



Eastern Shore Tourism Strategic Plan

Developed with assistance by:

Officially Adopted on:
August 21, 2024



Acknowledgements

This action plan is a direct result of a series of three planning sessions hosted by the Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission (ESVATC), where key community stakeholders came together, all working towards the same goal of expanding economic activity on the Eastern Shore and growing the tourism sector. Due to the nature of the tourism industry, it takes a great deal of focus and determination from a community to dedicate time to creating a tourism action plan and with that in mind, a great deal of appreciation is given to those who attended the two sessions.

Name	Organization
Frank "Jay" Abella	Director, Cape Charles Main Street Board Co-Chair of Economic Vitality Committee Senior Vice President, Investment Partners Asset Management
Karen Belknap	Owner, Ten Good Sheep in the Historic Onancock School
James "Jim" Bell	Wachapreague Renaissance Chair, Planning Commission, Town of Wachapreague
Cara Burton	Owner, Burton Consulting Services Volunteer, VA250 Northampton local commission
Ami Butta	Vacation rental owner in Cape Charles
Anne Clark	Eastern Shore of Virginia Chamber of Commerce
John Coker	Chair, Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission Northampton County Board of Supervisors
Martina Coker	Master naturalist, Northampton County
Cherron Davis	New Church Welcome Center, Virginia Tourism Corporation
Jenny Gehman	Program Manager, Onancock Main Street
Tammy Holloway	Commissioner, Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission Council member, Cape Charles Town Council Owner, Bay Haven Inn of Cape Charles
Gary Jeffrey	Virginia Tourism Corporation
Aileen Joeckrel	Administrative Coordinator, Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission Council member, Wachapreague Town Council
Emily Machen	Director of Marketing, Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission
Ian McDonald	
Clarice MacGarvey	Commissioner, Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission Town of Exmore
Marina Pierce	
Steve Potts	Managing Partner, Bill's PRIME Seafood & Steaks
Will Russell	WESR
Robert Sabbatini	Executive Director, Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission
Evelyn Shotwell	Commissioner, Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission Executive Director, Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce
Sally Williams	Staff, Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission
Heather Williamson	Director of Destination Development, Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission
Karen Zamorski	Executive Director, Cape Charles Main Street

Laura Messer, Destination Development Manager with the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) Partnership Marketing division, facilitated the planning process and drafted this document with assistance and input from staff of the Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission.

Executive Summary

The Eastern Shore of Virginia (ESVA/Shore) is the easternmost part of the Commonwealth of Virginia separated from the mainland by the Chesapeake Bay due to an impact crater more than 35 million years ago. The impact crater was discovered in the late 1980s deep beneath the Chesapeake Bay and later confirmed in the early 1990s. ESVA is part of the Delmarva peninsula and is comprised of two counties, Accomack and Northampton. Within the two counties, there are more than 30 towns including the two most well-known Cape Charles and Chincoteague Island. Additional towns include Eastville, Exmore, Onancock, Parksley, Saxis and Wachapreague. ESVA includes Tangier Island.

Surrounded by water, outdoor recreation and natural coastlines are key drivers of tourism on the Shore. The scenic views and natural beauty are the strongest assets of the Shore.

Following exceptional growth in tourism in part due to the pandemic, ESVA has reached summer-time capacity and should focus on driving visitors to travel during the shoulder seasons. Key marketing campaigns can support this initiative specifically focusing on outdoor recreation including wildlife viewing. The Shore is part of the Atlantic Flyway Migratory Bird Route and the migration of birds occurs during the shoulder seasons. Additional marketing towards niche audiences can expand tourism opportunities. More than 400 species of birds have been documented on the Eastern Shore by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service making it an ideal location for bird enthusiasts, both casual and experienced.

This tourism action plan provides measurable goals that take both tourism growth and the preservation of the Shore's unique character in mind. While the plan does not assign goals to any one person, it is vital that a collaborative approach take precedence due to limited staff and limited resources. The Eastern Shore of Virginia is fortunate to have supportive localities and non-profit organizations. If ESVA works in conjunction with local and regional partners, tourism will be successful. Furthermore, this plan lists numerous entrepreneurial gaps on the Shore. New tourism-related businesses will create new jobs and grow revenue within the local communities contributing to increased community vitality.

It is suggested that the stakeholders that participated in the development of this plan remain engaged with the ESVATC. Many of the goals within this plan must be coordinated in partnership with Accomack and Northampton Counties as well as towns and regional organizations.

ESVATC should focus on increased targeted marketing while continuing investment in tourism development including infrastructure and events that will extend visits on the Shore. Beautification of Route 13, the major throughway of the Shore, paired with increased wayfinding signage would support visitation to the small towns. For marketing, emphasis should be placed

on the shoulder seasons to contribute to a robust year-round experience for visitors while remaining mindful of not impacting the unique Eastern Shore culture and rural character.

In 2022 (latest data from VTC), visitors spent \$232.4 million on the Shore supporting dozens of businesses, creating more than 1,178 jobs, and generating approximately \$14.8 million in state and local taxes. Accomack County, which is larger portion of the Shore, has expenditures that are significantly higher than Northampton County. Tourism spending supports goods, services, facilities, and transportation that benefit residents of the Eastern Shore.

Note: Full economic impact data is available in the appendix of this document.

Multi-faceted Purpose:

ESVA Tourism Action Plan Vision Statement

Enhance the visitor’s welcoming experience by diversifying and expanding opportunities year-round while balancing economics and the environment.

ESVA Tourism Action Plan Mission Statement

The Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission will invite and inspire visitors to experience the natural beauty, culture, and heritage on Virginia’s natural coast.



Background

ESVA is a tranquil, natural coastline surrounded by the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean. With more than 70 miles of barrier islands, ESVA is a rural destination with rich history and heritage and unique culture. The Shore is comprised of two counties, Accomack and Northampton, with a combined population of 45,425 (United States Census Bureau, Census 2020 and 2020, 2021 Population Estimates), with a marginal decrease as of 2022 estimates of 44,965¹. Each county is about 35 miles in length although Accomack’s population is much larger than Northampton, which has approximately 12,000 residents.

Geography and History

ESVA is the easternmost part of the Commonwealth of Virginia separated from the mainland by the Chesapeake Bay due to an impact crater more than 35 million years ago. The impact crater was discovered in the late 1980s deep beneath the Chesapeake Bay and later confirmed in the early 1990s. ESVA is part of the Delmarva peninsula and is comprised of two counties, Accomack and Northampton. Within the two counties, there are more than 30 towns, villages, and hamlets including the two most well-known Cape Charles and Chincoteague Island. Additional towns include Cheriton, Eastville, Exmore, Nassawadox, Onancock, Parksley, Saxis and Wachapreague. ESVA includes Tangier Island.

The first recorded European visit to ESVA was Giovanni de Verrazano in 1524 followed by visits by Captain Bartholmew Gilbert in 1603 and Captain John Smith in 1608. The first permanent English colony on the Shore was settled by Thomas Savage in 1620 in what is now known as Cherrystone Creek in present Northampton County. Established in 1634 as Accomac Shire, the entire peninsula was one of eight original shires of Virginia. The name came from the Native American word, Accawmack which translates to “other shore.” In 1642, the name was changed to Northampton County and in 1663, it was split into modern day Accomack and Northampton Counties. Briefly, in 1670, the then governor abolished Accomac, as it was then spelled, but it was re-created in 1671. In 1940, the General Assembly modified the name to add a “k,” which remains the current and correct spelling.

Agriculture was the primary economic driver with timberland being cleared to plant crops. Food and tobacco were the primary commodities until the steamboat era in the 1840s, which allowed farmers to expand to commercial vegetable production. In 1884, the introduction of rail service allowed for further expansion of agriculture including exporting perishable items such as strawberries and seafood.

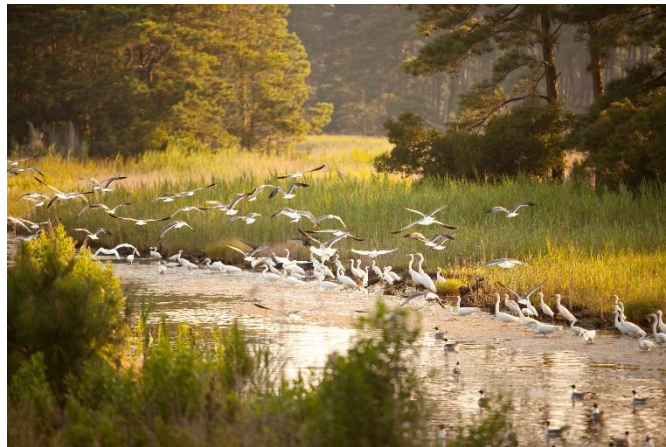
The barrier islands of ESVA played a major role in the Shore’s history and economy. There were once resorts, fishing villages and hunting lodges on the islands, but they are all now uninhabited. In 1933, a historic hurricane destroyed much of the permanent and transient lodging on the Barrier Islands due to 20-30 inches of rain before the storm’s landfall, and the buildings were not rebuilt.

The terrain of ESVA is mostly flat allowing for a variety of pedestrian uses including hiking and biking.

Transportation Transformation

ESVA is bordered by the Eastern Shore of Maryland to the north and has access to the mainland of the Commonwealth of Virginia due to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (CBBT). The CBBT is a 17.6 mile toll bridge that connects the Shore to Virginia Beach. With two single-lane tunnels, no stop signs, and no traffic lights, the CBBT was originally opened in 1964 after 42 months of construction. Previously, the Chesapeake Bay Ferry Service carried travelers across the Chesapeake Bay. Following the opening of the CBBT, the ferry service ceased to operate. The original CBBT was only two lanes and it was expanded in 1999 with a parallel crossing allowing

for four lanes of traffic, two in each direction. Currently, an expansion is underway creating an additional tunnel to allow for two lanes of traffic for the entire length of the CBBT.



