



SHORELINE

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Studies in VA and NJ Reveal Stressors on Osprey Populations

By Sue Mastyl

On December 4, a forum sponsored by Birding Eastern Shore reviewed the latest research on osprey populations in the Chesapeake Bay and the Mid-Atlantic, from Dr. Bryan D. Watts, Director of the Center for Conservation Biology (CCB) at the College of William and Mary, and Benjamin Wurst, Osprey Project lead for Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey, respectively. The presentation can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bR8byYABd8s>.

Chesapeake Osprey Data

Watts described the marine food web (see figure on p. 2), in which forage fish (including menhaden) are the “energy changers within the food web, allowing the rest of the web to have access to the vast energy stores located in the plankton.” Forage fish share several characteristics, including a high reproductive rate and a high lipid content; they occur in large schools and go through “boom and bust” cycles.

“Osprey in the Bay are in a demographic death spiral, because they’re not producing enough chicks to offset adult mortality.” - Dr. Bryan D. Watts

An example of the “boom and bust” cycles is the Pacific sardine, at one time the largest fishery in the world, which entirely collapsed in the 1940s – and has never recovered. One of the lessons from the Pacific sardine is that “when you’re going down a population hill like happened in the 1940s, the key is to take your foot off the gas and give that stock time to recover,” Watts noted.

The forage-fish industry has grown dramatically, with an annual harvest of 22 million metric tons, worth \$15 to \$20 billion, in 2014. One of the uses for forage fish is as fish meal for aquaculture. Two years ago, Watts noted, “we reached a milestone globally; we ate more farm-raised fish than wild-caught fish. ... The global expansion of aquaculture is what’s driving the increase in demand for fish meal.”

In the Chesapeake Bay, several bird species depend on forage fish, including bald eagles, pelicans, Northern gannet, and osprey. The osprey has been used globally for over 50 years as an indicator of aquatic ecosystem health. Eight years ago, Watts and his team began to study the relationship between prey (forage fish) and reproductive rate.

The best indicator, he noted, is brood reduction. With abundant food, broods are symmetrical, with equal-sized chicks. Under food stress, asymmetrical broods are more common, with one or more chicks getting less nutrition and often dying. “What this does is ensure that at least the

See **Osprey**, Cont’d on page 2

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Osprey, Cont'd from p.1

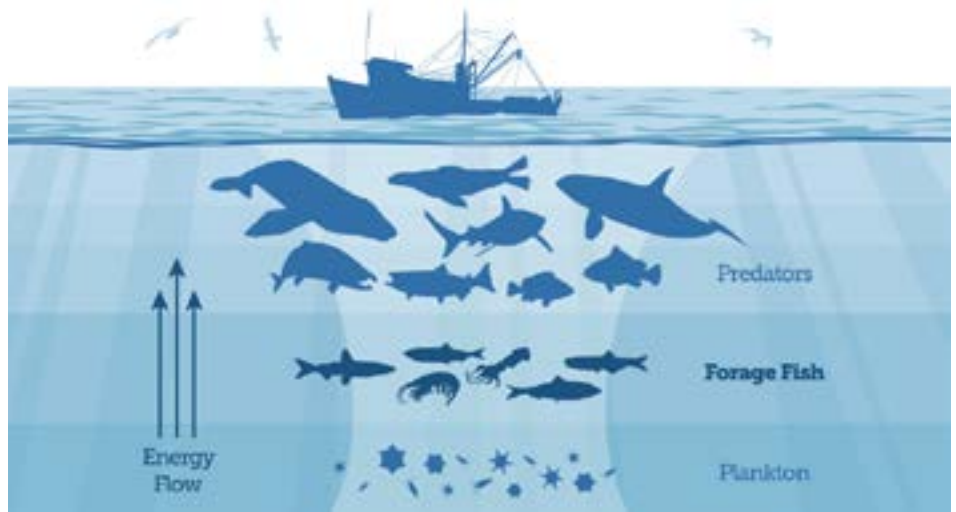
[dominant] chick will survive; if the female fed them both equally and there wasn't enough food, they'd both die," Watts added.

Compared with a low of 1,450 pairs in 1973, the current estimate for the Bay population is 10,000 to 12,000 pairs, "the largest breeding osprey population in the world." However, Watts noted that "the population is declining in a number of places."

The growth of the population after 1973 was in the lower-salinity reaches of the Bay. In 2006, Andy Glass of CCB found that diet is one of the main differences, with osprey feeding primarily on catfish and gizzard shad in the low-salinity reaches, and mainly menhaden and other salt-tolerant species in the high-salinity mainstem.

