

Create A More Resilient Commonwealth

The Commonwealth has taken great strides in recent years to advance policy initiatives that have improved water quality and resilience, including developing and funding the Community Flood Preparedness Fund (CFPF). The fund was established to provide support for regions and localities across Virginia to reduce the impacts of flooding, including flooding driven by climate change. The fund prioritizes projects that are in concert with local, state, and federal floodplain management standards, local resilience plans, and the Virginia Coastal Resilience Master Plan. The fund empowers communities to complete vulnerability assessments and develop action-oriented approaches to bolster flood preparedness and increase resilience. To continue our efforts to create a more resilient Commonwealth that protects human health and livelihoods, as well as our natural environment, **CBF urges legislators to invest \$100 million annually in the CFPF.**

CFPF has seen success, with four rounds of funding completed, helping communities around the Commonwealth prepare for the impacts of climate change. However, the CFPF is not open to Virginia's tribal entities, leaving these communities out of efforts to enhance their lands so they are more resilient. **CBF urges legislators to support HB 2077 (Krizek) which modifies CFPF guidelines to allow federally-recognized tribal governments to have access to the funding.**

One of the best ways to protect our shoreline infrastructure from storm surge and erosion due to the impacts of climate change is by creating more living shorelines. Compared to hardened shorelines, living shorelines offer cleaner water and better shoreline habitat for wildlife. Most importantly, a living shoreline is an erosion prevention tactic that has the ability to adapt to changing water levels and increased storm activity resulting from climate change. This is critical in today's environment, where more intense storms and record rainfalls are resulting in increased soil erosion, flooding, and polluted runoff.

Legislators have recognized the importance of living shorelines in our work to make the Commonwealth more resilient. The 2020 General Assembly passed a law to require the use of living shorelines unless the best available science shows that they would be not suitable on the site.

While many folks would like—or are required—to build a living shoreline, they do not have a means to do so. **We urge legislators to create a Living Shoreline Fund by supporting HB 1950 (Hernandez) and HB 2453 (Hodges), as well as allocating \$20 million to the new fund to support the addition of large-scale living shoreline projects in our fight against the impacts of climate change.**

For more information, contact
Jay Ford • 757-971-2600 • jford@cbf.org



Across the globe and here in Virginia, we are facing the biggest environmental issue of our time: climate change. More powerful storms increase water pollution from runoff and stream erosion, while causing flooding and destroying infrastructure that is costly to repair. Climate change also helps exacerbate droughts, making conditions like those seen this summer worse for our farmers, from the Shenandoah Valley to the Eastern Shore.

All parts of the state are feeling the impacts of climate change. The Hampton Roads region could see as much as a three- to four-foot sea level rise this century, putting many coastal areas at increasing risk—with some expected to be uninsurable or uninhabitable. This area, home to Virginia's largest city, a robust tourist economy, and several military installations, has the highest rate of sea level rise on the East Coast and the second highest in the nation. At the same time, this area is facing high land subsidence rates. This convergence of circumstances leads to increased flooding and increased risks to our critical infrastructure, our homes, our economy, and our way of life.

On the other side of the state, residents and local governments in Buchanan and Tazewell counties are still struggling to recover after record rainfall hit the area in the summers of 2021 and 2022, destroying or damaging scores of homes in the area. The recovery challenges were recently compounded by devastating flooding from Hurricane Helene in 2024.

We must act now to prepare the Commonwealth to be more resilient in the face of climate change. Restoring wetlands and marshes, installing living shorelines, planting trees and preserving existing forests, and building healthy soils all increase resilience. And the good news is that much of the work done to make us more resilient to climate change also helps us improve water quality in our local rivers and streams, as well as the Chesapeake Bay.

Many coastal communities in the Commonwealth are working with federal partners to conduct Coastal Storm Risk Management (CSRM) studies to identify and respond to flooding risks. While federal funding can help with implementation of protections derived from these studies, localities are required to provide significant local matching funds for which many localities are likely to seek state support. **Legislators should support HB 1949 (Hernandez) which directs the Office of Commonwealth Resilience to study the criteria needed to assign responsibility between the state and localities for each entities' portion of the cost of CSRM feasibility studies and plan implementation. Similarly, legislators should support HJ 434 (Feggans), directing the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) to study how localities and others should monetarily contribute to CSRM studies—and whether a separate fund should be created to support these studies.**

Legislators should also support HJ 437 (Convirs-Fowler), which reestablishes the Joint Subcommittee of Recurrent Flooding.



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION
Saving a National Treasure

JANUARY 2025