Agriculture and Aquaculture

Data emphasizes the importance of agriculture and aquaculture on the Shore. According to data from the *2017 USDA Census of Agriculture*, Northampton had a total agriculture commodity sales total of \$95.9 million. Northampton County is the state leader in both total vegetable annual and total wheat annual sales with Accomack being the second largest for both. Northampton alone accounts for about 35% of all vegetable crop sales in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Northampton has the highest portion of aquaculture sales in the state with over \$28 million in sales for 2017. Accomack is the next largest producer with \$4 million in sales. Most of the aquaculture sales are from clam and oyster farms with addition sales from wild caught seafood (clams, oysters and finfish).

Natural Coastline and Barrier Islands

ESVA's natural areas and barrier islands are vital assets to the Shore. Large parcels of land on the Shore are government-managed conserved lands including a variety of National Wildlife Refuges, State Natural Area Preserves, State Parks, and State Wildlife Management Areas along with a National Seashore.

The barrier islands of ESVA represent the last undeveloped barrier island system on the Atlantic Coast. All the Shore barrier islands represent recreational opportunities including fishing, hunting, crabbing, clamming, hiking, boating, and bird watching. The Virginia Coast Reserve, 670 square miles of seaside marshes and barrier islands, is an ecological gem of international importance.

The *Accomack County Comprehensive Plan* states, "There are a number of publicly owned natural areas and wildlife management areas in Accomack County. Depending on which agency manages the property, these are available for wildlife observation, hiking, canoeing, fishing, and hunting. Public areas include the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, 750 acres at Parkers Marsh Natural Area and the 6,177 acre Saxis Wildlife Management Area."

The *Northampton County Comprehensive Plan* says, “Pristine waters, beautiful beaches, and breath-taking vistas not only enrich residents’ lives but have facilitated the burgeoning growth of ecotourism.” Northampton County has more than 2,000 acres in Virginia’s Natural Preserve System including three that are open to the public (Cape Charles, Savage Neck Dunes and Magothy Bay.)

The report, *Tourism Strategy for the Eastern Shore*, from 2008 states that the key differentiator of the Shore is the undeveloped coastlines and the unspoiled natural environment. These natural resources must be preserved and maintained.

The Shore is part of the Atlantic Flyway Migratory Bird Route, and the migration of birds occurs during shoulder season months. Additional marketing towards niche audiences, such as birders, can expand tourism opportunities. More than 400 species of birds have been documented on the Eastern Shore by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service making it an ideal location for bird enthusiasts, both casual and experienced. The Eastern Shore of Virginia should position itself as a premiere destination for birding.

Heritage and Culture

The Accomack County Comprehensive Plan states, “There are a number of sites in Accomack County that are on Virginia’s register of historic landmarks and the National Register of Historic Places. Properties included on these registers are historically, architecturally or culturally significant. Accomack County sites include Saint James Episcopal Church, Bowman’s Folly, Hopkins and Brother Store, Kerr Place, Wessels Root Cellar, Saint George’s Episcopal Church, Wharton Place, Assateague Lighthouse, the Mercantile Building, the Mason House, Pitts Neck Farm, the Debtor’s Prison, the Scarborough House Archaeological Site, the Edmond Bayly House, Shepherd’s Plain, Arbuckle Place, and the Assateague Beach Coast Guard Station. Also, the towns of Accomac and Onancock have state designated historic districts.”

Few regions of the United States feature so many distinct villages and hamlets near one another.

The unique heritage and cultural assets of ESVA provide a variety of authentic experiences that can be shared with visitors. Through the existing ESVA Museum Network, there are more than 30 sites and museums to visit including sites dedicated to maritime history. The history of watermen is another component of the unique heritage and culture of the Shore. More can be done to share the stories of the heritage and culture of the Shore.

Tangier Island

Tangier Island is located less than 14 miles off the coast of the Town of Onancock. It is just slightly more than half a square mile of land comprised of three ridges with lots of wetlands. Tangier is a part of Accomack. With a declining population of approximately 425 residents in 2023, residents speak a distinct dialect in part due to their isolation from the mainland. Tangier has lost about two-thirds of its landmass since 1850. Coastal erosion and sea level rise will likely cause Tangier to be abandoned in the next 30-50 years if erosion is not mitigated. Currently, less than 100 acres

of Tangier are high enough to be inhabited. Tangier's working waterfronts including the soft-shell crab industry is its primary economic driver along with additional aquaculture. Tangier is a popular day trip during the summertime with visitors traveling from both the Eastern Shore and the Chesapeake Bay region with passenger ferries transporting visitors from Onancock and Reedville, respectively. Tangier has a limited number of cars and is generally a walkable destination, but golf carts can be rented as well. There is limited transient lodging available on the island. However, Tangier is a sociological and historical gem.

Tourism

Tourism on the Shore is listed as a critical industry cluster in the *Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Economic Development Plan 2017-2022*. This includes "developing the region as well-managed tourism destination; creating hospitality, ambassadorship, mentorship & internship programs; and enhancing revenues supporting local tourism." Tourism expanded following the construction of the CBBT and increased access to the Shore from urban areas.

The *Accomack County Comprehensive Plan* notes, "Traditionally, tourism in Accomack County has been focused primarily on the county's natural assets, such as the Chincoteague ponies, Assateague Beach, camping, fishing, and hunting. In recent years there has been a new focus on other activities such as bicycling, kayaking, bird watching, local art and crafts, specialty shops, seasonal festivals, and historic towns."

The *Northampton County Comprehensive Plan* says, "Northampton County remains a rural gem, with the major industries of the area reliant on the abundant natural and cultural resources of the County – agriculture, aquaculture, and tourism."

The *Tourism Strategy for the Eastern Shore* set a good foundation for tourism development on the Shore and one promotional focus from the plan has been very successful – summer vacations. ESVA needs to focus on shoulder season growth in order to maintain a year-round economy and in many ways, the summer season is at its current capacity.

Outdoor recreation is a key driver in tourism of the Shore, but it is augmented by several camping resorts, historical museums and sites, quaint downtowns, and a variety of lodging. Fresh seafood is abundant in restaurants and boutique retail has a strong presence particularly from a variety of artisans, who call the Shore home.

As tourism continues to grow on the Shore, it is important to note that a repurposed multiuse trail is underway. The Eastern Shore Rail Trail will be a 49-mile walking and biking trail along the historic ESVA railroad corridor. Partial funding has been allocated for portions of the trail, and this will become a huge asset for tourism as trails increase visitation and transportation.

ESVA has a regional destination marketing organization, the ESVATC, which has a board of directors representing multiple towns and counties and serves as the lead for the development and marketing of tourism on the Shore. Originally, reports and studies were completed in 2007 creating the ESVATC. Since 2008, the tourism brand for ESVA has been, "You'll Love Our Nature."

The tourism strategy for ESVA has not been updated since 2008. Tourism on the Shore is primarily based on the area's natural, ecological, cultural, and historical assets.

Following conversations with VTC, ESVATC staff invited a diverse group of tourism stakeholders to participate in three strategic sessions led by VTC staff. The sessions were held on November 1, 2023, December 6, 2023, and January 10, 2024. The first two sessions were identical in their content, with the third session focused on goal prioritization. Throughout the sessions, the planning group provided feedback on how to best maximize tourism efforts on ESVA.

The planning group recognizes the existing seasonality of the Shore's tourism economy with a typical busy summer season from Memorial Day to Labor Day and understands that to improve tourism that shoulder season visitation is critical to expanding expenditures. In the last few years, tourism has expanded with some success to April and October, but more targeted initiatives will further build upon this. Furthermore, the planning group recognizes the need for regional cooperation between the ESVATC, County and town staffs and the business community. While there is no doubt that tourism expenditures have grown tremendously over the last five years, there is room for continued sustainable growth to provide a more robust economy.

¹University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center, Demographics Research Group. (2020). Virginia Population Estimates. Retrieved from <https://demographics.coopercenter.org/virginia-population-estimates>



Situational Analysis

As a key component of the planning process, the planning team conducted a situational analysis to help determine the goals and strategies of this plan. Two sessions were held to conduct the situational analysis and the notes from both sessions are combined below.

Situational Analysis - SWOT

The discussion and identification of SWOT - S (Strengths) W (Weaknesses) O (Opportunities) and T (Threats) was used as a key method in developing goals for the Eastern Shore against the

backdrop of growing tourism on the Shore. Most goals and strategies spawned from SWOT discussion and consideration.

Strengths

Culture

- Chincoteague ponies and Misty
- The Chincoteague Center
- Events – big and small
 - Chincoteague Pony Swim
 - Chincoteague Oyster Festival
 - ESVA Bike Tour
 - Festive Fridays
 - Quirky events – lighted golf cart parade, crab pot drop
 - Good communication of events
- Harbors
- Historic movie theaters (Historic Palace Theatre in Cape Charles, Island Theatre in Chincoteague, Roseland Theatre in Onancock)
- Small towns
- World class art and artisans
 - Volume of artists
 - Unique art – ie, decoys

Economy

- Agriculture and farmer's markets
- NASA and rocket launches
- Niche businesses
- Repurposed buildings
- Small businesses
- Three Main Streets (Cape Charles, Chincoteague, Onancock)
- Welcome center at both ends of the Shore

History

- Architecture
 - Historic buildings
 - Landmarks
- Historical assets
 - Barrier Islands
 - Ker Place
 - Lighthouses
 - Samuel D. Outlaw Blacksmith Shop
- Museums
- Oldest Courthouse records

Location

- Access to nearby big cities, proximity to urban centers
- Accessible by land, sea/bay

- Coastal – water on three sides/surrounded by water
- Beaches
- Beach to bay accessibility
- Fresh air
- Greenspace
- One primary route – Route 13 #Off13 (length of Shore)
- Natural
- Quiet and relaxing

Natural Resources

- Beaches
- Dark skies
- Greenspace
- Marshes
- Natural coastline
- Open spaces
- Rural, undeveloped areas
- Sunrises and sunsets
- Unspoiled landscapes
- Water - shoreline and waterways, Chesapeake Bay, Atlantic Ocean
- Wildlife refuges

Outdoor Activities

- Biking
 - Eastern Shore Rail Trail
 - Existing bike paths
- Boating
- Ecotourism
- Fishing
- Hang gliding
- Hiking
- Water recreation – kayaking, SUP, boating
- Wildlife viewing and birding