Watts reviewed 45 years of data on osprey reproductive rate in Mobjack Bay. "We climbed out of the DDT era in the 1980s," he noted, with reproductive rates (chicks produced per breeding pair) above 1.4. By 2006, however, the rate had dropped to 0.8, and by 2023, only 3 young were produced among 81 breeding pairs, and 5 chicks among 85 pairs in 2024. The break-even rate is 1.1.

Watts' team has documented a change in diet – in the 1980s, over 70% of the diet was menhaden, compared with less than 30% in the 2000s. Although osprey have tried to adjust by using other species such as weakfish, croaker, toadfish, flounder, spot,



The marine food web. © The Pew Charitable Trusts

or herring, "all of these fish are not the same; the quality of the fish has declined by 50%." Watts continued, "menhaden are unique in that they're a high-lipid prey," with 200 kilocalories per gram (kcal/g); most of these other species are around 100 kcal/g, so about half the energy content.

For all these reasons, "osprey in the Bay are in a demographic death spiral – they're not producing enough chicks to offset adult mortality."

In 2024, Watts expanded the footprint of their work, to look at the region of the Bay with salinity above 10 parts per thousand (ppt), where osprey are completely dependent on menhaden. There were 12 study areas with more than 500 breeding pairs — 10 study areas within the 10 ppt area and 2 low-salinity reference areas. None of the 10 study areas broke even for reproductive rate, whereas the 2 low-salinity areas exceeded the break-even rate of 1.1. So this led to the conclusion that "Mobjack Bay did represent what was happening in the broader Bay."

Watts' 2025 work has focused on the metapopulation question – "is there enough surplus in the low-salinity reaches to offset the deficit in the mainstem?" They looked at 23 study areas with over 1,000 breeding pairs; only the low-salinity areas broke even. "For the entire Chesapeake Bay to break even, we would need 1.8 pairs in the surplus areas for every pair in the deficit area. Unfortunately, the reverse

is true – we have 7.5 pairs in the deficit for every pair we have in the surplus." He added that "we absolutely will be seeing a decline Bay-wide, and it's likely that decline has been going on for some time now."

Osprey in the Mid-Atlantic

Ben Wurst described his work over the past 20 years with osprey in New Jersey, including installing and maintaining over 250 artificial nest platforms. Using bird photography and prey remains below nests, they've documented that the osprey's main diet is menhaden.

In New Jersey, there are about 800 nesting pairs, with 75% along the Atlantic coast. In Barnegat Bay, where Wurst's work is concentrated, there are about 150 pairs.

Currently, Wurst's group surveys nests once a year – "we're the only crazy people you'll see with ladders

See **Osprey**, Cont'd on page 7

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Bottom-Use Conflicts: Aquaculture vs. Seagrass Meadows

By Cora Baird, Ph.D., Director of UVA's Long-Term Coastal Research Center in Oyster

Over the past few decades, the Eastern Shore has been home to 2 big coastal success stories: a now-booming hard clam aquaculture industry, and the re-emergence of seagrass meadows in the shallow bays of the seaside (i.e. Atlantic) – important habitat that went missing entirely for almost 2 generations. Increasingly, growers, researchers, and regulators are grappling with conflict between these 2 successes, because clams and seagrass thrive in similar coastal conditions. Or so we thought. A recent study led by Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) researchers examines the occurrence of clam farms and seagrass, areas of overlap, changes between 2002 and 2021, and potential future expansion and conflict.

Why the Concern About Conflict?

Clam aquaculture expansion is limited by the availability of state-owned bottom leases, which are managed by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC). It is a tight squeeze: aquaculture is approved in areas of suitable environmental conditions (depth and tides), but cannot overlap with Baylor (public) grounds or seagrass meadows, limiting the leases available. Seagrass is protected as critical habitat, serving as a nursery for many marine species (including blue crabs and commercially harvested fish).

VMRC policies protecting seagrass are based on struggling seagrass recovery in the Chesapeake. On the seaside, however, seagrass has expanded so successfully (by over 3,000% in the past 20 years), there is now concern that rapidly expanding seagrass could limit industry growth in clam aquaculture.

