platter filled with an asparagus salad on the table – this might be the one. A basic prep, a little butter and lemon, some chopped herbs, and you’re good to go.

- Toss 12 to 15 cherry tomatoes with a little olive oil, salt, and pepper. Place in single layer on foil-covered pan, and roast at 425° for about 10 minutes, stirring once.
- In a dry sauté pan, toast ½ cup sliced almonds for about 5 minutes, stirring a few times.
- In a large skillet, put trimmed, washed asparagus in a little boiling water for 3 to 4 minutes. Remove, rinse with cold water, then immerse in ice water bath for 5 minutes. Pat dry.
- In the dry skillet, melt 4 to 5 tbsp butter; add salt and pepper to taste.
- Add asparagus, turning to coat each spear. Remove to platter, and spoon remaining butter over asparagus.
- Pour juice of ½ lemon over all, then sprinkle with chopped herbs – chives, tarragon, parsley, etc.
- Place roasted tomatoes across center of asparagus, then add almonds.
- Finish with a little coarse sea salt.

The Kitchen Hive. Reprinted with permission: <https://www.talkrealnow.com/>

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Keeping Track

Shore Receives Federal Funds

On Tuesday, April 19, Congresswoman Elaine Luria visited Cape Charles to present a \$2,500,000 check to fund phase I of the Eastern Shore Rail Trail, from downtown Cape Charles to Rte. 13. The plan is to construct a trail head at “the hump” in Cape Charles, 2.3 miles of trail, a pedestrian crossing at the Food Lion traffic light, and a parking lot on the east side of Rte. 13 near the Dollar General.

The funding comes from a revised “earmarks” program. Previously, earmarks were local projects quietly inserted into appropriations bills. The new system is transparent, with local groups submitting grant requests that are published online. The funds cannot go to for-profit organizations, and each Representative or Senator must certify that they themselves will not benefit financially from any project being funded. Funds are limited to 1% of total spending.

Earlier that day, Luria presented checks for \$8,245,000 for upgrading the Eastern Shore 911 radio communication systems, and \$500,000 for phase II of the Ruth Wise Road (housing) Development Project in Exmore.

Primary Election 2022

The Republican primary will be held on Tuesday, June 21, 2022, for the 2nd Congressional District. The Democratic incumbent, Elaine Luria, is unopposed in the Democratic Party.

Candidates for the Republican primary are –

- L. Tommy Altman III
- Andrew G. “Andy” Baan
- Jarome Bell
- Jennifer A. Kiggans

No excuse is needed for voters who choose to vote by mail or vote early in person. Key dates to remember:

- In-person early voting at Registrar’s office – Friday, May 6, 2022, through Saturday, June 18, 2022 (including Saturday, June 11, 2022)
- Deadline to register – Tuesday, May 31, 2022
- Deadline to apply for a mail-in ballot – Friday, June 10, 2022

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

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

Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan Available

According to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the Master Plan “charts the course to adapt and protect Virginia’s Coast.” The publication, available online at <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/crmp/plan#plan>, presents tabular data on hazards, impacts, projects, funding, and community context, as well as discussing the challenges faced by coastal Virginia communities, current conditions, and potential projects designed to mitigate damages caused by coastal flooding.

The Master Plan builds on the 2020 Virginia Master Planning Framework, which outlined goals and principles of Virginia’s coastal resilience strategy. Over 2,000 stakeholders, government employees, and experts in various areas were involved in developing the Plan. In addition, public workshops were conducted with Planning District and Regional Commissions, localities, and communities “to refine the assessment of impacts due to coastal flooding with local knowledge and understanding.”

As an example of a capacity-building and planning initiative, the publication describes the Oyster Coastal Adaptation and Resilience Plan, a joint effort by Oyster residents, Northampton County, and The Nature Conservancy. The Plan is projected to be completed within the next 2 years, and has already received partial funding for the \$500,000 price tag. Stay tuned!

2022 Clean the Bay Day Saturday, June 4 10 AM - 12 noon Oyster Harbor

For more information and to register, please contact TNC Outreach and Education Coordinator, Margaret Van Clief, at mvelief@tnc.org, or go to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation’s registration page for the Oyster location: <https://cbf.org/events/clean-the-bay-day/tnc-virginia-coast-reserve.html>.

CBES partners with The Nature Conservancy in this important community event. Join us this year!



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