

# TIDELINES



News & Notes From the Hampton Roads Office of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation

APRIL 2024

## Virginia General Assembly Session Concludes

Throughout the 2024 Virginia legislative session, lawmakers showed historic support for critical environmental issues, including bills that conserve trees, ban toxic products, and strengthen climate resiliency.

Virginia continues to lose tree canopy at an alarming rate due to development, road expansions, energy infrastructure, and other causes. To stem the loss, CBF supported several successful legislative initiatives, including House Bill 529 (Hope, D-1), which provides all localities with the authority to establish tree replacement requirements. Currently, localities have limited authority to require developers to replace a higher percentage of trees that are cleared for construction. House Bill 1100 (Carr, D-78) enables statewide adoption of tree conservation language, which is currently limited to the Northern Virginia region. House Bill 459 (Sullivan, D-6) and Senate Bill 121 (Subramanyam, D-32) provide incentives to preserve mature trees and add flexibility for tree funds. House Bill 309 (Hope, D-1) and Senate Bill 461 (Marsden, D-35), dubbed the Forest Conservation Act, will charge the state with creating a baseline canopy assessment. All of these bills passed out of the House and Senate and now are at the governor's desk for consideration.

CBF urged the General Assembly to support House Bill 985 (Tran, D-18), which prohibits the sale and use of toxic pavement sealants in Virginia as a cost-effective way to prevent toxic pollution from entering our waterways and harming our children and wildlife. This type of sealant typically contains about 1,000 times more polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) than sealant products with an asphalt base. PAHs are known to cause cancer, birth defects, and mutations to aquatic life. For the first time since being introduced three years ago, this bill successfully passed both



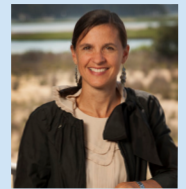
CBF staff and partners celebrate with Delegate Kathy Tran (center, in yellow) after passage of House Bill 985, which bans the sale and use of toxic pavement sealants.

chambers and now awaits the governor's signature to become state law.

We strongly supported budget amendments that direct Virginia to rejoin the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), a market-based program to cap and reduce carbon emissions from power generators. Virginia was a member until recently. Proceeds from RGGI participation support the Community Flood Preparedness Fund, which provides grants to localities across the state—from Winchester to Hampton, Danville to Fairfax—to build desperately needed resilience against coastal and inland flooding. This language was included in the final conference report of budget amendments approved by both chambers and awaits the governor's action.

CBF also encouraged legislators to unify state agencies' climate change resources by supporting House Bill 1458 (Hernandez, D-94). We're pleased that this critical legislation was approved by the Senate and House and now awaits the governor's signature. Once signed into law, this legislation will create the Office of Commonwealth Resilience, increase transparency and oversight over the distribution of resilience funds, and ensure local and state officials can maximize federal, state, and private flood mitigation funding opportunities.

From the Desk of  
**Christy Everett**  
HAMPTON ROADS  
DIRECTOR



Earlier this year, CBF filed a legal brief supporting a request to suspend Virginia's withdrawal from RGGI. The brief emphasizes the importance of RGGI in providing consistent and dedicated funding to community flood prevention projects that prioritize nature-based resiliency solutions across Virginia. These projects reduce the impacts of sea level rise and flooding as well as improve water quality.

Virginia joined RGGI in 2020 through legislation passed in the General Assembly; however, last year, Governor Youngkin repealed the regulations that govern Virginia's participation in RGGI, leading to a lawsuit challenging the withdrawal, filed by the Southern Environmental Law Center.

RGGI sets a regional limit on carbon dioxide emissions from power plants. Each plant must pay for each ton of carbon dioxide it emits. The emissions cap lowers over time, leading to cleaner air and less pollution to waterways.

As mentioned in the story to the left, legislators also support Virginia rejoining RGGI, as in just two years, the initiative raised more than \$600 million, allowing Virginia to award \$97.7 million for community flood prevention projects.

*Christy Everett*



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION  
Saving a National Treasure

## Collaboration is Key to Adding Oysters to the Bay

The Chesapeake Oyster Alliance (COA) recently announced it has recorded a new total of six billion oysters directly added to the Bay since 2017. COA's count aims to include all oysters directly added to the Bay and its tributaries through restoration and aquaculture. These efforts have now surpassed the halfway mark to the group's goal to promote adding 10 billion new oysters to the Bay by 2025.