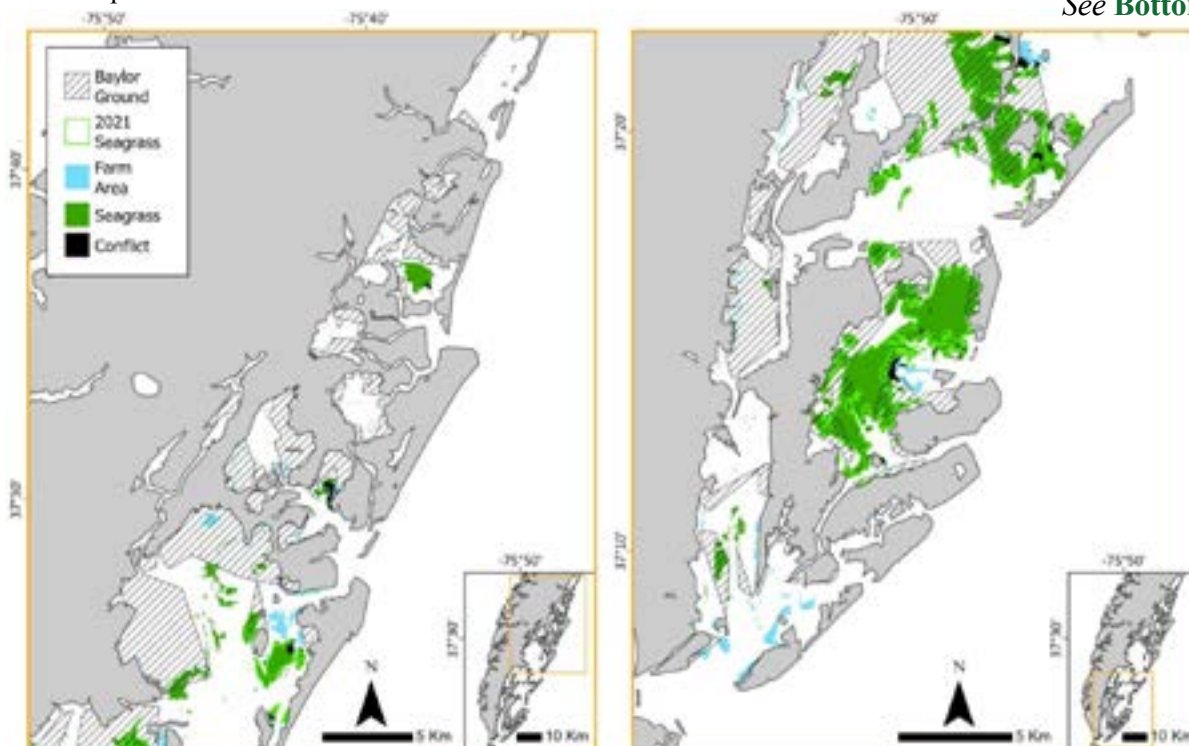
Big Expansion, Small Conflict

VIMS researchers used aerial imagery to map areas occupied by seagrass and clam farms, characterized the conditions in which they occur, and predicted their future occurrence. Over the past 20 years (2001 to 2021), coverage of seagrass meadow has increased by 3,373%; clam aquaculture increased 140%. Clam farms make up just 7% of active bottom-lease areas. Despite its proliferation, seagrass expansion led to only a 3% decline in the bottom available for aquaculture.

The study's "results indicate that both the clam aquaculture industry and seagrass can continue to expand without significantly impeding the other's growth" because they occupy areas with slightly different characteristics. Seagrass and clam farms both occur in shallow protected bays behind the barrier islands – salty with lots of water exchange, but no big waves. Beyond that, the study reveals that their occurrences diverge: clams occur in sandier areas; seagrass prefers (or creates) siltier conditions. Seagrass is found in deeper water than clams, and occurs in areas with more fetch (distance of wind across water) and more water temperature anomalies.

But are these separations just an artifact of VMRC's regulations to keep aquaculture farms out of seagrass meadows? Through additional analysis (comparing periods before and after major seagrass recovery), the researchers determined that environmental tolerance or suitability, not policy meant to reduce overlap, is responsible for the divergence between clams and seagrass. It is an environmentally

See **Bottom-Use**, Cont'd on p. 7



Maps of model predictions of seagrass (dark green), farm areas (light blue), and bottom-use conflict (black) distributions across the northern (left) and southern (right) regions of the Virginia coastal lagoons under current environmental conditions with Baylor Grounds (hatched) and 2021 seagrass meadow area (light green outline). From Breitenbeck et al.

Virginia Big Tree Program: Eastern Shore Highlights

By H el ene Doughty, Agricultural and Natural Resources Extension Agent, Virginia Cooperative Extension

On October 31, 2025, Northampton County’s monthly Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension coffee hour drew a record-setting crowd of 40 attendees. The presentation focused on the Virginia Big Tree Program, sharing highlights from Northampton and Accomack counties. The program also featured Robbie Lewis, Area Forester with the Virginia Department of Forestry, who provided additional insights into local forestry efforts. The strong turnout reflected the community’s enthusiasm for conservation and environmental literacy.

The Virginia Big Tree Program is a statewide initiative that celebrates and documents the largest trees of each species across the Commonwealth. Founded in 1970 as a youth-led 4-H and Future Farmers of America project with Virginia Cooperative Extension, the program is now coordinated by Virginia Tech’s Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation with support from Cooperative Extension agents and the Virginia Department of Forestry. Its mission is to inspire appreciation for trees, encourage stewardship, and highlight the ecological and cultural significance of Virginia’s giants.

