



Virginia's Working Waterfronts

Eastern Shore

Regional Value

- Since colonial times, working waterfronts have been essential infrastructure to the Eastern Shore's economy.
- Clam and oyster aquaculture industries have historically been key sources of income for Eastern Shore citizens who have access to growing areas and off-loading sites.
- Many of the Eastern Shore's waterfront towns have made investments into enhancing and preserving their public harbors, and Accomack and Northampton Counties maintain numerous public facilities used by working watermen.

Regional Challenges

- Shifting land ownership and waterfront development have negatively impacted working waterfronts in areas with growing tourism economies.
- Viewshed issues have arisen between landowners and clam and oyster growers.
- Natural hazards such as sea level rise and storm surge in tandem with aging infrastructure and navigability have reduced the working capacity of working waterfronts.
- The watermen demographic is aging and fewer young people are going into business within the industry.

Virginia's working waterfronts are of great historic, economic and cultural value. Unfortunately, they are disappearing. It's time to find solutions.

The following organizations have come together to harvest solutions at the Virginia Working Waterfronts Workshop:

King's Creek Marina and Cape Charles Harbor: Meeting the Needs of Watermen

King's Creek Marina and the Cape Charles Harbor together provide valuable recreational and commercial waterfront access, welcome residents and visitors, and help maintain the historic and economic vitality of this Eastern Shore community.

Located on the north side of the town of Cape Charles, King's Creek Marina, once known as King's Creek Harbor, was purchased by a private developer, who put in all new facilities with floating docks. Prior to the sale, the waterfront was primarily used by commercial watermen. The fees at this site were lower than in the Town Harbor on the south side of Cape Charles. The



Virginia Working Waterfront Workshop

Exchange ideas and potential strategies to keep Virginia's waterfronts working!

Wednesday, February 26, 2013

Virginia Institute of Marine Science
Eastern Shore Community College (satellite location)

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Call—Beth Polak, Virginia CZM Program, (804) 698-4260

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Kings Creek Harbor waterfront also had a marine rail line that enabled the watermen to haul their boats for painting and other work. Selling the waterfront for redevelopment however was a logical step for the private owner. The facility was in a state of partial decline with narrow and rotting docks, primitive restroom facilities, and the severely shoaled channel was a challenge to keep open. The King's Creek Marina Site is zoned as "Planned Unit Development (PUD) – Special Commercial", which was exactly what the developer needed for the housing development, shops, restaurant, and marina. When the developer bought King's Creek Harbor, there was concern that the watermen would not be welcome after redevelopment.



Southeasterly aerial view of the Cape Charles Town Harbor. The facility is a designated Harbor of Refuge that serves a variety of commercial, recreational, and industrial users. Credit: Cape Charles Wave.

Commercial uses are allowed, but the fees are viewed as prohibitive by watermen, and the floating docks are not conducive to gear loading or off loading. Almost all commercial watermen began working out of the Cape Charles Town Harbor.

The move of many commercial watermen

from King's Creek Marina to the Cape Charles Town Harbor benefited the harbor. Partly due to an increase in use of the working waterfront provided by the harbor, the Town of Cape Charles has been able to acquire funds and make many improvements to the harbor, including new bulkheads, docks, a bath house, and two launch ramps.

The Cape Charles Town Harbor serves commercial watermen as its first priority, with transient and seasonal boaters as second priority. Challenges for watermen and subsequently for the vitality of the working waterfront remain. The seasonality of crabbing—winter crab dredging was closed in 2008—has impacted activity in the Harbor. During the winter months, there are few commercial watermen in the harbor. Tangier Island crabbers will be in Cape Charles as soon as the season opens and will follow the crabs north as the season progresses.

Redevelopment of King's Creek Harbor proved to be a boon for the town. King's Creek Marina is a world-class recreational marina and is a revenue-generating asset for the Town of Cape Charles. While the improved, publically-owned and operated, Cape Charles Town Harbor—a designated Harbor of Refuge—will be an asset for commercial watermen in perpetuity.

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Value of Virginia's Working Waterfronts

Virginia is known for its rich history of maritime commerce. Today working waterfronts continue to be a force in local economies, providing critical access to coastal waters for commercial fishing, seafood processing, recreational fishing businesses, boat building, aquaculture and other water-dependent businesses. Working waterfronts are without a doubt a vital element of the culture and character of our coastal communities.

Challenges Facing Virginia's Working Waterfronts

Working Waterfronts are under pressure. These important areas are being converted to other uses, such as condominiums, hotels, restaurants or private residences. Increasing demand for waterfront properties along Virginia's coast has resulted in an increase in property values and higher costs for traditional waterfront businesses. Because of these and other factors, Virginia is slowly losing its working waterfronts – an issue that may have long-term consequences for local economies, the environment, our coastal culture and quality of life.