Virginia saw an outstanding year for oyster aquaculture with about 119 million oysters recorded in the Commonwealth in 2023. Oyster aquaculture operations raise these oysters to sell to restaurants and consumers, supporting local economies while filtering water and creating habitat.

A significant number of oysters were also added through small-scale restoration work and the efforts of individuals and small businesses through programs like oyster gardening. These efforts are a great example of how the people and partners throughout the region have embraced the many benefits of oyster restoration and aquaculture. CBF founded COA to bring back oysters from historically low levels and the alliance now boasts 110 partners.

CBF staff in Virginia—and our volunteers—are contributing to COA's goal. In March, students



Students from Old Dominion University help build oyster cages as part of their Alternative Spring Break Experience.

and faculty from Old Dominion University came to CBF's Brock Environmental Center as part of their Alternative Spring Break Experience. The group toured our campus and oyster restoration barges, unloaded about 40 bushels of shell, organized cages to be cleaned and repaired, and built 47 new cages that will eventually house baby oysters for our upcoming oyster gardening season.

Also in March, volunteers joined us for some dirty work at Ocean Lakes High School. The group spent a few hours shoveling loose oyster shell from the public collection bin into 99 bushel baskets. And our awesome volunteers attended the Chuckatuck Ruritan Club's oyster roast, collecting 72 bushels of shell from oysters enjoyed by more than 700 guests. All these recycled shells will be used for our restoration efforts this summer.

## Nansemond Indian Nation Plants 450 Trees

In early March, CBF had the privilege of working with the Nansemond Indian Nation (NIN) and the Virginia Department of Forestry to plant 450 native trees at Mattanock Town, the NIN ancestral property situated on the Nansemond River and Cedar Creek.

This tree planting is one of the many projects that the NIN has planned to help restore the land and reconnect their people to the local waterways. More than 45 volunteers from the local community, as well as representatives from the Nansemond River Preservation

Alliance, the Elizabeth River Project, and other neighboring tribes came together to support the NIN in their restoration efforts.

To learn about the NIN, please visit their website at [nansemond.gov](http://nansemond.gov).



A volunteer helps plant a tree at Mattanock Town.

## CBF in the Community RESTORATION

### Shell Recycling Program

CBF's Virginia Shell Recycling program collaborates with nearly 40 restaurants across the Commonwealth and collects more than 2,500 bushels of shell a year! We are looking for volunteers to help collect shells from area restaurants. To get involved, contact Ryan Westpfahl at [rwestpfahl@cbf.org](mailto:rwestpfahl@cbf.org).

## COMMUNITY

### VoiCeS Adult Education Class

Monday evenings, April 8, 15, 22, and 29  
5:00–7:00 p.m.

Ivy Baptist Church

50 Maple Avenue, Newport News

Join CBF for our Volunteers as Chesapeake Stewards (VoiCeS) adult education class. The course will feature different expert speakers each week. We will learn about a variety of topics impacting Newport News and the greater Bay watershed. To register, contact Lisa Renée Jennings at [ljennings@cbf.org](mailto:ljennings@cbf.org).

### Student Leadership Summer Expeditions

These multi-day, in-person, overnight experiences are open to rising 9th–12th graders. Expeditions primarily take place outdoors where participants explore different parts of the watershed and engage with CBF staff, field experts, and scientists. Courses scheduled for July and August. Register by April 19 at [cbf.org/studentleadership](http://cbf.org/studentleadership).

### Hampton Mosaic Festival

Saturday, April 20

Morning shift: 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Afternoon shift: 1:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.

Mill Point Park

100 Eaton Street, Hampton

Help CBF staff a table at this community event. Contact Lisa Renée Jennings at [ljennings@cbf.org](mailto:ljennings@cbf.org) to sign up for a shift.

### Suffolk Earth & Art Festival

Saturday, April 20

Morning shift: 10:00 a.m.–1:30 p.m.

Afternoon shift: 1:30 p.m.–5:00 p.m.

Main Street & Washington Street, Suffolk

Help CBF staff a table at this community event. Contact Lisa Renée Jennings at [ljennings@cbf.org](mailto:ljennings@cbf.org) to sign up for a shift.



**CHESAPEAKE BAY  
FOUNDATION**

*Saving a National Treasure*

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