The program maintains a comprehensive register that lists the three largest specimens of more than 300 native, non-native, and naturalized tree species. Trees are evaluated using a scoring system that combines trunk circumference, height, and crown spread, allowing for fair comparisons across species. The program’s scoring system is straightforward yet effective. Circumference is measured at 4.5 feet above the ground, height is determined using clinometers or laser range-finders, and crown spread is calculated as the average of the widest and narrowest crown diameters. The total points for each tree are calculated by adding the circumference, height, and one-quarter of the crown spread.

Champion trees are re-certified every decade to ensure their continued status, and Virginia’s registry connects to the National Champion Tree Program at the University of Tennessee, linking local champions to a broader national effort. Did you know Virginia is the leading state for National Champion Trees, with 93 to date?

Big trees hold more than visual appeal. Ecologically, they provide essential habitats for wildlife, help stabilize

soils, and contribute significantly to carbon sequestration. Culturally, many of these trees are woven into local histories, serving as landmarks and gathering places for communities. Educationally, they inspire curiosity and promote environmental literacy among people of all ages.

Northampton County is home to several remarkable big trees that are quietly known by most tree enthusiasts in the county. The leading Virginia champion tree in Northampton County is a loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*) with 341 points. It is a magnificent specimen with a height of 134 feet, a crown of 90 feet and a circumference of 184 inches.

Located in the vicinity of Machipongo, it is unfortunately on private land and not available for public access. For many years, it ranked as the second largest, with a willow oak (*Quercus phellos*) earning 466 points and holding the champion title until its removal in 2025 due to root rot and safety concerns in Eastville. Both also hold the titles of National Champions.

Other Virginia champion trees in Northampton County include the Hercules’ club (*Zanthoxylum clavaherculis*), a National Co-Champion located within the Fisherman Island National Wildlife Refuge, and a hazel alder (*Alnus serrulate*) found on Eyre Hall Plantation. The 2 trees boast a total of 78 points and 94 points, respectively. Neighboring Accomack County features its own impressive specimens, including a Virginia Champion Hackberry tree. This giant measures 238 inches in circumference, reaches 70 feet

in height, and has a crown spread of 98 feet, totaling 333 points. Its distinctive multi-stem growth is believed to be the result of past storm damage. Additional Virginia Champions in Accomack include a Japanese zelkova (274 points) and a Swamp Chestnut Oak (382 points).


Community involvement is a cornerstone of the Virginia Big Tree Program. Anyone can nominate a tree by submitting its measurements and location details, and certified measurers then verify the data to maintain accuracy. Outreach events and educational publications further raise awareness about the importance of tree conservation. Local volunteers, including Extension agents, area foresters, and forestry enthusiasts, play a crucial role in maintaining the register and fostering a culture of stewardship.



Former Virginia Champion Willow Oak in Eastville. Photo courtesy H. Doughty

Since 1970, the program has documented more than 2,000 trees, encompassing both native and non-native species that reflect Virginia's diverse landscapes. Trees are categorized based on their status as Alive (Top 3), Alive (Not Top 3), or Legacy, which helps track their ongoing significance. The unique coastal environment of the Eastern Shore shapes the growth and survival of these big trees. Maritime forests support species like the Hercules' Club, which are adapted to sandy soils and salt spray. Floodplains and farmland edges provide ideal conditions for large hackberries, oaks, and sycamores. Conservation lands protect these trees from human disturbance, ensuring their longevity.

The Virginia Big Tree Program is more than a registry; it is a celebration of natural heritage. Northampton and Accomack counties exemplify the diversity and resilience of Virginia's trees. By documenting, protecting, and sharing these living monuments, the program fosters a deep appreciation for forests and inspires stewardship that will endure for generations. For those interested in learning more or exploring the register, the Virginia Big Tree Program website (<https://www.treesvirginia.org/services/virginia-big-tree-program>) offers a wealth of information. Together, we can ensure that these magnificent trees continue to thrive and inspire for many years to come.

Tree lovers of the Eastern Shore – join the search for Virginia's next champion specimens! 



Virginia Cooperative Extension Coffee Hour on Forestry Resources and the VA Big Tree Program - October 2025. Photo courtesy H. Doughty

Correction

In the December "Recycling Corner," we indicated that the Friends Book Shop in the Eastern Shore Regional Library in Parksley "provides 50% of the library's income, for programs and materials."

In fact, the Book Shop provides almost 50% of the Friends of the Library income; the library system receives funding from both counties, the state, grants, as well as generous individual donors.

We regret the error.




Check Out Our New (Online) Home!

By Sue Mastyl

This past spring, CBES launched a redesigned website at <https://www.cbes.org/>. With a lot more photos highlighting the beauty of this place we call home, great graphics, and a lot more information and local resources, it's worth checking out.