Small town charm

- Charm
- Friendly
- “Hallmark feel”
- Hospitable
- Laid back/slower pace/relaxed
- Proud residents who share their stories and Shore history
- Sense of community
- Towns are invested in creating their own “unique flavor” so there is something for everyone
- Welcoming people

Tourist Assets

- Authentic and unique experiences
- Bird migration hot spot
- Diverse offerings for visitors
- Food and restaurants
 - Coastal cuisine
 - Doughnuts
 - Farms – local produce and farmer’s markets
 - Fresh seafood including oysters
 - Old-fashioned comfort food
- *Future* ESVA Rail Trail
- Lodging options of all price points
- Nature trails, preserves and wildlife refuges
 - Assateague Island National Seashore
 - Brownsville Nature Preserve
 - Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge
 - Eastern Shore of Virginia Wildlife Refuge
 - Guard Shore part of the Saxis Wildlife Management Area
 - Historic Onancock School trails
 - Kiptopeake State Park
 - Savage Neck Dunes Natural Area Preserve
- Outdoor recreation
- Tangier Ferry
- Small towns
- Space tourism
- Variety of experiences from “tip to top”

Other

- Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel
- Family-oriented
- Genuine/authentic
- Libraries
- Natural beauty
- Not congested with people, traffic and industry
- “On the shore”
- People
- Regional approach
- Safe location
- Strategic marketing and intentional tourism promotion
 - Tourism Commission
 - VTC staff at New Church
 - Strong social media presence
 - Authentic storytelling to outside media
 - Funding

- Northampton County for tourism grants
 - Strong support for VTC funding
 - Utilizes data for target marketing and analysis
- Weather is mostly good (nine months)

Weaknesses

Drive-through community (must get off Route 13)

Geography – the Shore is 70 miles; isolated geographically

Seasonality as a tourism destination

Division within areas of Shore (Accomack vs. Northampton)

Commercial and retail issues

- Blighted buildings
- Limited hours of operation (need more weekday hours)
- Limited amount of retail and grocery stores
- Limited amount of restaurants
 - Limited high-end dining options
 - Limited family-friendly dining options
- Limited lodging options
- Limited workforce
- Seasonal businesses
- Small economic base, need more entrepreneurs

Missing amenities for visitors

- Kid-friendly activities and attractions (teens too)
- Limited arts centers, no art museum
- Limited boat rental options
- Limited guided tours (land and water)
- Limited high-end dining options
- Limited high-end lodging options
- Limited indoor activities (no rainy day options)
- Limited transportation for visitors (no shuttle service/bus system/public transportation, limited ride sharing services)
- Need more itineraries
- Need bus tours
- No immersive educational programs with VIMS, Nature Conservancy
- No planetarium
- No outfitters for outdoor gear/equipment
- No spa
- Public restrooms for tourists

Tourism issues

- Accessibility for all visitors
- Access to docks and paths (tourists often enter private property)
- Brand
- Businesses are closed when visitors are here

- Cost
- Crowding and overdevelopment
- Distance between tourist attractions is large/long in travel time
- Diversity needed in types of events
 - Limited music events
 - No large art festivals
- Lack of event space or space for retreats/groups
- Limited beaches
- Limited large meeting space for groups
- Limited partnerships between businesses
- Limited parking available in towns
- Limited workforce
- Need more hospitality training
- Need more lodging capacity
- No beach mid-Shore
- No focus on diverse tourists (minorities)
- No group tourism
- No sports tourism
- Overdevelopment in some parts of Shore
- Public restrooms in towns
- Well known locations get more attention (ie, Cape Charles, Onancock and Chincoteague)
- Workforce

County issues

- Cell phone reception
- Emergency health services limited to one hospital in Onley; limited urgent care facilities
- Funding
- Internet access
- Lack of vision for future
- Limited land for development
- Limited workforce housing
- Locals vs. tourists
- More infrastructure needed
- Potential overdevelopment of rural lands
- Route 13 is ugly
- Signage on Route 13 to towns and points of interest

Other

- Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel
 - Cost of toll
 - Fear of bridge
- Lack of daycares
- Need to communicate getting off Route 13 for visitors

- Need more volunteers (volunteer base is aging)

Opportunities

Building better coordinated relationships

- Advocate the importance of the tourism sector
- Better collaboration
- Continue expanding ESVA Tourism Summit
- Encourage ESVA vendors over MD vendors
- Increased communication
 - Share data with Chambers of Commerce and Main Streets
 - Advocate the impact of tourism
- Target new/young entrepreneurs
- “We must cooperate to compete.”
- Stronger regional cooperation

Education

- Business resources
 - Workshops on grants
 - Tourism education workshops
 - Scaling entrepreneurial efforts
- Higher education opportunities
 - Customer service training
 - Entrepreneurship initiatives
 - Small business support
 - Succession planning for businesses
- Hospitality and service industry training
 - Management
 - Niche skills – ie, culinary
- Internships for high schoolers
- Share value of tourism with communities

Expanded commerce

- Additional grocers and retail
- Embrace short-term rentals
- Expanded lodging opportunities (boutique hotel with spa)
- Main Street growth – Chincoteague specifically
- Small businesses
 - Encourage entrepreneurs
 - Support Eastern Shore Rail Trail
 - Petcare/pet sitters
- Restaurants
 - Allergy-friendly options
 - Variety of restaurants
 - Vegan options
- Transportation options (Taxis and ride sharing options)

Infrastructure

- Rehabilitation and/or redevelopment of older commercial properties
- Restrooms
- Signage

Tourism development

- Accessible tourism for all
- Agritourism
- Coordination of events – too many occur at the same time
- Creation of national heritage area
- Develop a cultural arts center
- Eastern Shore Rail Trail
- Expanded opportunities at NASA, visitor centers, etc.
- More access to water
- More events in smaller towns
- Rehabilitation and restoration of buildings
 - Historical – adaptive reuse
 - Blighted
- Transportation opportunities (visitor shuttle, guided bus tours)
- Wayfinding signage

Tourism marketing

- Audience development
 - Target specific audiences
 - The outdoorsman (hunting, fishing)
 - Birders and wildlife viewing tourists
 - Boaters
 - Campers specifically primitive
 - Girlfriend getaways
 - Get visitors off of Route 13
 - Off 13 Passport highlighting activities in towns
 - Trails to highlight specific interests
 - Encourage longer stays
 - Encourage those driving through to stop overnight
- Expanded marketing materials
 - Capitalize on what is unique to the Shore
 - Develop expanded itineraries (hub and spoke)
 - History and heritage marketing (include connections to outside locales)
 - Interactive storytelling activities
 - Trail cards
- Focus on shoulder seasons
- Promote outdoor recreation
 - Dark skies/stargazing
 - Wildlife viewing and birding
- Promote winter holiday events

- Stronger regional marketing
 - Bucket lists for whole Shore
 - Trails for whole Shore
 - Inclusion of towns in marketing efforts
- Year-round destination

Other

- Beautification of Route 13
- Encourage those born on the Shore to stay/return
- Encourage and incentivize residents to convert or rent out detached properties to improve workforce housing
- Increase investment in tourism
- Increase workforce housing
- Market remote work opportunities
- More access to NASA facilities – tours, hours of operation
- More lighthouse hours

Threats

Community

- Affordability for natives and service industry employees
- Complacency
- Decreased engagement of stakeholders
- Declining and aging population
- Disconnection between two Counties
- Fear of change
- Lack of collaboration
- Lack of communication
- Lack of diversity in community decision making and economic opportunities
- Loss of community character (no more quiet; tranquility; loss of charm)
- Loss of small-town identities
- Not moving forward at realistic pace
- Political division
- Racism
- Resident opposition - “Not In My Backyard”
- Viewing each other as threats/competition

Counties

- Continued limited funding
- Inability to work together
- Infrastructure
 - Increased needs to accommodate growth
 - Sewer - Hampton Roads Sanitization District
- Leadership (including changes and change of vision)
- Political will

- Overdevelopment
- Regulations and ordinances could hinder progress
- Town isolation (by choice)

Economic and financial

- Chain restaurants and stores
- Development of a large resort
- Federal government shutdowns impacting national seashore, etc.
- Lack of support of entrepreneurs and small businesses
- Loss of agriculture sector
- Overdevelopment on Route 13 impacting viewshed
- Short-term rentals
- Vacant commercial buildings on Route 13 corridor
- Workforce limitations
 - Limited number of employees
 - Limited wages for service industry due to seasonality/cut hours

Other

- Another pandemic
- Balancing development with rural character
- Climate impact on historical and cultural resources
- Coastal resilience and increased sea rise
- Limited support of museums and cultural sites
- National economy (recession)
- Overtourism
- Overutilizing natural resources (ie, overfishing)
- Similar communities doing a better job (ie, MD Eastern Shore)
- Weather (major hurricane)

Action Plan

The goals of this plan are framed to coincide with the objectives of Virginia’s State Tourism Development Plan, available for viewing at <https://www.vatc.org/drive2/>. In 2019, VTC completed a long-term strategic plan to help increase tourism visitation and spending across the Commonwealth. This plan is titled “Drive 2.0,” and builds on the existing findings and conclusions from the 2013 Statewide Tourism Plan

DRIVE 2.0

This strategic plan is a result of conversations with Virginia’s tourism industry and tourism partners as we look to the future and plan for success. It focuses on answering two key questions:

- What should we be promoting?**
- What should we be building?**

The tourism industry is an overly saturated and extremely competitive market. To succeed and thrive, Virginia communities must continue to develop new tourism product and focus on winning strategies to evolve and grow. When tourism development is increased, communities increase the visitor experience and economic impact to communities.

ESVA has its own regional guide, “Coastal Virginia – Eastern Shore.” ESVA’s natural and outdoor recreational opportunities continue to be its primary strengths. The unique natural coastline offers visitors scenic and relaxing getaways with a rich variety of outdoor activities. In addition, its growing culinary scene and rich history and heritage experiences remain attractive draws. For the entire regional guide, visit <https://www.vatc.org/download/regional-guide-cv-eastern-shore/>.

