

TIDELINES



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

JULY 2025

36th Annual Clean the Bay Day a Success!

On June 7, more than 3,000 volunteers gathered at over 200 sites throughout Virginia to pick up more than 60,000 pounds of litter as part of CBF's Clean the Bay Day. Clean the Bay Day is the state's largest and longest-running litter cleanup. Since 1989, Clean the Bay Day has engaged more than 177,000 volunteers who have removed 7.1 million pounds of debris from across the state.

Sponsors for Clean the Bay Day include our Title Sponsor, PRA Group; our Presenting Sponsor, Edward Jones; our Blue Crab Sponsor, The Port of Virginia; and our Oyster Sponsors, AECOM, Froehling & Robertson, Cox Communications, East Coast Appliance, High Liner Foods, MEB, Ulliman Schutte-Alberici Joint Venture, Workshop Digital, and WSP.

As usual, the most common items found during this year's cleanup were plastic and glass bottles, plastic wrappers, and plastic bags. This year's litter removal played a critical role in mitigating the pervasive threat of microplastics. Litter, especially plastic, doesn't just disappear. It breaks down



Volunteers celebrate after picking up litter at Northside Park in Norfolk at Clean the Bay Day.

into smaller and smaller pieces, known as microplastics. More than 90 percent of microplastics that enter the Bay stay in the Bay. These microplastics can be ingested by fish and animals in the water, entering the food chain and potentially harming wildlife and even human health. Additionally, larger debris can entangle animals and degrade the natural beauty of the Bay and our local waterways.

Among the volunteers at Clean the Bay Day were many elected officials, community leaders, service members, Scout groups, small businesses, large corporations, and thousands of other Virginians.

CBF Hosts Lecture Featuring Indigenous Leaders

This June, CBF hosted a panel discussion titled, *Virginia Tribes and the Path to Climate Resilience*, featuring Chief Frank Adams of the Upper Mattaponi Tribe, Reggie Stewart of the Chickahominy Tribe, and Dave Hennaman of the Nansemond Indian Nation. The tribal leaders shared their insights into the environmental threats their communities face across the region, as well as Indigenous-led efforts to protect land, water, and cultural heritage. The CBF Climate Lecture Series, sponsored by Cox Communications, CMA CGM, and Planetary Technologies, brings together community members to share their expertise on the pressing issues surrounding climate change and its impact on the Bay. Join us for our next lecture on July 8 when experts will explore the growing challenges of urban heat islands and the critical role that urban tree canopy plays in enhancing community resilience. To register, visit events.cbf.org/treecanopy.



Indigenous leaders participate in a panel discussion on climate change.

From the Desk of
Christy Everett
HAMPTON ROADS
DIRECTOR



While Chesapeake Bay health declined in 2024 compared to the previous year, the Bay's health remains on a long-term upward trend, according to the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science's (UMCES) 2025 Chesapeake Bay and Watershed Report Card released in June.

UMCES identified extreme weather from drought and heavy storms in 2024 as a possible reason for the decline. Intense rainfall on hard, dry soil leads to runoff that washes pollution into streams, rivers, and the Bay. Climate change is intensifying extreme weather, leading to both stronger storms and more severe droughts.

The release of the report card comes as the Trump administration rolls back climate change work and proposes slashing funding to federal agencies and programs that support Chesapeake Bay restoration and are instrumental in monitoring progress. This year is also pivotal as leaders around the region work to update the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, which since the 1980s has guided federal-state efforts to restore the Chesapeake Bay.

For more than two decades, CBF and UMCES have each independently produced two of the most respected reports on the health of the Chesapeake Bay. In future years, the two organizations plan to collaborate more closely on this mission.