Some of the new features include:

- **ShoreLine** – in addition to accessing individual issues from 2020 to the present, explore a searchable archive for 2020 to 2025.
- **Join** – information on annual and lifetime membership, and reasons why CBES membership is important.
- **Bike Tour/Events** – a dedicated space for all CBES events, including the annual Between the Waters Bike Tour and Oyster Roast, the Annual Meeting/Picnic@theBarn, Community Unity Day, Clean the Bay Day, and Candidate Forums.
- **What We Do** – how CBES puts our mission into action.
- **Who We Are** – a history of CBES from its founding, and info on the current Board of Directors, ShoreLine Editorial Board members, and Staff.
- **Get Involved** –
 - Ways to volunteer with CBES
 - How to participate effectively in public meetings
 - Why and how to contact the Shore's elected representatives
- **Resources** –
 - **Recycling** – why it is important to recycle, what can be recycled at county facilities, plus other recycling outlets available
 - **Towns and Counties** – with 2 counties and 19 incorporated towns, it's important to understand what local governments do; includes contact info and details about each town and county.
 - **Museums** – with a network of 14 museums on the Shore, from large to small, there's something for everyone; includes descriptions, hours, and contact information.
 - **Store** – a centralized location for all CBES gear, including raffles, Bike Tour apparel (when available), and memberships.

So take some time to explore the new website. If you notice something's missing in telling CBES story, email info@cbes.org! 

General Assembly Bills Prefiled For 2026 Session

By Mary Miller

Every year, hundreds – often thousands – of Bills are filed by legislators in Virginia’s General Assembly (GA); only about half of them ever get acted upon. In 2025, close to 3,000 Bills and Resolutions were introduced, but only about 900 were actually passed and sent on to the Governor.



Photo: Wikimedia

Often, Bills are prefiled by Delegates and Senators and recorded, printed, and set up for GA action. Some of the more controversial Bills, including redistricting and marijuana sales, have been well covered by the press. Other Bills, impacting

some or all Virginians, are already on the table for action. Several House Bills (HB) and Senate Bills (SB) on file are outlined here. They include funding for school meals and student health care; overtime pay for domestic employees; apprenticeship programs; lobbying local elected officials; voter registration records review; use of facial coverings by law enforcement; changes to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA); and action on single-use polystyrene food containers. *Note: Italics indicate changes or additions to existing statutes.*

Employment

Both **HB1** and **SB1** would incrementally *increase the minimum wage* to \$15/hour by January 1, 2028.

SB 10 would exempt apprenticeships for children 16 years and older from *employment prohibitions* – provided that the person is a registered apprentice under relevant law, is employed in a legal work-training program, and has obtained verifiable proof of competency for the work involved.

SB 28 would add domestic workers and certain other employees to legal provisions related to *overtime pay*.

Education

SB 4 would require school boards to require each primary and secondary school in its district to participate in the federal National School Lunch Program and the federal School Breakfast Program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and to make free breakfast available to any student who requests such a meal.

SB 33 would add funding to support covered programs for at-risk students to include hiring of both registered nurses and advanced practice nurses.

SB 42 would require school boards to adopt policies to annually pay for most of the total unpaid school meal balance debts by using appropriated non-federal funds – except that no school would be required to provide funding to pay for that school’s unpaid meal balance.

Local and State Government

SB 50 expands the definition of “*lobbying*” to include influencing or attempting to influence local government officials or to solicit others to so influence. The Secretary of the Commonwealth would prepare a list of local government positions and names to be made available to lobbyists to assist them with compliance.

SB 56 seeks to limit the fees charged for producing public records in response to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, and to provide public bodies with additional time for response through petitions to general district or circuit court.

SB 26 would permit local governments to include in its land development ordinances, a provision that would require installation of solar canopies over parking areas.

Voting and Elections

SB 52 would require the Department of Elections to periodically *review registration records* to systematically remove the names of ineligible voters from the voter registration system, but not later than 90 days before a primary or general election.

And **SB 54** would prohibit the state Board of Elections from approving a standard nominating petition that would require a candidate to provide his residence address on the petition before filing.

SB 58 would change the *time for receipt of absentee ballots*, information to cure an absentee ballot, or provide identification for a provisional ballot, from 12 noon to 5 PM, on the third day after the election.



Photo: Richmond Free Press

Other

HB3 seeks to establish a Task Force to determine barriers to enrollment by income-qualified energy customers for *home weatherization*, and to develop a plan to better coordinate improvements by State and Federal agencies.

HB 7 seeks to restrict the use of facial coverings by law enforcement officers who are not employed by Agencies that have a written policy and restrictions on the use of such coverings. Violators would be subject to disciplinary action, including dismissal, decertification, legal action, etc.

SB 9 would eliminate the remaining 1% sales tax on food for human consumption and essential personal hygiene products.