Current Visitor Profile

Virginia is in the top three feeder markets for the Coastal Virginia Eastern Shore Region at 33% with strong representation from both the Hampton Roads Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and Richmond MSA. VTC data also reveals that Washington DC/Maryland is in top three feeder markets for Coastal Virginia Eastern Shore Region. According to the regional report from VTC’s DRIVE 2.0, nearly 25% of visitors to the Eastern Shore are from this region.

Recently, the Eastern Shore gained access to its visitor data from Arrivalist courtesy of a VTC grant. Arrivalist is the leading location intelligence platform in the travel industry and utilize mobile location datasets to provide actionable insights on consumer behavior, competitive share, media effectiveness, and market trends.

For 2022, 83.3% of visitors to Accomack and Northampton Counties spent at least one night with the average nights spent in destination being 2.3 nights. This was slightly up from prior year data (0.1%). The majority of visitors traveled from the Hampton Roads MSA with Washington DC as the second largest origin for visitors. The Baltimore MSA rounded out the top three origin locations according to Arrivalist data. For months of travel, the summer season led for number of visits with July having the highest number. The trips by month data indicated room for improvement in all shoulder season months in 2022. Weekends were most popular for visits.

Data for 2023 had a large decline in overnight visitation with only 58.8% of visitors spending the night and the average nights in destination decreased to 1.2. The places travelers visited from also changed with Salisbury, MD in the second spot after the Hampton Roads MSA and Washington DC rounding out the top three places of origin. Visitation in the months of May and September increased, but there is still room for growth in all shoulder season months. Weekends remained the most popular for visiting.

The Arrivalist data indicates room for growth from the Richmond MSA and Baltimore as a strong candidate for increased visitation as visitor data decreased from 2022 to 2023.

Goals

The ESVATC is a regional DMO with limited staff capacity and funding. It is critical that ESVATC work collaboratively with Accomack and Northampton Counties as well as towns and regional organizations such as the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission. Without sustained support from all partners, ESVATC may not be able to complete many of the goals identified. Additionally, ESVATC must work in collaboration with its local, state and federal government partners to achieve all goals.

Some goals of the plan require partnerships of different agencies, financial resources, and additional staff time. Without community-wide support and the allocation of additional assets, the entirety of this plan cannot be successful.

Goals were categorized into four categories:

- Amplify Tourism Marketing
- Increase Tourism Products and Events
- Strengthen Tourism Relationships and Partnerships
- Expand Tourism Infrastructure

These categories align with Drive 2.0.

Some goals included in this plan were identified in existing documents including the Accomack County Comprehensive Plan and the Northampton County Comprehensive Plan, which were adopted/amended last in October 2018 by the Accomack County Board of Supervisors and Northampton County Board of Supervisors in June 2021, respectively. Additional reference documents included the Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Economic Development Plan 2017-2022 prepared by the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission, Cape Charles Comprehensive Plan adopted by the Cape Charles Town Council in November 2022 and the Tourism Strategy for the Eastern Shore adopted in 2007 and amended in 2008. Goals associated with these documents are noted with the following annotations:

- *Accomack County Comprehensive Plan* – Accomack Comp Plan
- *Northampton County Comprehensive Plan* – Northampton Comp Plan
- *Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Economic Development Plan 2017-2022* – ESVA REDP
- *Town of Cape Charles Comprehensive Plan* – CC Comp Plan
- *Tourism Strategy for the Eastern Shore* - TSESVA

Goals tied to these documents may have been inferred from document text or directly stated in the documents.

These documents can be viewed online:

Accomack Comp Plan: <https://www.co.accomack.va.us/departments/planning-and-community-development/comprehensive-plan>

Northampton Comp Plan:

https://www.co.northampton.va.us/government/departments_elected_offices/planning_perm_iting_enforcement/planning/comp_plan

ESVA REDP: https://www.a-npdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/ESVA-Regional-Economic-Development-Plan-2019_June_update_final.pdf

CC Comp Plan:

<https://www.capecharles.org/files/documents/TownofCapeCharlesComprehensivePlanDRAFT11-23-20221468042255112322PM.pdf>

TSEVA: [https://cdns5-](https://cdns5-hosted.civiclive.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_14877142/File/Government/Departments_Elected%20Offices/County%20Admin/Tourism_Strategy_adopted_6_25_08.pdf)

[hosted.civiclive.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_14877142/File/Government/Departments_Elected%20Offices/County%20Admin/Tourism_Strategy_adopted_6_25_08.pdf](https://cdns5-hosted.civiclive.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_14877142/File/Government/Departments_Elected%20Offices/County%20Admin/Tourism_Strategy_adopted_6_25_08.pdf)

Key Goals

The planning group identified five goals that are critical to growing tourism on the Shore through a voting process. The comprehensive votes are included in the appendix of this plan.

Amplify Tourism Marketing

- Expand Tourism Itineraries
- Increase marketing outdoor recreation including creating a guide for outdoor recreation opportunities

Increase Tourism Products and Events

- Support more trail assets and driving/walking tours including agricultural, arts and culture, heritage and craft beverage

Strengthen Tourism Relationships and Partnerships

- Continue to maximize outside funds

Expand Tourism Infrastructure

- Support the Preservation of ESVA culture and rural character

The themes of these critical goals are amplified marketing, increased tourism assets, and expanded funding, which align with the Coastal Virginia – Eastern Shore Regional Guide from Drive 2.0. The regional guide highlights outdoor recreation as a primary asset on the Shore, which increasing outdoor recreation marketing is one of the key goals identified by the group. One additional key goal is to preserve the unique ESVA culture and rural character. This goal of preserving the rural character ensures a climate where residents and visitors can coexist.

The planning group created a larger list of goals, which was broken down into short-term, long-term and ongoing goals within each category. The previously noted key goals are included and each category has overall strategies in bold with tactics listed under • bullets.

Short-term goals will be completed within two years and long-term goals may take more than five years. Some goals are ongoing because they are multi-step processes or will require annual updates. Each goal should be assigned to stakeholder organizations as appropriate.



Amplify Tourism Marketing

Expand promotional efforts

Short-Term Goals

- Assess the existing ESVA tourism brand and develop a new logo and brand that more accurately reflects the depth of tourism on the Shore
 - Explore the development of branded ESVA merchandise (TESVA) (Long-Term Goal)
- Host influencers to expand tourism
- Optimize content based on visitor interests and under-visited attractions
 - Increase Marketing for Outdoor Recreation
 - **Expand Itineraries**
 - Target specific audiences through a variety of means (blogs, digital marketing, influencers, etc.)
 - Accessible/ADA-friendly trips to the Shore
 - Encourage “through travelers” to stop for one night
 - Girlfriend getaways (TSESVA)
 - Groups
 - Minority travelers
 - Niche audiences – agritourists, arts-oriented tourists, heritage tourists, nature tourists (TSESVA)
 - Outdoor audiences – boaters, campers, birders, fishermen and anglers, wildlife enthusiasts, outdoorsman
 - Encourage the marketing of Shore venues for weddings
 - Create an ESVA “by season” guide to focus on year-round visitation
 - Complete guide
 - Ten reasons per season to visit blog series

Strengthen existing marketing strategies

Short-term, Ongoing and Long-Term Goals

- Increase outdoor recreation marketing
 - Create a guide for outdoor recreation opportunities
 - Establish ESVA as the premier paddling destination in the Mid-Atlantic (TESVA) (Long-Term Goal)
 - Develop Marketing campaign to promote shoulder season
 - Expand support of Virginia Water Trails marketing
 - Linkages to recreational, cultural and natural resource destinations (Accomack Comp Plan)
 - Develop additional blogs utilizing influencers
 - Market the fall and spring as peak eco-tourism seasons, offering the best of the Shore's unique natural wonders without the summer heat or insects
 - Golf assets

Note: emphasize eco-friendly outdoor practices to protect environment

Strengthen existing marketing strategies

Short-Term and Ongoing Goals

- Expand itineraries
 - Hidden gems of the Shore
 - Highlight space tourism and support Virginia's Space Loop (Long-Term Goal)
 - Lesser-known history/heritage
 - Main Streets of the Shore
 - "Top to Tip" for multi-day itineraries
 - Trails by type on ESVA
 - Ultimate girls getaway
 - Ultimate Tangier day trip
 - Ultimate wildlife viewing and birding
 - Ultimate three-day Shore getaway

Expand marketing strategies

Ongoing Goals

- Increase marketing materials to simplify visitor planning (TSESVA) and encourage year-round visitation
 - Additional trails on Visit Widget
 - A la carte pairing guides
 - Bucket lists
 - Event guide
 - Expand and distribute ESVA historic sites map (pad map for welcome centers)
 - More trail cards
 - Themed Google maps
- Develop new marketing campaigns
 - Authentically ESVA/local flavor – unique stories and ESVA made products

- Promote the efforts of local artists, artisans, musicians and writers to publicize events where their work is offered (Northampton Comp Plan)
- Market community vibrancy (Northampton Comp Plan)
- ESVA made products including specialty food, seafood, etc. (TSESVA)
- Birding and wildlife viewing by season/ecotourism/nature-based tourism
 - Develop awareness of the Eastern Shore as a major birding destination (TESVA) (Short-Term and Ongoing Goal)
 - Market the Shore’s thriving hunting and fishing industries as part of the eco-tourism experience (TESVA)
- Culture and heritage of the Shore
- Explore Our Natural Coast

Increase Tourism Products and Events

Expand events

Short-Term Goals

- Support marketing with regional partners
- Assist towns and counties with ESVA Birding related events

Expand tourism products

Short-Term. Ongoing and Long-Term Goals

- Be an active partner in the development of the ESVA Rail Trail (Northampton Comp Plan)
 - Assist with plan for signage
 - Marketing of rail trail
- Develop more trail assets and driving/walking tours
 - Agriculture and aquaculture (include farmer’s markets and U-pick)
 - Arts and culture including small towns and culinary
 - Craft beverage
 - Town walking tours (TSESVA)

