



**VIRGINIA COASTAL
RESILIENCE
MASTER PLAN**
2021



**Aquia Underserved Community Meeting
Summary Report**

Meeting Date: October 20, 2021

Meeting Time: 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Meeting Location: Stafford County Government Center Board Chambers

Attendance: 8 in person; 5 via Zoom

Commonwealth Staff: Joshua Saks, Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources

Overview: Joshua Saks conducted a power point presentation to relay the importance of coastal resiliency in the face of increased flooding. He also explained the goals of the Coastal Resilience Master Plan and its relationship to the Community Flood Preparedness Fund. He addressed participants' questions and asked participants to communicate the needs of their community. Attendees participated in a mapping exercise to identify flooding challenges in Stafford County. Attendees participating via Zoom were asked to post any questions or comments in the Zoom chat.

Participant Comments and Questions

- Brooke Road is a primary concern for Stafford County, as when Accokeek Creek floods, the Creek and Brooke Road merge.
 - There are over 350 houses that become isolated when it floods – there is no route in or out.
 - Brooke Road floods very often, and the surrounding residents have limited access to safety services.
 - The houses themselves do not flood, but it is a major public safety issue because there is poor cell coverage and lack of access to communication, so it is difficult for residents to seek help.
 - The County has limited emergency services. When Brooke Road floods, it is difficult to offer emergency services to those residents that become isolated.
 - The County is spending over \$100,000 to study Brooke Road specifically and also the watershed along Accokeek Creek. The

goal is to better understand the underlying cause of the issue, what impact development has had on the road, what solutions are available to us, and what the cost of those solutions are. The County is hoping to apply for a grant in the future to address the problem.

- Brooke Road is not the only area in Stafford County that has this issue, but it is the largest threat to public safety.
- All of the docks in Aquia Harbor have been impacted by flooding; many people have had to raise their docks. The issue of coastal resiliency is often placed on the backs of the individuals living in this area.
- County staff appreciate the acknowledgement that the combined effect of multiple flooding types has heavily impacted the area.
- In the Aquia Harbor area, an erosion project to protect the bridge from the erosion of Aquia Creek was completed. This was the second major project completed in the area- the first was conducted at Austin Run.
- The bridge near Austin Run was almost completely destroyed by a heavy rain event, which resulted in tens of thousands of dollars in repair. Hurricane Isabella in 2003 caused extreme flooding in Aquia, which resulted in fire department hovercraft having to evacuate elderly individuals in need of aid.
- County staff reported that they do not yet have enough information to outline a project-specific strategy; however, they would like to take advantage of funding opportunities.
 - Joshua Saks encouraged County staff to reach out to DCR to gain advice regarding project-specific information. He also assured staff that local resiliency plans do not have to include detailed project information; the plan can demonstrate how a locality is identifying problem areas and exploring resiliency solutions while maintaining a broad perspective, so that the locality can revisit project-specific decisions when they have more information.
- Participants asked for clarification regarding the scale at which communities can apply for funding.
- Participants asked for clarification regarding the relationship between the Community Flood Preparedness Fund and the Coastal Resilience Master Plan.
 - In particular, participants asked if funding through the CFPF was only for projects that address coastal flooding. Joshua Saks clarified that the CFPF is meant to address any type of flooding throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

- County staff asked whether localities will have influence over the decision criteria for the CFPF grant manual. They expressed concern that the grant manual did not appropriately weigh the impact on public safety due to flooding, such as is the case at Brooke Rd.
- County staff expressed concern that projects related to Brooke Road flooding would not be appropriately weighted, as the community impacted would likely not be considered socially vulnerable.
- Participants expressed concern with the grant manual and the ability to receive funding if the project does not focus on green infrastructure. Joshua Saks provided clarification that the grant funding is not solely focused on green infrastructure projects.
- County staff expressed concern that projects need to be shovel-ready in order to receive funding, but the development of projects that are high-cost, only to potentially not receive supportive funding, could negatively impact the area financially.
- Participants asked if it is preferable for the planning district commission or the locality to apply for grants. Joshua Saks clarified that it is the choice of local governments- either entity can apply.
- Participants expressed concern regarding dam safety and asked if Service Districts could apply for CFPF grant funding, because the Dam Safety Fund is often underfunded. Joshua Saks responded that Service Districts could not apply for grant funding, but that hopefully the creation of the CFPF will free funds in the Dam Safety Fund.
 - Joshua Saks encouraged participants to continue raising the issue of dam safety and its connection with coastal resiliency, as well as applying for funds to address such issues.
- Participants identified that many property owners would like to implement their own, small-scale resiliency projects, but they are limited and overwhelmed by permitting, regulations, and the cost of engineering studies. Should be taking advantage of small groups and individuals who want to contribute resources to promote coastal resiliency, especially if these efforts can prevent the government from having to contribute extensive costs if or when something disastrous happens.