See **General Assembly Bills, Cont’d on p. 9**

Osprey, Cont'd from p.2


on boats,” he added. They use ladders, cameras, and drones to document nestlings, remove marine debris, and band the chicks when they’re old enough.

One site on the Mullica River has had “boom or bust” years. In 2015, full-size adult menhaden were driven into the river by striped bass, and couldn’t leave. Comparing that abundant year with 2025, which was “the worst year ospreys ever had in New Jersey,” they found an average young/nest of 1.77 in 2015 and 0.73 in 2025, indicating, Wurst noted, “just how well they can do with abundant menhaden.”

In a survey this year of a 40-nest colony in Barnegat Bay, which typically produces around 55 nestlings per year, a couple of nests did produce a few young, but “the whole colony was devoid of ospreys. After they failed, they just left.” He added that “this just showed that food was obviously very very scarce for them.” Overall, in New Jersey, 352 young were produced from 683 occupied nests, for a reproductive rate of 0.70 – “the lowest ever recorded for the state of New Jersey.” Brood reduction was common, and 386 (57%) of nests failed.

Menhaden - Size and Timing Matter

Wurst noted that the osprey are taking smaller menhaden. Commercial bait fishermen and recreational fishermen are also seeing this. Watts added that the most common size class that osprey take is 10 to 12 inches, but they’re starting to see osprey taking “peanut bunker,” which are about 1/3 of the size, and don’t have the lipid content of adult menhaden.

Watts noted that timing may also be affecting osprey. Menhaden used to enter the Bay in mid-spring; in 2024, the menhaden didn’t come into the Bay until June, which is too late in the season and too hot, and eggs that are laid are not going to be successful. This year, it was even later; menhaden didn’t come into the Bay until July. 

SL comment: *The data summarized in these presentations provide further evidence that the lack of availability of menhaden is responsible for a significant decline in the osprey population in the Bay and coast-wide. The decline in the menhaden population could be due to overfishing or other factors such as climate change (which could be driving the change in timing), which is why a scientific study of the Bay population is so important.*



Contact Del. Rob Bloxom (804-698-1733; DelRBloxom@house.virginia.gov) and State Sen. Bill DeSteph (804-698-7508; senatordesteph@senate.virginia.gov),

and ask them to allocate the necessary funds for the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science to conduct the previously approved research of the Chesapeake Bay menhaden population.

Bottom-Use, Cont'd from p.3

real division of suitable conditions, not a separation created by VMRC regulation. On closer inspection, environmental divergence makes sense. For example, the trade-off in occurrence by water depth reflects both workability and habitat needs: seagrass finds refuge from heat stress in deeper water, while shallower intertidal areas increase maintenance accessibility and decrease fouling of clam nets. For clam operations, deeper sites are less profitable.

Looking Ahead

Predicted occurrence indicates that even with expanding clam aquaculture and seagrass meadows, there is little evidence for additional conflict in the coastal bays of our seaside (12% overlapping areas). Models in this study predict a maximum extent of 5,932 hectares of seagrass (64% increase from 2021) under conditions at the time of the study. The model results point to opportunities for continuing seagrass restoration into suitable areas – some of which would be slow to recover on their own. They predict 994 hectares (377% increase from 2021) of maximum clam farm area, with only 2% to 11% of maximum area overlapping between seagrass and clam beds. Notably, with future expansion, more overlap is predicted for each system with Baylor Grounds (designated for public harvest).

Industry growth outside areas of conflict (i.e. Baylor Grounds and seagrass meadows) could bring in an additional \$184.5 million (above the \$57.8 million in clam landings in 2021). The number could be higher if protections for seagrass were reduced or if Baylor Grounds were redrawn to more accurately align with existing reefs, resulting in an estimated 583 acres added to available clam-farming areas (and not suitable for seagrass).

Thanks to this state- and federally funded research, it is now clearer that, on Virginia’s seaside, we can support expanding aquaculture while also preserving seagrass habitat that serves as the nursery for fisheries species. Ensuring this coexistence is vital, as aquaculture has been identified as one of the best approaches for meeting the food demands of our growing human population.

Article Source

This article summarizes the research published in:

Breitenbeck GA, Johnston CJ, Wilcox DJ, et al. Bottom-use conflicts in shallow coastal zones: Hard clam (*Mercenaria mercenaria*) aquaculture and restored seagrass (*Zostera marina*). *Estuaries and Coasts* 48, 154 (2025).

The study, led by VIMS, leverages data sets collected by VIMS, the National Agriculture Imagery Program (NAIP), VMRC, Rutgers University, the Long-Term Ecological Research (LTER) program in Oyster, and others. Read the full research paper at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12237-025-01593-2>.





RECYCLING CORNER

By Sue Mastyl

Have You Made Your Recycling Resolutions Yet?

