

Building Resiliency: Norfolk Restores Tidal Wetlands Converting an Eyesore Into A Valuable Neighborhood Asset

Project Summary: Responding to sea level rise and recurrent flooding that left a large portion of Myrtle Park with degraded aesthetics and recreational function, the Department of Public Works removed a concrete seawall and restored wetlands and ecosystem services to provide a demonstration site for living shoreline erosion control techniques.

Project Name: Myrtle Park Wetland Restoration Project

Location: Cove bounded by Richmond and Surrey Crescents, west of Hampton Boulevard, Norfolk, VA



Background: In its heyday, Myrtle Park was an attractive neighborhood waterfront park characterized by majestic live oak trees and broad green open spaces. In recent decades however, sea level rise and recurrent tidal flooding changed the character of the park. The existing concrete seawall fell into disrepair and saltwater killed lawn grasses. Where wetland plants did not survive, large barren muddy areas formed.

Approximate Cost of the Project: \$230,452 (not including the pedestrian bridge)

Resource Challenges Addressed: Unnecessarily-hardened shoreline and deteriorating concrete seawall, recurrent flooding, ponding saltwater that killed vegetation and left areas unstabilized and muddy, reduced recreational functionality and aesthetics, diminished water quality and wildlife habitat value, and land-use management.

Key Partners (Public and Private): Funding was provided by the Department of Public Works and the project was completed by a private contractor. Once the vegetation matured and the project was stable, goose fencing was harvested for reuse by volunteers and stored at a City facility for future public projects. The US Army Corps of Engineers provided regulatory assistance and guidance.

Types of Jobs Created: Environmental engineering services, marine contracting, wetland planting/landscaping contractual service, heavy equipment rental, businesses that supply wood stakes, plastic fencing, sand, geotextile fabric, stone, fuel, etc., and specialty wetland plant suppliers.

Results and Accomplishments: Construction began in November 2013. The contractor used an innovative cofferdam system to both contain the sand necessary for site grading and create the dry conditions that optimized excavation of the tidal pond and placement of the stone sill. The site was planted in early April 2014 and goose fencing was installed to prevent plant losses due to grazing. Plant cover grew so vigorously that goose fencing was able to be removed in August 2014 and stockpiled for future use on other projects. Comments by local residents have been



overwhelmingly positive especially in support of restoring the recreational value of the park. Myrtle Park is now a destination for walkers, cyclists, and wildlife photographers. Neighborhood children have reclaimed the open green spaces. The project removed an unnecessary hard structure and stabilized the shoreline. The project provided new recreational amenities including new footpaths and an observation bridge over lush wetlands. The 24,662 sq. ft. of new wetlands have become a beautiful neighborhood amenity. The wetlands will enhance water quality and wildlife habitat, and, most of all, they will help the city meet its required pollution reduction (TMDL) goals.

Website: [public works]

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