Expand commerce, collaborations and events

Ongoing Goals

- Support opportunities for historical and cultural education (Accomack Comp Plan)
- Expand placemaking opportunities to promote vibrant communities (CC Comp Plan)
- Explore the development of a multipurpose building mid-Shore
 - A cooperative marketplace for agriculture and aquaculture products (TSESVA)
 - A cultural center defining the heritage and culture of the Shore (Accomack Comp Plan)
 - A marketplace, located on Route 13, could provide a central outlet for artisans and producers of local arts, crafts and food products and encourage highway travelers to stop and shop (Accomack Comp Plan)
 - A regional marketplace for farmers and artisans (ESVA REDP)
- Identify gaps in “chains of activity” for visitors (CC Comp Plan)

- Improve the visitor experience through better wayfinding and promotion (Northampton Comp Plan)
- Increase heritage interpretive opportunities (Accomack Comp Plan)
- Support the expansion of agritourism opportunities
- Work with Accomack and Northampton Counties, the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission, and others to diversify and increase tourism-specific small businesses

Create new and expand existing tourism assets

Long-Term Goals

- Explore the creation of an Eastern Shore National Heritage Area
- Investigate the introduction of one-day excursion packages to Cape Charles via mini bus from the nearby resort destinations of Virginia Beach, Norfolk, and Williamsburg (TESVA)
- Investigate transportation opportunities for moving visitors—especially tourists based at marinas (TSESVA)
- Support the creation of events in small towns
- Work with regional partners to develop immersive educational experiences for visitors (TSESVA)
 - Nature Conservancy
 - NASA/Wallops Island to extend its visitor-outreach programs with a view to creating a mid-Atlantic equivalent to the Space Coast
 - VIMS

Strengthen Tourism Relationships and Partnerships

Encourage collaborative efforts on the Shore and with regional partners

The stakeholder group noted that all goals under strengthening tourism relationships and partnerships should be ongoing efforts. Relationships and partnerships need constant communication and effort to be successful.

Ongoing Goals

- Advocate the importance of the tourism sector and its economic impact (ESVA REDP)
- Better communicate with internal (stakeholders and businesses) and external partners (media and public)
 - Internal
 - Develop stakeholder communication plan
 - Annual report – internal (one pager)
 - Data sharing
 - Develop regular communications strategy with larger stakeholder group (email newsletter or Facebook private group)
 - Share opportunities for collaboration and participation
 - External
 - Advocate the importance of tourism

- Annual report – external (one pager)
 - Policies for communicating effectively with local press
 - Press release strategy
- Continue to maximize outside funds such as VTC DRIVE, VTC grants, DHCD grants, USDA grants, etc.
- Support the ambassadorship, mentorship, and internship program to educate workers and citizens on hospitality and tourism opportunities (ESVA REDP)
- Review potential submissions in conjunction with partners for Grants
- Support existing and new small businesses and entrepreneurs (Northampton Comp Plan) (CC Comp Plan)
 - Communicate and educate funding opportunities for businesses
 - Develop tourism workshops
 - Marketing agricultural products and value-added products
 - Share available data (Northampton Comp Plan)
 - Work regionally to connect with existing resources for entrepreneurs
- Support regional organizations including Chambers of Commerce and Main Streets
- Support workforce development for tourism-related businesses (CC Comp Plan)
- Work collaboratively with educational institutions
- Work collaboratively with museums and historical sites
- Work collaboratively with regional partners on outdoor recreation marketing (DCR, DWR, NPS, etc.)

Expand Tourism Infrastructure

Support new development

Short-Term Goals

- Review the potential of Tourism Zone designations on the Eastern Shore (ESVA REDP) (Northampton Comp Plan)

Invest in tourism as a sector

Ongoing and Long-Term Goals

- Advocate for workforce housing
- Support Beautification of Route 13
 - Blighted building restoration/rehabilitation
 - Enhancement projects such as sidewalk infill, bike lanes, and wayfinding signage (Northampton Comp Plan)
 - Improve landscaping (TSESVA)
 - Improve town gateway signage (Northampton Comp Plan) (TSESVA)
 - Maintain attractive road corridor (Accomack Comp Plan)
- Increase funding for tourism development and marketing

Preservation of buildings, character, and environment

Ongoing and Long-Term Goals

- Support preservation of Eastern Shore Heritage

Long-Term Goals

- Support the Preservation of natural resources that support agriculture, aquaculture, eco-tourism, and maritime activities (Northampton Comp Plan)
- Creation of cultural heritage literature
- Support regional efforts of coastal resilience (Accomack Comp Plan) (Northampton Comp Plan)

Improve infrastructure

Long-Term Goals

- Continue to support the local investment in infrastructure
- Support the Development of more public restrooms
- Support the expansion of public access to water for recreation
- Support the development and connectivity of the Eastern Shore Rail Trail (CC Comp Plan)

Branding

As a component of the facilitated sessions, the stakeholder group discussed the logo and brand of the ESVATC. The current logo was developed in 2008 and there has been feedback that it may be time to update the logo and brand as ESVA is more than just nature. Nature is a large component of the Shore, but the depth of tourism assets is not reflected in the current brand.

The group reviewed logos from across the Commonwealth of Virginia and answered two questions about what makes ESVA unique and what are the strongest assets.

What makes ESVA special and unique?

- Bayside and seaside, water
- Location
- Natural coastline
- Quiet
- Rural – farming
- Slow growth
- Eclectic
- Connectivity

What are the strongest assets of ESVA?

- Agriculture – farms
- Art and artisans
- Architecture
- Barrier Islands
- Birds
- Boating
- History

- Marshes
- Nature
- Ponies
- Rockets (NASA/aerospace)
- Seafood – oysters
- Sense of place
- Small towns
- Sunrise and sunsets (also moonrise)
- Water
- Wildlife

The group noted three potential ideas for a new brand:

- Virginia’s Natural Coastline
- It’s All Perfectly Nature
- More _____ Than People

Of these three ideas, the stakeholder group preferred “Virginia’s Natural Coastline.” This discussion is reflected in the goals.

A professional marketing firm should be engaged by the Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission to create a new brand. The forementioned information from stakeholders should be used as guidance.

Other

Throughout the process of developing this Tourism Action Plan, the planning group had a variety of engaging conversations, and several items of interest were noted. The group believes that the Eastern Shore needs to focus on shoulder season visitation.

As previously documented in this plan, limited staff and financial resources exist to promote economic development and tourism. Additional resources will be necessary to further grow the tourism sector.

Throughout the sessions, the group identified multiple entrepreneurial opportunities that would benefit the tourism industry.

Identified Entrepreneurial Opportunities

Additional lodging

- Boutique hotel with spa
- Luxury lodging
- Short term rentals
- Unique lodging

Additional restaurants

- Diverse offerings – healthier options, vegan, family-friendly, multicultural

- Luxury dining

Additional retailers

- Grocers
- Boutique shopping
- Specialty “gear” – binoculars, cameras, etc.
- Equipment rentals (boats, personal watercraft)
- Outdoor recreation outfitters
- Collaborative marketplaces (artisans, seafood, etc.)

Additional transportation for visitors

- Ride-sharing opportunities
- Shuttle service
- Taxi services

Additional visitor-amenities

- Spa
- Childcare
- Pet sitters and pet care

Attractions

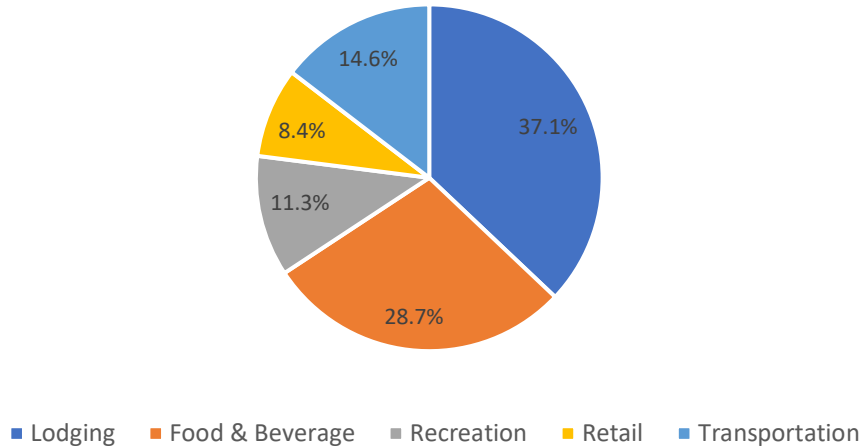
- Family-friendly and “rainy day” activities
- Agritourism opportunities
- Art museum
- Planetarium

Guided tours

- Additional outdoor recreation tours
- Additional aquaculture opportunities
- Bus tour
- Fishing charters
- History/heritage bus tour

Creation of new businesses through the above identified opportunities would grow tourism expenditures on the Eastern Shore. In the most recent data from VTC, lodging is currently the largest category of tourism expenditures on the Shore at more than 37% of total expenditures, but if tourism on the Shore continues to grow, additional accommodations would be necessary. Growth in the recreation and retail sectors would greatly benefit the local economy. In 2022 data, retail had the lowest share of tourism expenditures at only 8.4% of combined spending.

2022 Sector Share Percentages of Tourism Expenditures on the Eastern Shore (combined)



*Source: Virginia Tourism Corporation Economic Impact Data 2022
Combined Accomack and Northampton Counties data*

Monitoring Progress

ESVATC and its staff will monitor progress of all goals and initiatives on an annual basis. Tourism on the Shore must be a collaborative effort even though Accomack and Northampton Counties are separate and there are dozens of small towns in the mix. Collaboration is key due to limited financial and staff resources. It is important that the Eastern Shore work collaboratively as a united region, highlighting all areas to visitors.

It is important that the Eastern Shore reiterate their shared goals, mission, and vision with both Accomack and Northampton Counties as well as town staff, so that stakeholders continue to recognize tourism as an essential sector on ESVA. ESVATC is encouraged to work with collaborative partners to execute this plan including Main Street organizations, Chambers of Commerce, regional organizations, Shore-wide businesses, and other tourism-related partners including the Eastern Shore Rail Trail. This plan contains important community and entrepreneurial development ideas that would support tourism development on the Eastern Shore.

To encourage progress toward the established strategies, this plan should be reviewed on a consistent basis. Upon each review, any adjustments that need to be made to this plan should be considered. Once many of the targets have been met or three to five years have passed, a new/updated plan should be developed through another collaborative process. Measures can vary based on the goal and can be established by Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission. Suggested measures should be tangible and inspire visitors to engage and explore year-round.