Every New Year, many of us come up with our resolutions – ways we’re going to do better in our lives. We shouldn’t overlook our recycling practices as we form these resolutions. Here are a few suggestions –

Switch Products

You can lessen your impact on the environment by changing the products you purchase and use every day. Some examples are –

- Paper products (toilet paper, paper towels, napkins, printing paper) – instead of buying products made from virgin paper (i.e., forests), look for those with recycled content or alternative material like bamboo. Or switch to cloth napkins and cloth rags – maybe even make the leap to a bidet!
- Single-use plastics – bring your own drink bottle/coffee container, ideally metal.

Recycle More

Try adding new categories to your regular recycling routines. Got the basic paper/cans/bottles regimen down? You can expand to make sure you’re recycling everything in those categories, including cardboard, magazines, metal cans and aluminum pie plates, and every #1 and #2 plastic bottle. Then, think about expanding to the following (keep in mind that you’ll have to keep each of these sorted separately, so make sure you have the room; you can find the details of where to recycle these at <https://www.cbes.org/recycling>) –

- Plastic film, including grocery bags, plastic overwrap (e.g., for toilet paper, paper towels), bread bags, dry cleaning bags, Ziploc bags, cereal liners
- Glass bottles and jars (all colors)
- E-recycling for electronics and used cell phones
- Hazardous waste
- Yard waste, including branches, brush, and grass clippings

You can also consider starting a compost pile, to reduce the food waste we send to the landfill.

Reduce and Reuse

The first steps in the “recycling mantra” are to end up with fewer items to recycle in the first place, by reducing what we purchase, or reusing (or repairing) what we already have. You could start by bringing your own bags to the store, or not using produce bags unless they’re really needed. Make it a habit to stop and think, “Do I really need this?” before every new purchase.

From Dream to Reality: 2026 Community Unity Day

By Friends of the Do Drop Inn and Jane Cabarrus

Launch Party January 17, Soup for Seniors January 19

For nearly 40 years, the Northampton County Branch NAACP, Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore, and Northampton County Public Schools have come together to celebrate Community Unity Day in observance of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday. Inspired by Dr. King’s dream, this annual tradition has honored his legacy of justice, love, and equality through collective action and community connection.



Past Community Unity participants circle and sing at the courthouse. Photo by Watts Photography

This vital partnership was a key initiative of CBES founding president, the late Suzanne Wescoat, and Jane Cabarrus, President of the Northampton County Branch of the NAACP.

In the early years, school marching bands and youth led the way, carrying banners bearing Dr. King’s words as neighbors gathered to “Walk for Unity and Good Health” from Bethel AME Church to the Eastville Courthouse green and back again, where hot chocolate and snacks awaited. Through thoughtful discussion and advocacy, the Northampton County Public School Board later designated Dr. King’s birthday as “a day on, not a day off.”

One of the first speakers under this observance was then-new Superintendent Dr. S. Dawn Goldstine, joined by her late husband James “Jim” Goldstine. In the years that followed, Community Unity Day continued to grow. At the suggestion of Dr. King’s friend, the late Rev. Edward Whitaker, the tradition expanded to include the Community Unity Breakfast, which became one of the largest and most diverse gatherings on Virginia’s Eastern Shore.

As we gathered around tables guided by leaders such as Suzanne Wescoat, Jane G. Cabarrus, and members of the NAACP, we were grounded in Dr. King’s reminder that “whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.” Together, we believed that unity, peace, civil rights, and human rights could flourish here on the ESVA

What Are You Doing for Others? Soup for Seniors

When COVID shut down large gatherings, Dr. King’s poignant question, “What are you doing for others?” stirred the partners to come up with an alternative to the Breakfast. Cabarrus, CBES, local sororities, and a diverse alliance joined forces to prepare deliveries of fresh soup to those living in low-wealth communities in Northampton County. Soup for Our Unified People – AKA Soup for Seniors – continues in 2026 on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, January 19, from 11 AM to 1 PM at the Do Drop Inn, Weirwood.

See **From Dream to Reality**, Cont’d on p. 9

With the holidays over, it is also a nice way to show seniors that their contributions to our Shore have not been forgotten.

Launch Party: Community Unity - Building Bridges Together

New this year, the Friends of the Do Drop Inn will host **Community Unity – Building Bridges Together** event on January 17, 2026, at 6 PM at the Do Drop Inn, launching the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday weekend with an evening of music, remembrance, and celebration in support of this historic community landmark.

The Legendary Giddens’ Do Drop Inn has been family-owned since 1967, when the late Lloyd and Annie Maude Baines Giddens opened its doors to all. Lloyd H. Giddens Sr. often said, “When the Do Drop Inn’s doors swing open, remember – you are the hinges.” For decades, the Do Drop Inn has served not only as a business, but also as a vital and diverse gathering place, enriching lives through its deep commitment to community.