Christy Everett

Virginia Celebrates Major Oyster Milestone

In early June, partners celebrated the successful completion of commitments to restore oyster reef habitat in six Virginia Chesapeake Bay tributaries. This milestone marks Virginia's fulfillment of its portion of the Chesapeake Bay Program's ambitious goal to restore ten Bay tributaries with oyster reefs by 2025. In Virginia, those tributaries consist of the Lafayette, Piankatank, Great Wicomico, Elizabeth, Lynnhaven, and lower York rivers. The Maryland portion restored five tributaries. Cumulatively, more than 1,000 acres of oyster reefs are part of these projects.

The celebration highlighted the collective efforts that have revitalized oyster habitats across the Commonwealth, including recent work in the Lynnhaven River. Partners recognized for their collaboration in the Lynnhaven include the Commonwealth of Virginia, Lynnhaven River Now, CBF, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Norfolk District, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the City of Virginia Beach.

This oyster restoration success is a testament to years of dedicated work, scientific



CBF's Jessica Lutzow (facing camera) shows Lynnhaven oysters to attendees of a recent oyster event in Virginia Beach.

innovation, and unwavering partnership. Due to overharvesting and pollution, a decade ago oyster habitat in the Lynnhaven River remained at a fraction of its historic scale. Thanks to restoration efforts, the Lynnhaven now has 152 acres of new oyster reef that will enhance water quality and fishing while adding critical habitat for oysters, fish, crabs, and shrimp.

Funding from partners, including the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation under the Environmental Protection Agency's Chesapeake Bay Program, has been instrumental in supporting these restoration initiatives.

Blue Crab Population Drops to Distressing Low

Blue crabs in Maryland and Virginia have dipped to the second lowest number in recent history. The numbers, released in late May, come from the annual blue crab winter dredge survey conducted jointly by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science and Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

The 2025 survey estimated total crab abundance at 238 million, the second lowest since the surveys began in 1990. This comes just three years after an all-time low in 2022 of 226 million crabs.

Blue crab numbers can vary dramatically year by year, depending on weather trends, predator numbers, and habitat availability. The

loss of critical crab habitat, such as underwater grasses, as well as the rise of invasive predators like blue catfish, can threaten blue crabs. Other factors like climate change and polluted runoff can also be detrimental for young and spawning crabs.

Because of the blue crab's short lifespan, no single response can be the solution. Only a comprehensive and collaborative approach will improve the population. Given that, CBF urges Virginia to reduce its blue crab harvest, and consider additional protections for males, which have reached a historic low; and for the federal government to fully fund programs and agencies that support regional clean-water initiatives that protect blue crab habitat.

CBF in the Community RESTORATION

Oyster Gardening

Various dates and locations in July and August

Anyone with access to salty water can volunteer to grow an oyster garden. For workshop dates and locations, visit cbf.org/vaoystergardening.

Pine Cone Harbour Living Shoreline Project

Various dates in July

Pine Cone Harbour Condominiums
240 B Dockside Drive, Hampton

Join CBF and other volunteers to help install a living shoreline along the Hampton River. Register for one or more days by visiting cbf.org/pinecone.

COMMUNITY

CBF Climate Lecture Series: Cooling Our Cities with Tree Canopy

Tuesday, July 8

6:30-7:30 p.m.

CBF's Brock Environmental Center
3663 Marlin Bay Drive, Virginia Beach

Join us as we explore the growing challenges of urban heat islands, how climate change intensifies these effects, and the critical role that urban tree canopy plays in cooling cities, improving air quality, and enhancing community resilience. Visit events.cbf.org/treecanopy to register.

VoiCeS Adult Education Class

Wednesdays, July 9-August 13

6:00-8:00 p.m.

Online via Zoom

Held virtually over six consecutive Wednesday evenings, this interactive course features expert speakers covering a wide range of environmental topics relevant to Virginia, plus chances to get out in the field. To register, visit events.cbf.org/vavoices25.

Virginia Rod & Reef Slam

Saturday, September 13

9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Hampton University

Registration opens August 1 for CBF's fishing event. To learn more, visit events.cbf.org/rodandreefopen.



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