It is vital that the plan be referenced consistently as any new tourism related project/initiative discussions occur and as all applicable decisions are made. Using this plan to help make decisions will be beneficial to the Eastern Shore of Virginia as it creates a welcoming experience for visitors by diversifying and expanding opportunities year-round while balancing economics and the environment.

To assist with completion of the plan's goals it is suggested that stakeholders monitor grants offered by VTC. Grants will continue to help extend investments made to create larger impacts. Grants include the Marketing Leverage Program, VA250 Marketing Leverage Program, VTC's DRIVE program and any other applicable new grants.

Conclusion

All ships rise with the tide and increased tourism visitation and expenditures can expand community vitality on ESVA. Increased outdoor recreation marketing will allow visitors to plan their trip to Virginia's Eastern Shore with ease. The addition of new and expanded commerce opportunities will increase the length of visitor stays and improve quality of life for residents. Entrepreneurship, small business development and events are vital to the Shore thriving as a tourist destination.

ESVA has a tremendous natural location with both bay and seaside areas in addition to the barrier islands. These outdoor assets and natural beauty can encourage a stronger tourism sector specifically through further developing outdoor recreation and ecotourism focused on the water and wildlife. ESVA should focus on its five key goals and work collaboratively to develop shoulder season tourism through expanded events.

Implementation of this plan is expected to result in various benefits to Shore citizens, including increased job and business opportunities and increased tax revenue, while maintaining quality of life for those citizens. Preservation of both the natural and built environments of ESVA will ensure that the unique community character is maintained.

This tourism action plan was developed utilizing community input from a variety of stakeholders in conjunction with existing research on the Coastal Virginia – Eastern Shore region and previously approved Comprehensive Plan documents.



Appendix

Abbreviations

CBBT: Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel

DCR: Department of Conservation and Recreation

DHCD: Department of Housing and Community Development

DWR: Department of Wildlife Resources

ESVA: Eastern Shore of Virginia

ESVATC: Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission

MSA: Metropolitan Statistical Area

NPS: National Park Service

SEO: Search engine optimization

USDA: United States Department of Agriculture

Terms & Definitions

Goals: Broad statements of measurable outcomes to be achieved on behalf of customers

Measures: Meaningful indicators that assess progress towards accomplishment of goals and objectives

Mission Statement: Statement of purpose; fundamental reason for an organization's/tourism effort existence

Opportunities: Factors or situations that exist beyond your organization that may have a favorable effect on it

Strengths: Resources or capabilities that can be used to accomplish your mission.

Target: The numerical value of the performance measure you hope to achieve

Threats: Factors or situations that exist beyond your organization that can negatively affect it

Tourism Assets/Products: Any tourism related product, attraction, site, or promotional effort that is of interest to target customers/tourists

Vision Statement: A word picture of the future that the organization/tourism effort intends ultimately to become or to influence

Way finding: Signs, maps, and other graphic or audible methods used to convey location and directions to travelers

Weaknesses: Deficiencies in resources or capabilities that hinder your ability to be successful

Hub & Spoke Exercise

Lures were identified – a lure is the primary reason travelers are coming to your area. Lures were based on tourism products that have been brought up continually throughout the planning process. Following identification of lures, key existing tourism assets were identified. These are referred to as existing product.

Following review of existing product, the group reviewed what the Eastern Shore of Virginia should be building and focusing on to expand tourism products. At the core of vibrant communities are its assets. To stay competitive in the tourism landscape, it is critical that communities are well-rounded. Part of this includes constantly assessing what exists, what needs to be enhanced and what needs to be added.

The group reviewed what could enhance existing products. These are areas that just need a little tweaking or improvement.

The 2- year product ideas are projects or ideas that a community can implement in the short-term. The five-year product idea is something that is truly game changing and have a significant impact on a community.

Session 1 – Nov. 1

Lure: Nature

Existing Product: Outdoor recreation

Existing Product: State parks, wildlife refuges, nature preserves, national seashore

Enhanced Product: Expanded Virginia Water Trails and water recreation marketing

Enhanced Product: Increased marketing as a birding destination

Two-Year Idea: Return of the ESVA birding festival (shoulder season event)

Five-Year Game Changer: Multipurpose building mid-Shore (restrooms/welcome center for rail trail)

Note: Preservation and awareness about minimizing impacts to nature is a critical component of highlighting nature as a tourism asset.

Lure: Heritage/History

Existing Product: Museums

Existing Product: Tours (walking/garden tours)

Enhanced Product: Marketing the trails and historic sites and communication efforts (pad map, Google map enhancements)

Enhanced Product: Signage

Two-Year Idea: VA250 events

Five-Year Game Changer: History-themed bus tour (entrepreneur)

Note: Tangier Island should be a part of this lure as should the Off 13: The Eastern Shore of Virginia Guidebook by Kirk Mariner as well as the untold stories of the Shore.

Lure: Culture

Existing Product: Events

Existing Product: Small towns

Enhanced Product: Collaborative partnerships

Enhanced Product: More marketing (itineraries, pairings guide, a la carte idea)

Two-Year Idea: Community college partnership and educational opportunities

Five-Year Game Changer: Shore-wide event or multipurpose building mid-Shore

Note: Guided bus tours were a point of interest during this discussion.

Session 2 – Dec. 6

Lure: Nature

Existing Product: Outdoor recreation

Existing Product: State parks, wildlife refuges, nature preserves, national seashore

Enhanced Product: Expanded Virginia Water Trails and water recreation marketing

Enhanced Product: More marketing geared towards all wildlife and coordinated by season

Two-Year Idea: Identify birding itineraries and emphasis on ecotourism and wildlife viewing

Five-Year Game Changer: Shore-wide wildlife and birding event

Lure: Heritage/History

Existing Product: Museums

Existing Product: Tours (walking/garden tours)

Enhanced Product: Sharing diverse, inclusive stories

Enhanced Product: More marketing and communications about heritage and history

Two-Year Idea: VA250 events

Five-Year Game Changer: Crater Festival celebrating the impact crater that formed the Eastern Shore and rail trail signage

Lure: Culture

Existing Product: Events

Existing Product: Small towns

Enhanced Product: Expanded storytelling

Enhanced Product: Expanded itineraries

Two-Year Idea: Culture trail(s)

Five-Year Game Changer: Shore-wide cultural center

Note: Foodways, watermen and agriculture were all noted as important facets of culture.

Goal Prioritization Exercise

Amplify Tourism Marketing

	Important Votes	Votes	Total
--	--------------------	-------	-------

Assess the existing ESVA tourism brand and develop a new logo and brand that more accurately reflects the depth of tourism on the Shore	3	2	5
Create an ESVA “by season” guide to focus on year round visitation	1	6	7
Develop marketing materials to simplify visitor planning and encourage year-round visitation	2	6	8
Develop new marketing campaigns	0	1	1
Expand itineraries	2	14	16
Focus on development of small town marketing	0	4	4
Host influencers as needed to target specific audiences	0	1	1
Implement website best practices including SEO particularly that of “Eastern Shore”	0	2	2
Increase outdoor recreation marketing	1	13	14
Investigate the introduction of one-day excursion packages to Cape Charles via mini bus from the nearby resort destinations of Virginia Beach, Norfolk, and Williamsburg	0	1	1
Optimize content based on visitor interests and under-visited attractions			
Support the 100 th Chincoteague Pony Swim in 2025 with a year-long marketing campaign	0	2	2
Target specific audiences through a variety of means (blogs, digital marketing, influencers, etc.)	0	8	8

Increase Tourism Products and Events

	Important Votes	Votes	Total
Be an active partner in the development of the ESVA Rail Trail (Northampton Comp Plan)	0	7	7
Collaborate with regional partners to execute VA250 events	0	2	2
Continue to support regional efforts for outdoor recreation	0	1	1
Develop new events	1	7	8
Develop more trail assets and driving/walking tours	0	11	11
Develop tourism packages in conjunction with partners			
Develop tri-leg boating events involving Cape Charles, Onancock, and Tangier (TESVA)	0	2	2
Encourage the development of identified entrepreneurial opportunities (list included in this plan)	0	1	1
Enhance opportunities for historical and cultural education	0	2	2
Encourage the expansion of hours at numerous attractions including the ESVA Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center and NASA Wallops Island Visitor Center	0	5	5

Explore the creation of an Eastern Shore National Heritage Area	0	6	6
Explore the development of a multipurpose building mid-Shore			
Explore Dark Sky designations	0	2	2
Explore the feasibility of constructing a Cape Charles Crater Museum, focusing on the crater impact that formed the Chesapeake Bay	0	1	1
Expand placemaking opportunities to promote vibrant communities			
Identify gaps in “chains of activity” for visitors			
Improve the visitor experience through better wayfinding and promotion	0	4	4
Increase heritage interpretive opportunities	0	1	1
Investigate transportation opportunities for moving visitors—especially tourists based at marinas	0	1	1
Review feasibility of the return of the ESVA Birding Festival as a shoulder season event	0	1	1
Support the creation of events in small towns	0	1	1
Support the expansion of agritourism opportunities	0	1	1
Work with Accomack and Northampton Counties, the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission, and others to diversify and increase tourism-specific small businesses	0	3	3
Work with regional partners to develop immersive educational experiences for visitors	0	6	6

Strengthen Tourism Relationships and Partnerships

	Important Votes	Votes	Total
Advocate the importance of the tourism sector and its economic impact	0	2	2
Better communicate with internal (stakeholders and businesses) and external partners (media and public)	0	3	3
Continue to maximize outside funds such as VTC DRIVE, VTC grants, DHCD grants, USDA grants, etc.	1	10	11
Continue to work regionally	0	1	1
Encourage businesses to expand operating hours	0	5	5
Engage local governments in enhancing support for tourism	0	4	4
Implement an ambassadorship, mentorship, and internship program to educate workers and citizens on hospitality and tourism opportunities			
Increase collaborative efforts throughout the Shore			
Increase public-private partnerships			

