

Executive Summary

Environmental Services Strategic Plan

To be finalized by November 15, 2020

The George Washington Regional Commission's role in regional environmental services has been growing with increased support from the state to provide technical assistance to member localities. **The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, administering federal funds for coastal zone management and water quality improvement programs, asks GWRC to prepare scopes of work for annual funding.** If GWRC can conceptualize and implement technical assistance projects serving member localities and generate the required cash or in-kind match, the commission can bring federal funds to the region in a relatively simple process for non-competitive grants.

The purpose of this strategic plan is to identify the regionals environmental services needs, coordinate the requirements of related programs, create a list of strategies, and develop an implementation plan. **The result is a recommendation for each program scope of work for each of the next ten years. This gives us strong proposals for projects that build upon each other over time to maximize impact and return on investment.** It also gives a wish list of unfunded projects, a desire to acquire cash for matching federal grants instead of in-kind services, and a list of partners and potential funding sources for achieving all our strategies.

The items in this plan transcend the commission's environmental services department to interact with economic development, human services, and transportation programs. For example, the plan includes ecotourism, improving air quality, and creating trail networks for non-motorized mobility. In 2016, the Trust for Public Land reported that every \$1 invested in land conservation returns \$4 in economic value in natural goods and services in the form of improved air and water quality, carbon sequestration, and enhanced fish and wildlife habitat. The Trust also reported that outdoor recreation generates \$13.6 billion in consumer spending and \$923 million in state and local tax revenues in Virginia. **The strategies in the plan contribute to improved environmental quality and quality of life.**

Current annual program funding:

- Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Program. GWRC is receiving \$52,000 with a requirement for \$13,000 in match (cash or in-kind).
- Coastal Zone Management Technical Assistance Program. GWRC is receiving \$34,500 with a requirement for \$34,500 in match (cash or in-kind).

New program funding:

- APPROVED: Coastal Zone Management Resilience Program. GWRC will receive \$30,000 with a requirement for \$30,000 in match (cash or in-kind) for each of the next three years.