

**SUMMARY OF THE MEETING OF THE
HRPDC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 6, 2025
Virtual Meeting on Zoom**

1. Summary of the December 5, 2024, Meeting of the Hampton Roads Regional Environmental Committee (REC)

The meeting summary and attendance of the December meeting were accepted.

2. Beneficial Use of Dredge Material and Thin Layer Placement Guidance

Ms. Ella DiPetto from the Elizabeth River Project (ERP) presented an overview of their initiative to advance thin layer placement (TLP) in the Elizabeth River Watershed, which is part of a broader push to provide guidance on the beneficial use of dredge material (BUDM) in Virginia. The project aims to develop a technical guidance document and a GIS-based matchmaking tool to align restoration site owners with potential dredging efforts. These will both be available by the end of February and the tool will be beta tested to stakeholders willing to input projects. ERP is also planning to design up to three demonstration projects within the Elizabeth River. The statewide guidance document is being developed by the Virginia Marine Resource Commission (VMRC) and other partners. It is under review by various stakeholders across the Commonwealth.

Ms. Katchmark asked how Virginia is doing compared to other states that have BUDM programs. Ms. DiPetto noted that Virginia is very conservative and sharing best practices and case studies from Maryland and other states will be helpful once the guidelines are finalized. Once the GIS tool is developed, partners are seeking interests from anyone willing to host and maintain this tool. Interested stakeholders are asked to reach out to Ms. DiPetto with suggestions. Another participant asked what the limitations are to matching marsh restoration locations in small rivers and creeks with proximity to dredge material. Ms. DiPetto noted that this is a challenge and something to be considered when developing projects.

3. EPA Recycling Grant Update

Ms. Katie Cullipher, HRPDC and askHRgreen.org, provided an update on the Recycling Education and Outreach grant, which was awarded \$1.96 million to support recycling education initiatives. The project focuses on reducing waste generation, increasing awareness of recycling practices, and minimizing contamination in recycling streams. While the grant is currently on hold due to a federal funding freeze announced by the EPA, Ms. Cullipher shared updates on the progress made so far. The team has developed and working on growing web-based recycling and disposal tools, the [Waste Wizard tool](#), and the [Ready Set Sort game](#). She also discussed the Feet on the Street project, which aimed to reduce contamination in recycling programs by educating households on proper recycling practices.

4. Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Update

Ms. Whitney Katchmark provided an update on the region's Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP) and recent public engagement efforts. The first public informational webinar was held on January 20th, attracting 94 participants, and focused on reviewing the plan goals, encouraging survey participation, and answering questions. The [survey](#) covers various sectors including energy supply, buildings, transportation, waste management, agriculture, and industry. Initial results from 147 respondents show high importance placed on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and priorities such as transitioning to renewable energy. Major barriers identified include high costs and limited access to alternative transportation options. Ms. Katchmark encouraged further survey participation to gather more diverse input and mentions that an FAQ will be posted soon based on questions received during the webinar.

Currently, the project is still funded but there are no promises of future funding for implementation. But this plan will allow the region to synthesize programs and information. A similar effort is being undertaken by the state, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has taken the lead on their CCAP. Mr. Quan McLaurin, HRPDC, added that the plan is specific to the Hampton Roads region and will help in future partnerships with DEQ's plan.

5. Legislative Update

HRPDC staff provided an update of bills moving through the General Assembly related to resilience, stormwater, planning, solar, trees, data centers, and the budget. Many bills of concern have either been laid on the table or amended. The team agreed to continue monitoring the progress of these bills throughout the session. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) and Wetlands Watch are tracking legislation closely as well. They mentioned that for the first time, the Virginia Sea Grant has a budget line item in the Senate's budget bill, environmental literacy currently has \$750,000 allocated and CBF is distributing a letter of support, and that George Mason University is named as a potential the State Climatologist.

6. Updates and Other Business

On March 17th, CBF is hosting Senator Tim Kaine for their Brock Climate Lecture Series. Find more details and register [here](#). CBF is also hosting a legislative debrief on March 27th, more details to come.