Recruit volunteers and tourism ambassadors	0	3	3
Review potential submissions in conjunction with partners for a USDA Rural Business Development Grant	0	1	1
Support existing and new small businesses and entrepreneurs	0	4	4
Support regional organizations including Chambers of Commerce and Main Streets	1	5	6
Support workforce development for tourism-related businesses	0	3	3
Work collaboratively with educational institutions	0	9	9
Work collaboratively with museums and historical sites	0	2	2
Work collaboratively with regional partners on outdoor recreation marketing			
Work cooperatively with the Towns to attract compatible and creative development and infill that contributes to their economic and community vitality	0	1	1

Expand Tourism Infrastructure

	Important Votes	Votes	Total
Advocate for workforce housing	0	6	6
Beautification of Route 13	2	8	10
Continued efforts need to be made to ensure sufficient guest services are provided to meet the demand and growth of the tourism industry for Accomack County, include lodging, dining, and entertainment opportunities	0	1	1
Continued investment in infrastructure	0	5	5
Develop more public restrooms	0	5	5
Encourage and promote the adaptive reuse of historically or culturally significant buildings and structures	0	1	1
Encourage revitalization of blighted buildings			
Increase funding for tourism development and marketing	0	2	2
Increase public parking as needed	0	1	1
Preserve the unique Eastern Shore culture and rural character	3	8	11
Review the potential of Tourism Zone designations on the Eastern Shore			
Support the expansion of public access to water for recreation	0	1	1
Support the development of additional recreation facilities such as pickleball courts	0	1	1
Support the development and connectivity of the Eastern Shore Rail Trail	1	4	5
Support regional efforts of coastal resilience	0	1	1
Work with stakeholders on short-term rental regulations	0	1	1

Notes: Goals are not listed in their entirety in the above chart. Please view pages 22-29 for the complete goal descriptions.

VTC Economic Impact Data for Accomack County 2018-2022

Accomack

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Percent Change
Travel Economic Impacts						
Employment	1,224	1,247	1,133	1,291	1,331	3.1%
Expenditures	\$ 126,327,818	\$ 134,724,240	\$ 118,198,249	\$ 168,525,308	\$ 166,361,350	-1.3%
Labor Income	\$ 27,303,862	\$ 29,765,200	\$ 28,350,038	\$ 36,190,615	\$ 38,725,479	7.0%
Local Tax Receipts	\$ 5,427,701	\$ 5,783,784	\$ 5,056,006	\$ 6,365,680	\$ 6,471,101	1.7%
State Tax Receipts	\$ 3,097,266	\$ 3,313,844	\$ 2,732,660	\$ 3,695,277	\$ 3,903,926	5.6%

VTC Economic Impact Data for Northampton County 2018-2022

Northampton

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Percent Change
Travel Economic Impacts						
Employment	341	352	310	376	387	3.0%
Expenditures	\$ 44,576,667	\$ 48,462,726	\$ 41,156,800	\$ 68,272,530	\$ 65,996,977	-3.3%
Labor Income	\$ 8,043,051	\$ 8,579,356	\$ 7,921,501	\$ 10,523,696	\$ 10,674,160	1.4%
Local Tax Receipts	\$ 1,851,933	\$ 2,004,177	\$ 1,714,875	\$ 2,573,880	\$ 2,835,828	10.2%
State Tax Receipts	\$ 1,119,161	\$ 1,209,677	\$ 972,176	\$ 1,599,377	\$ 1,615,389	1.0%

Source: <http://www.vatc.org/research/economicimpact>

Combined Sector Specific Data 2018-2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Lodging	\$ 66.2 M	\$ 70.2 M	\$ 65.9 M	\$ 97.3 M	\$ 86.1 M
Food & Beverage	\$ 46.4 M	\$ 51.2 M	\$ 39.4 M	\$ 62.6 M	\$ 66.7 M
Recreation	\$ 18.4 M	\$ 19.9 M	\$ 16.8 M	\$ 25.7 M	\$ 26.3M
Retail	\$ 15.6 M	\$ 15.7M	\$ 13.4 M	\$ 18.5 M	\$ 19.5 M
Transportation	\$ 24.4 M	\$ 26.2 M	\$ 23.9 M	\$ 32.8 M	\$ 33.8 M

Total Spending	\$ 170.9 M	\$ 183.2 M	\$ 159.4 M	\$ 236.8 M	\$ 232.4 M
-----------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------

These are the combined totals for both Accomack and Northampton Counties.

Accomack County Sector Specific Data 2018-2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Lodging	\$ 51.8 M	\$ 54.5 M	\$ 51.6 M	\$ 69.0 M	\$ 61.9 M
Food & Beverage	\$ 33.3 M	\$ 36.8 M	\$ 28.2 M	\$ 44.5 M	\$ 47.5 M
Recreation	\$ 11.9 M	\$ 12.8 M	\$ 11.4 M	\$17.1 M	\$ 17.4 M
Retail	\$ 11.7 M	\$ 11.8 M	\$ 9.9 M	\$ 13.7 M	\$ 14.7 M
Transportation	\$ 17.6 M	\$ 18.8 M	\$ 17.2 M	\$ 24.1 M	\$ 24.8 M
Total Spending	\$ 126.3 M	\$ 134.7 M	\$ 118.3 M	\$ 168.4 M	\$ 166.3 M

Northampton County Sector Specific Data 2018-2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Lodging	\$ 14.4 M	\$ 15.7 M	\$ 14.3 M	\$ 28.2 M	\$ 24.2 M
Food & Beverage	\$ 13 M	\$ 14.4 M	\$ 11.2 M	\$ 18.0 M	\$ 19.2 M
Recreation	\$ 6.5 M	\$ 7.1 M	\$ 5.4 M	\$ 8.6 M	\$ 8.9 M
Retail	\$ 3.9 M	\$ 3.9 M	\$ 3.5M	\$ 4.7 M	\$ 4.7 M
Transportation	\$ 6.7 M	\$ 7.4 M	\$ 6.7 M	\$ 8.7 M	\$ 9.0 M
Total Spending	\$ 44.5 M	\$48.5 M	\$ 41.1 M	\$ 68.2 M	\$ 66.0 M

Source: This data is provided by Tourism Economics and prepared for VTC.

Existing Historical Landmarks

*denotes that an associated physical highway marker exists

Place	VLR Listing Date	NRHP Listing Date	Link	Locality
Accomack Historic District	12/16/1980	7/21/1982	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/160-0020/	Accomack
Arbuckle Place	12/17/1985	5/22/1986	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/001-0066/	Accomack
Assateague Beach Coast Guard Station	2/20/1973	11/2/2015	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/001-0172/	Accomack
Assateague Lighthouse	4/17/1973	6/4/1973	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/001-0078/	Accomack
Bowman's Folly	5/13/1969	11/12/1969	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/001-0002/	Accomack
Bunting Place	12/4/2002	4/11/2003	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/001-0017/	Accomack

Captain Timothy Hill House	6/16/2011	8/22/2011	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/001-0274/	Accomack
Central High School	6/17/2010	8/16/2010	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/001-5065/	Accomack
Cokesbury Church	9/8/2004	11/27/2004	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/273-0001-0171/	Accomack
Corbin Hall (delisted 6/19/2008)	4/18/1972	11/9/1972	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/001-0007/	Accomack
Debtors' Prison*	6/15/1976	11/7/1976	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/160-0009/	Accomack
Hermitage	11/18/1980	6/28/1982	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/001-0021/	Accomack
Hills Farm	6/19/2008	9/12/2008	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/001-0023/	Accomack
Hopkins and Brother Store	5/13/1969	11/12/1969	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/273-0002/	Accomack
Kerr Place	12/2/1969	2/26/1970	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/273-0003/	Accomack
Locustville Academy	9/15/2016	11/22/2016	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/001-0103/	Accomack
Makemie Monument Park*	9/6/2006	2/15/2007	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/001-0112/	Accomack
Mason House	9/17/1974	11/21/1974	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/001-0029/	Accomack
Old Mercantile Building	5/21/1974	7/23/1974	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/160-0013/	Accomack
Onancock Historic District	4/22/1992	10/8/1992	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/273-0001/	Accomack
Pitts Neck	2/17/1976	10/21/1976	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/001-0038/	Accomack
Samuel D. Outlaw Blacksmith Shop	3/16/2023	5/17/2023	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/273-0014/	Accomack
Saxis Island Historic District	6/15/2017	11/24/2017	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/296-0001/	Accomack
Scarborough House	1/18/1983	5/16/1985	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/001-0064/	Accomack

Archaeological Site				
Shepherd's Plain	10/21/1982	6/28/1982	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/001-0032/	Accomack
Smith Point Light Station	9/10/2003	12/2/2002	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/066-0064/	Accomack
St. George's Church	6/2/1970	9/15/1970	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/001-0040/	Accomack
St. James Church	11/5/1968	6/11/1969	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/160-0005/	Accomack
Tangier Island Historic District	3/20/2014	6/27/2014	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/309-0001/	Accomack
U.S. Government Lifesaving Stations, Houses of Refuge, and pre-1950 U.S. Coast Guard Lifeboat Stations MPD	N/A	3/15/2013	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/001-5158/	Accomack
Wessels Root Cellar	12/2/1969	2/26/1970	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/001-0076/	Accomack
Wharton Place	4/18/1972	11/3/1972	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/001-0050/	Accomack
Willowdale	9/6/2006	5/2/2007	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/001-0062/	Accomack
Almshouse Farm at Machipongo	9/12/2001	4/1/2002	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-0053/	Northampton
Arlington Archaeological Site	3/20/2008	5/12/2008	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-0001/	Northampton
Benjamin's Department Store	3/8/2006	5/10/2006	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/217-0007/	Northampton
Brownsville	12/2/1969	2/26/1970	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-0003/	Northampton
Cape Charles Historic District*	8/15/1989	1/3/1991	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/182-0002/	Northampton

