

# Regional Update

A Monthly Report of Activities on the Eastern Shore of Virginia

August 2005

## James M. McGowan Accepts Director of Planning Position with Accomack County

James M. McGowan, who worked at the PDC from September 1990 till July 2005, has accepted the Director of Planning position at Accomack County and will start on August 1st. Mr. McGowan worked with several towns as Regional Planner and later as Director of Planning. He completed town plans for Belle Haven, Bloxom, Cheriton, Painter and worked on updates and amendments for Onancock, and Nassawadox.

Mr. McGowan worked for many years on the U.S. Route 13 Corridor Study, this study was one of two priorities set when the Rural Transportation Program was started. The other priority was what came to be known as STAR transit. Mr. McGowan also worked on that issue. He has been working on Shore transportation issues continuously as PDC Director of Planning with one of his final tasks completing the Cheriton Access Management

Ordinance. He also worked on groundwater protection issues and was instrumental in getting the Household Hazardous Waste Collection started.

Executive Director Paul Berge noted that "Jim is a talented and dedicated planner. While at the A-NPDC, Jim made huge contributions to the region and agency. I am excited that Accomack can now benefit from his immense skills." The staff at A-NPDC wish him success in his new endeavors.



*Clockwise from top left: Mr. McGowan at the PDC Annual Christmas party, helping at the Household Hazardous Waste Collection and trying out the new Seaside Water Trail*

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## Executive Director Paul Berge to Serve on Coastal Policy Team

The Virginia House of Delegates and Virginia Senate have agreed to a Joint Resolution requesting Michael J. Schewel, the Secretary of Commerce and Trade, to study the possibility of exploring for natural gas in the coastal areas of the Commonwealth. The Secretary will submit a report on his findings and recommendations by January 1, 2006.

The Resolution states that the area to be considered is the Outer Continental Shelf that includes 112 miles of coastline. The Virginia General Assembly also required that the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy and the Department of Environmental Quality, Virginia Coastal Program provide technical assistance.

On June 22, 2005, Mr. Schewel and other advisory groups held a meeting to address the resolution of the Virginia General Assembly. Subsequently, the Department of Environmental Quality, Virginia Coastal Program asked Paul Berge, PDC Executive Director, to serve on the Coastal Policy Team.

The June meeting brought out many of the issues that the study is supposed to address. Virginia's energy costs are rising and business across the nation and in the Commonwealth is suffering. Natural gas is cleaner than oil and can also be used to benefit agriculture by producing fertilizer. In other examples of similar offshore drilling in the Gulf of Mexico and Nova Scotia, drilling led to reduced energy cost, stimulated business activity and in the case of Nova Scotia tourism actually increased. Senator Wagner of District Seven, including much of northeast Virginia Beach including the area around the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, sponsored

the joint resolution. He noted that drilling platforms become habitat for fish and other marine life and offshore drilling poses less of a risk to the coastal region than oil tanker traffic.

Following the Senator's remarks, several state officials gave presentations on aspects of the issue for Virginians. Natural gas makes up 11% of all the energy consumed in the Commonwealth. The largest use is in the residential sector. The nation as a whole is increasingly relying on foreign natural gas over domestic production. In 2001, foreign imports made up 17% of the natural gas supply up from 5% in 1980.



Previous studies of Virginia's coast did not demonstrate that natural gas does or does not exist on the continental shelf. Virginia's coast does have several indicators that a reservoir may exist. More study is required to determine if there is natural gas and if it is feasible to produce.

A national ocean industries representative noted that an offshore facility could cost from \$10 million to \$100 million and that an onshore gas processing facility could cost \$500 million. He also noted that technology allows extraction of natural gas for up to 50 miles around a single platform.

The Coastal Policy Team will specifically work on laying out the environmental impacts of offshore natural gas exploration and drilling.

## PSA Pounds the Pavement and Clogs the Mail

On July 13-15, 2005, Staff visited every dwelling in and around the town of Nassawadox to deliver flyers to alert everyone to a Town Meeting which is to take place on Wednesday, July 27, 2005 and to talk to and explain to residents just what the opportunities for a community sewer system can mean to them. Information mailers went out the following week, July 18-20, 2005. Responses have started coming in!

There are many advantages to having a wastewater system. Health related issues as a result of a septic system failure go away, as does the sudden large financial burden of doing the repair. The septic tank and drainfield will not get in the way of improvement projects. The disadvantage is a small monthly bill.

The Nassawadox service area will have the participation of Shore Memorial Hospital. They represent a large portion of the use of the system. The Hospital's participation represents a large operating revenue anchor for the system. Their presence offers an economy of scale in the design of the system and will help buffer costs of the potential operation, thereby serving to control cost fluctuations for all. The advantage to the Hospital is that they won't have to foot the bill for a new plant on their own, or to operate the plant once it is in operation. To put it in their words, "We're a health-care facility, that's our expertise! We aren't interested in operating a wastewater disposal plant!"

For more information, please contact Artie Miles at (757)787-2936 x.124

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## Exmore Receives Enhancement Funds

Exmore was awarded \$264,100 in the latest round of TEA-21 Enhancement Grant funding. The grant will help the Town to construct the first phase of a public parking facility between Broad Street and Main Street. It will include 56 parking spaces, a sheltered Star Transit stop and pedestrian connection to the commercial district. Property owners have agreed to donate the land needed to construct the facility.

The funds will also be used to continue improvements to Main Street between Willis Wharf Road and Commercial Avenue. It is anticipated that these funds will be available in December. For more information, please contact Kat Edwards at (757)787-2936 x.123

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## PSA Now A Single Member Authority

On Wednesday, July 20, 2005, the Eastern Shore of Virginia Public Service Authority received communication from the State Corporation Commission that the Certificate of Amendment for Accomack County's petition for withdrawal from the Authority was effective on July 13, 2005.

In preparation for the changes brought on by Accomack County's withdrawal, the Northampton County Board of Supervisors has selected Stephen C. Bunce of Nassawadox and Dr. Michael Peirson of Eastville to fill the vacant positions for a minimum Board complement of five members.



### How to Contact the A-NPDC

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