

## Regional Resources Reports Southern Maryland



*Regional Resources Teams, comprised of the 10 State Agencies of the [Governor's Commerce Subcabinet](#) as well as the Governor's Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, were formed in 2019 to improve communication and collaboration between state agencies representatives in their respective regions across the state. The teams meet regularly to provide project updates and identify opportunities to assist businesses and local jurisdictions with economic development efforts. This report exemplifies how the Regional Resources Team is collaborating to support Southern Maryland region.*

The towns of Chesapeake Beach and North Beach are neighboring communities in Calvert County situated directly on the Chesapeake Bay. Their proximity to the Chesapeake Bay, Fishing Creek and tidal wetland/marshes in conjunction with a high water table and shoreline erosion make them susceptible to tidal flooding, while the topography of the area can also make areas of the both towns susceptible to stormwater flooding during weather events. Each community wanted to work to address their flood related concerns, and they decided to work together based on their shared boundaries, opportunities, and challenges. This joint approach builds on recent efforts in Chesapeake Beach to map the impacts of sea level rise and ongoing nuisance flooding and stormwater initiatives in each town.

The Maryland Regional Resources team works to assist local jurisdictions and businesses by providing a single point of contact when they need state assistance to resolve an issue quickly and efficiently. Gretchen Hardman is the regional leader for the Southern Regional Resources team and when the Mayor of North Beach, Michael Benton, shared with her that his town was experiencing challenges related to flooding and parking, a team visit to North Beach was scheduled. Representatives from numerous agencies met with Mayor Benton and Dawn Richardson, North Beach Public Relations & Marketing, in January of 2020.

During the course of the visit, the Mayor and Ms. Richardson described the challenges associated with flooding of the downtown area, shared pictures of flood events and the impacts on the downtown area, and took the group for a walking tour of the area impacted by flooding. Regional Resources team member, Sarah Lipkin Sularz, Maryland Department of Planning, had already been working with the community on flood-related issues and assisted Donald Bowen, North Beach Director of Public Works, along with interested town residents in forming a committee for concerned participants, known as the Stormwater Flooding Mitigation Advisory Committee.

From her close interaction with the town and its citizens, Ms. Sularz had great insight into the town's scenario, including previous efforts to obtain grant funding. So when the Regional Resources team was asked to support North Beach, Ms. Sularz quickly got the team up to speed on the challenges, so the team could get to work connecting the town with state resources to help address the challenges.

Regional Resource team member, Cheryl Wise, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, provided North Beach with information about and links to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Chesapeake and Coastal Service Grants Gateway. The Grants Gateway was created to provide a one-stop location for government, non-government, and academic institutions seeking technical and financial support for projects that foster healthy ecosystems, communities, and economies that are resilient in the face of change. Working with DNR through the Grants Gateway and with the University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center, the towns of Chesapeake and North Beach assembled a basic Flood and Sea Level Rise Action Plan Framework that will allow the towns to develop and implement high-quality plans that can be updated as required over time.

The next step, which involves development of a more detailed plan, is expected to begin July 1, 2021. Like development of the plan framework, development of the detailed plan is funded by a grant obtained through the Grants Gateway.

For North Beach, the fact that flooding issues impact 5th street, the only main road out of the town, lends urgency to finding effective solutions. Additional considerations of sea level rise impacts to evaluate include:

- Social impacts of flooding on the community and on certain populations within the community including the delivery of social support services;
- Impacts on quality of life for residents and visitors;
- Displacement or elimination of recreational amenities and/or access to them;
- Disruption of community wide gatherings, festivals, celebrations and remembrances;
- Impacts on other public goods that the community had sought to achieve, including the ability to provide quality housing for low income residents, accessibility for the disabled, and the opportunity for children to learn about the town's coastal heritage and environment.

Addressing flooding will provide economic benefits to North Beach by opening opportunities to develop currently undeveloped lots within the Main Street corridor of downtown North Beach. Calvert County has slated this area for the next county library center, which will be an important community resource. Development of the area, which has been postponed due to flooding, will also create business opportunities and have a positive impact on residents, tourists, visitors, and the downtown business community. In addition to allowing new development, solutions to the town's flooding issues will help protect existing development and businesses.