Cape Charles Light Station	12/4/2002	6/23/2003	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-0071/	Northampton
Cape Charles Rosenwald School*	9/21/2023	10/26/2023	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/182-0003/	Northampton
Caserta (delisted 3/19/1997)	12/2/1969	2/26/1970	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-0051/	Northampton
Cessford	9/10/2003	1/16/2004	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/214-0001/	Northampton
Chatham	6/16/2022	9/20/2022	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-0005/	Northampton
Custis Tombs	11/5/1968	4/17/1970	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-0066/	Northampton
Eastville Historic District	6/18/2009	10/1/2009	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/214-0040/	Northampton
Eastville Mercantile	12/1/2004	1/20/2005	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/214-5001/	Northampton
Eyre Hall	9/9/1969	11/12/1969	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-0008/	Northampton
Eyreville	6/15/2023		https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-5126/	Northampton
Glebe of Hungars Parish	12/2/1969	2/26/1970	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-0033/	Northampton
Grapeland	6/21/1977	5/6/1980	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-0035/	Northampton
Hungars Church*	7/7/1970	10/15/1970	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-0012/	Northampton
James Brown's Dry Goods Store	9/12/2001	4/1/2002	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/214-0039/	Northampton
John W. Chandler House	9/8/2004	11/27/2004	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/217-0009/	Northampton
Kendall Grove	10/21/1980	6/21/1982	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-0060/	Northampton
Light Stations of the United States MPD	9/10/2003	12/2/2002	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/114-5250/	Northampton
Northampton County Courthouse	11/16/1971	3/19/1972	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/214-0007/	Northampton

Historic District*				
Northampton Lumber Company Historic District	3/20/2008	5/29/2008	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/267-5005/	Northampton
Oak Grove	12/9/1992	2/4/1996	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-0019/	Northampton
Pear Valley	5/13/1969	11/12/1969	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-0052/	Northampton
Selma	3/8/2006	5/10/2006	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-0077/	Northampton
Somers House (delisted 6/19/2008)	12/2/1969	2/26/1970	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-0023/	Northampton
Stratton Manor*	9/19/1980	11/28/1980	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-0024/	Northampton
Upper Ridge Site	6/1/2005	8/23/2005	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-5015/	Northampton
Vaucluse*	12/2/1969	9/15/1970	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-0028/	Northampton
Westerhouse House	9/17/1974	11/19/1974	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-0030/	Northampton
Westover (delisted 12/3/1997)	11/18/1980	6/28/1982	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-0038/	Northampton
Winona	11/5/1968	10/1/1969	https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/065-0032/	Northampton

Source: <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/>

Abbreviations:

VLR: Virginia Landmarks Register

NHL: National Historic Landmark

NRHP: National Register of Historic Places

Additional Highway Markers

Marker Name	Location	Details	Locality
"The Bear and the Cub"	Wachapreague Rd.	Wachapreague Road at intersection with Langford Highway	Accomack
"The Bear and The Cub"	Bobtown Rd.	Rte. 178, about 0.5 miles northeast of Pungoteague	Accomack

Assawaman Church of England	Atlantic Rd.	12224 Atlantic Road	Accomack
Birthplace of Governor Wise	Front St.	23346 Front St.	Accomack
Civil Air Patrol Coastal Base Four	Bennett St.	Bennett St. at intersection with Dunne Ave., Parksley	Accomack
Fort Albion	Main Ridge Rd.	Opposite 16128 Main Ridge Rd., Tangier Island	Accomack
Founder of Presbyterianism	Lankford Hwy	Lankford Highway at intersection with Saxis Road	Accomack
Mary Nottingham Smith High School	Front St.	Business Rte. 13, 0.6 miles east of Rte. 13, at Accomac	Accomack
Oak Grove Methodist Church	Wachapreague Rd.	Southeast corner, Wachapreague Road and Langford Highway	Accomack
Occohannock Indians	Lankford Hwy	Langford Highway, west side, about 1,100 feet north of intersection with King Street	Accomack
The Parson of the Islands	Main Ridge Rd.	Main Ridge Road, at intersection with Ponderosa Road, on Tangier Island	Accomack
Elijah Baker (1742-1798)	Lankford Highway	24280 Lankford Highway	Northampton
Home of the First Settler	Courthouse Rd.	Rte. 13, south of Park Hall Lane	Northampton
Northampton County High School	Young St.	Young St., 0.2 miles from intersection with US 13, Machipongo	Northampton
Peter Jacob Carter	Bayside Rd.	7638 Bayside Road	Northampton
Salem Methodist Church	Lankford Hwy	Rte. 13, at intersection with Rte. 636	Northampton
Site of Tidewater Institute	Cobbs Station Rd.	Rte. 636, 0.75 miles east of Rte. 13	Northampton
Town Fields	Lankford Hwy	Rte. 13, at Business Rte. 13 junction, at Cheriton	Northampton

Source: <https://vcris.dhr.virginia.gov/HistoricMarkers/>

Icebreaker Exercises

Each session began with a question for stakeholders. The questions and their answers are listed below.

What is a hidden gem on the Shore?

	Accomack County	Northampton County
--	-----------------	--------------------

Attractions	ChincoTiki Caribbean Bar and Grill Harbor's End Restaurant Historic Onancock School	Barrier Island Center Pickett's Harbor Farm Quail Cove Farms Shockley Farms
History	Beebe Ranch Island Theatre Samuel D. Outlaw Blacksmith Shop Saxis Island Museum Saxis Timothy Hill House	Cape Charles Rosenwald School Restoration Initiative Eyre Hall Gardens
Outdoors	Barrier islands Beach camping in Saxis Wildlife Management Area Bivalve Trail (Assateague Island National Seashore) Dawson Shoals (Wachapreague Inlet) Guard Shore part of the Saxis Wildlife Management Area Harborton boat ramp Mutton Hunk Fen Natural Area Preserve Queen's Sound Landing (DWR) Queen's Sound Channel Sandbars	Barrier islands Bayford put-in Brinkley Nature Preserve Brownsville Nature Preserve Fisherman Island National Wildlife Refuge Indian Town Park Kiptopeake State Park Sandbars Savage Neck Dunes Natural Area Preserve Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center Wise Point Boat Ramp
Other	Bike to the beach from Chincoteague Island	

	Hang gliding	
	Marinas	
	Wachapreague Carnival	

What is your favorite restaurant on the Shore?

Accomack County	Northampton County
<i>Bill's Seafood</i>	AJ's
Channel Bass Inn	Ambrosia
Captain's Cove Golf & Yacht Club	Cape Charles Coffeehouse
Don Valerio	<i>Deadrise</i>
Harbor Inn	El Ranchito
Havana 13	<i>Exmore Diner</i>
<i>Island House Restaurant</i>	<i>Hook @ Harvey a Cape Charles Bistro</i>
Mallard's on the Wharf	<i>Kelly's Pub</i>
<i>Maurice</i>	<i>Machipongo Trading Company</i>
Ray's Shanty	Northampton Hotel
Ropewalk	Oyster Farm Seafood Eatery
Slack Tide	<i>Salt & Sand Family Restaurant</i>
Sunset Café	Small's Smokehouse
The Village Restaurant	Stingray's
	<i>The Shanty</i>

Received multiple votes

What location shows the Shore best in a single photo?

- Aerial view with Assateague Island, rockets and an eagle
- Barrier Islands
- Beach view with birds – blue herons, pelicans and poundnuts
- Cape Charles Beach
- Cape Charles LOVEwork
- Chincoteague LOVEwork
- Dock view with ponies, a couple, kayakers, birds and fishing
- Marshlands (aerial) from At Altitude
- Seaside shanties
- Sunset on the bay with beach and boats
- Sunset with ponies
- View from Island House deck at sunset looking at Barrier Islands
- View of Tangier Island

Describe ESVA in one word.

Away

Beautiful
De-stressing
Distinctive
Ecosystem
Fun
Gem
Historic
Natural
Peaceful
Rejuvenating
Relaxing
Retreat or hideaway
Slow-paced
Tranquil
Unique
Unspoiled

Fill in the blank.

The Eastern Shore is a _____ destination for _____ seeking _____.

The Eastern Shore is a unique destination for visitors seeking relaxation in a serene (or natural) environment.

The Eastern Shore is a unique destination for interesting people seeking a recharge of spirit and soul.

The Eastern Shore is a perfect destination for everyone and anyone seeking outdoor recreation, authentic experiences, world class art, phenomenal cuisine, local culture and the best hospitality from the folks of the Shore.

The Eastern Shore is a step back in time destination for living a simpler life for those seeking community.

The Eastern Shore is a peaceful destination for tired city dwellers seeking a peaceful place to recharge.

The Eastern Shore is a coastal destination adventure seeking wanderers.

The Eastern Shore is a great destination for someone seeking solitude with nature.

The Eastern Shore is a natural destination for adventurers seeking a getaway.

The Eastern Shore is a remote destination for adventurous spirits seeking easy vacationing.

The Eastern Shore is a restorative destination for busy people seeking relaxation.

The Eastern Shore is an ideal destination for anyone seeking an uncrowded, peaceful and active outdoor experience.

The Eastern Shore is a pristine destination for lovers of all natures seeking a breath of fresh air.

The Eastern Shore is an extraordinary destination for anyone seeking the experience of a lifetime.

The Eastern Shore is a nature lover's destination for friends and families seeking an escape from the big city.

The Eastern Shore is a historic destination for hunters seeking waterfowl.

The Eastern Shore is a perfect destination for anyone seeking one-of-a-kind experiences.

The Eastern Shore is a coastal destination for culture seeking adventurers.

The Eastern Shore is a couple's destination for a weekend seeking quiet and tranquility (and seafood).

The Eastern Shore is a pot of gold destination for crabs seeking a soft-shell attitude.

The Eastern Shore is a gem of a destination for people seeking an experience uniquely their own.

The Eastern Shore is a unique destination for interesting people seeking what they have longed for.

The Eastern Shore is a year-round destination for anyone seeking outdoor activities and a slower pace.

The Eastern Shore is a quiet, peaceful, laid back destination for very busy people seeking rest, relaxation, and serenity.

The Eastern Shore is a beautiful destination for people seeking the opportunity to recharge, relax, and enjoy a variety of outdoor activities.

The Eastern Shore is a unique destination for visitors seeking an authentic vacation experience.

The Eastern Shore is a zen destination for humans seeking quiet.

The Eastern Shore is a natural destination for adventurers seeking unique wildlife (or birds).