As Jane Giddens Cabarrus shared, “Our father built the Do Drop Inn with his own hands and a dream. His dream became a reality. It has been said that the power is not in the destination, but in the journey.” That journey has included performances by nationally known and beloved local artists. Learn more about the Do Drop Inn and its rich history by watching the *Curate 757* episode profiling this historic community landmark:

<https://www.pbs.org/video/the-do-drop-inn-bk87xn/>.

Community partner WESR/Shore Daily News radio (103.3 FM) will host an hour-long **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration** starting at 9 AM on January 19.

Soup for Seniors welcomes sponsorships, as well as volunteers, to help serve our community. Doors open for volunteers at 9 AM on January 19 at the Do Drop Inn, 8204 Bayford Road, Weirwood. For more information, contact CBES: info@cbes.org or 757-678-7157.



KEEPING TRACK

Appeal Scheduled For Vaulted Deep Proposal

As we described in the November 2025 *ShoreLine* (“Deep Injection Wells: Proposal Raises Questions”), Houston-based Vaulted Deep is proposing to locate a series of deep injection wells in northern Accomack County to permanently sequester industrial poultry waste and excess manure in 6,000-foot-deep wells.

Part of the permitting process will require approval from the county; Accomack County staff had previously determined that the project would not be allowed under the current Zoning Ordinance. Vaulted Deep has submitted an appeal of the county’s decision, which will be heard by the Accomack County Board of Zoning Appeals at their March 4, 2026, meeting at 10:00 AM.

We will keep CBES members apprised of additional developments for this proposal.

Chocolate Butter Tarts

There’s no point waiting for Valentine’s Day – these Canadian delights warm up winter weather all season long. Make your favorite pie crust or use refrigerated dough to save a little time – the filling is the star here. Bars of baking chocolate work best – but semi-sweet chocolate chips would work in a pinch. Recipe is easily doubled.

- 12 unbaked pie crust tart shells (3")
- 4 squares, 1 oz each, from unsweetened baking chocolate bar
- ¾ cup packed light brown sugar
- ¼ cup corn syrup
- 1 egg
- 2 tbsp soft butter
- 1 tsp white vinegar
- 1 tsp vanilla
- Pinch of salt



Crust

From rolled-out pie crust, cut 12 circles, 3" each. Lightly spray small tart pan with cooking spray and insert tarts into pan. Prick bottoms lightly with a fork, place on baking sheet, and bake at 350° until golden brown – 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool completely before filling.

Filling

Chop 3 of the 4 chocolate squares into small pieces and place evenly in bottom of each tart. Reserve last chocolate square. Whisk the remaining ingredients until smooth – then fill tart shells about ¾ full. In a preheated 450° oven, bake tarts on baking sheet until filling is bubbling – about 12 minutes. Let cool. Melt the remaining 1 oz square of chocolate and drizzle a little over each tart.

Mary Miller: The Kitchen Hive

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General Assembly Bills, Cont'd from p. 6

Shore General Assembly Members

Delegate Robert Bloxom, House District 100, is not noted as pre-filing any Bills for the 2026 Session. Among the 4 Bills noted pre-filed by Senator Bill DeSteph, representing Senate District 8, which includes the Eastern Shore, is **SB 11**. This Bill would repeal the statute prohibiting food vendors and certain restaurants from dispensing prepared food to a customer in a single-use expanded polystyrene food service container.

The 2026 General Assembly Session will convene at noon on Wednesday, January 14, in Richmond. The Session will last 60 days. For additional information on any of these pre-filed Bills, go to <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-search> and enter the bill ID in the search bar.



Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore
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And the Raffle Winners Are...

**2025 Between the Waters
painting by**

Bethany Durham:

Joe Dunn, Winter Garden, FL

**Garmin Bike Computer
& Radar:**

Steve Jarboe, Silver Spring, MD

**Bike Tour Survey Drawing
for 2 Free Bike Tour 2026**

Registrations:

John Maddock, Henrico, VA

**33rd Between the Waters Bike
Tour is October 24, 2026
in Wachapreague, VA**

Registration Opens April 1st

Sign Up:

2026 BTW Bike Tour Notification List
on www.CBES.org/bike-tour

Community Unity – Building Bridges Together

DATE: JANUARY 17, 2026

DOORS OPEN: 6:00 PM



LIVE MUSIC:

Willie C. and the Gang

Hors d'oeuvres served

Donation: \$25

to support repairs to the Do Drop Inn

Legendary Giddens' Do Drop Inn

8204 Bayford Road

Weirwood, Virginia

Hosted by the Friends of the Do Drop Inn

**For more information, contact Jane Cabarrus:
janeCabarrus@aol.com or phone: 804-513-0532**