

The Virginia Coastal Protection Act

SUPPORT HB 2205/SB 1428: Funds to Fight Flooding & Support Climate Resilience

The water is coming. Mayors, families, businesses, and all who live and visit Hampton Roads know that flooding has become one of the most challenging public policy issues facing coastal Virginia. The increased warming, expanding, and rising of ocean waters due to climate change, combined with the area's sinking land, will cause an additional 1.5 feet of sea level rise in the next 20 to 50 years and as much as 7.5 feet by century's end, according to the Virginia Institute of Marine Science. ⁱ It's time for collective action.

Communities Are Getting Wet. It's Getting Worse. And We Need Solutions Now.

Lawmakers from both parties have acknowledged the need for action to combat sea level rise. But action is not possible without a dedicated source of funding.

As a win-win solution, Virginia should join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), which will provide crucial funds for adaptation measures in Hampton Roads while lowering emissions of heat-trapping pollution. Half of the revenues generated from the sale of carbon allowances will help fund coastal climate resilience efforts. The other half will support economic development in Southwest Virginia, and clean energy and efficiency investments all over the Commonwealth.

Support for Action

The 2014 General Assembly unanimously passed legislation (HJ 16/SJ 3) to create a joint subcommittee to recommend adaptation solutions. We now need funds to implement them.

Fund Flooding Solutions for Our Coast

The Dutch engineering firm Fugro estimates that Norfolk needs at least \$1 billion to fully adapt to the flooding threat posed by climate change. ⁱⁱ The billion dollar price tag equals Norfolk's entire annual operating budget. ⁱⁱⁱ The cost of protecting the entire region's 1.7 million citizens, business community, and military assets will be much higher, requiring immediate action and significant investments.

Invest in Clean Energy and Efficiency

Virginia lags far behind neighboring states in solar energy development and does not have a single wind farm. **We have also reduced energy use by less than 1% below 2006 levels—well off the pace of reaching the state's goal of reducing energy use by 10% by 2022.** ^{iv} New funding investments in these areas will help Virginia catch up in these growing clean energy industries.

Stimulate Job Growth in Southwest

Historically low natural gas prices have led to even lower levels of coal production in a region heavily dependent on it. **The Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority (VCEDA) created more than 1,100 new jobs and \$26 million in economic investments in 2013 while receiving less than \$10 million in new revenue.** ^v More funds will mean more opportunities to aid families and businesses in SW Virginia.

Reduce Harmful Carbon Emissions

The federal Clean Power Plan requires Virginia to cut its carbon emissions by 38% below 2012 levels by the year 2030. By joining RGGI, Virginia can position itself to meet future pollution limits in a cost-effective way. The program encourages more efficiency from fossil-fuel plants and supports the growth of less carbon-intensive energy sources, particularly solar and wind.

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative: How It Works



RGGI is a cooperative effort of nine East Coast states from Maine to Maryland that caps and reduces carbon emissions from power plants. Under RGGI, power plants in participating states purchase allowances for every ton of carbon pollution that they emit.

RGGI states agree amongst themselves how many pollution allowances to offer for sale each year, thus setting a cap on emissions, and they gradually lower the cap each year. **It's a flexible, market-based system: once states set the carbon cap, power plants decide how to stay below it.** Revenue from the auction of pollution allowances goes back to the state to fund carbon reduction programs and other initiatives.

The Virginia Coastal Protection Act: In Detail

The Virginia Coastal Protection Act would require Governor McAuliffe to join Virginia into the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative and authorize Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality to establish guidelines for Virginia's participation in RGGI by June 30, 2016.

The act creates the Commonwealth Resilience Fund, a dedicated source of revenue to help localities fund coastal adaptation and climate resilience efforts. The fund will hold all proceeds from RGGI auctions and will accept additional appropriations made by the General Assembly. The act specifies that the funds be appropriated in the following manner:

- Hampton Roads Coastal Adaptation Efforts – 50%
- Statewide Energy Efficiency & Clean Energy Programs – 35%
- Southwest Virginia Economic Development Assistance – 10%
- RGGI Programmatic Expenses – 5%

RGGI = Revenue

Virginia's participation in RGGI is projected to raise **more than \$200 million per year** by 2020 in auction allowances.

THE SOLUTION:

Virginia can generate millions of dollars annually to fight climate change impacts and protect citizens from sea level rise by joining RGGI, a regional collaboration to reduce greenhouse gas pollution. Revenue associated with the sale of pollution auction permits will fund adaptation solutions in Hampton Roads, economic development assistance in Southwest Virginia, and clean energy and efficiency programs throughout the Commonwealth.

ⁱ http://ccrm.vims.edu/recurrent_flooding/Recurrent_Flooding_Study_web.pdf

ⁱⁱ http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/in-norfolk-evidence-of-climate-change-is-in-the-streets-at-high-tide/2014/05/31/fe3ae860-e71f-11e3-8f90-73e071f3d637_story.html

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.norfolk.gov/DocumentCenter/View/16480>

^{iv} <http://www.wiseenergyforvirginia.org/new-power/efficiency-first/>

^v http://www.vaceda.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/AnnualReport_.pdf



TAKE ACTION! If we're serious about protecting Hampton Roads from sea level rise, we must first dedicate revenue to fund adaptation. To get involved, contact: Dawone Robinson, Virginia Policy Director, at dawone@chesapeakeclimate.org or 804-767-8983. Learn more at chesapeakeclimate.org/virginia/safe-coast/