



REGION **22**

*Accomack-
Northampton*



Chincoteague | Jason Barnette/Virginia Tourism Corp.

Introduction

The Accomack-Northampton Recreational Planning Region includes the counties of Accomack and Northampton and the towns of Accomac, Belle Haven, Bloxom, Cape Charles, Cheriton, Chincoteague, Eastville, Exmore, Hallwood, Keller, Melfa, Nassawadox, Onancock, Onley, Painter, Parksley, Saxis, Tangier and Wachapreague. Virginia’s Eastern Shore is the narrow, 70-mile long, southern portion of the Delmarva Peninsula separating the Atlantic Ocean from the Chesapeake Bay. In addition, the region provides five major metropolitan areas with premier outdoor recreation opportunities. Emerging technologies, including investments in broadband, the Virginia Space Coast, solar, wind and offshore oil and gas, enhance the region’s economic status. Outstanding natural resources, valued rural and agricultural lifestyle combined with education, health care and job creation are integral to the success the region enjoys as a destination for outdoor recreation.

Regional Focus

Table 22.1 Most-Needed Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Accomack-Northampton Recreational Planning Region

activity	% of households in	
	region	state
Parks	48	49
Natural areas	47	54
Water access	47	43
Trails	40	43
Historic areas	33	39
Playing fields, sports and golf facilities	27	22
Scenic drives (driving for pleasure)	25	29

Source: 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey



Cape Charles | Sarah Hauser/Virginia Tourism Corp.

Table 22.2 Top 10 Outdoor Recreation Activities By Participation

Accomack-Northampton Recreational Planning Region

activity	% household
Driving for pleasure	65
Walking for pleasure	64
Visiting natural areas	62
Viewing the water	48
Visiting parks (local, state & national)	45
Sunbathing/relaxing on a beach	44
Saltwater fishing	42
Swimming/beach/lake river (open water)	42
Swimming/outdoor pool	40
Visiting historic areas	38

Source: 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey. Visit www.dcr.virginia.gov/vop to view regional participation rates for more than 100 activities.

Regional Featured Projects

To be considered a regional featured project, a project must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Has statewide or regional significance.
- Addresses top statewide or regional needs identified by the Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey.
- Has involvement and support from multiple jurisdictions in the region.
- Able to be initiated within the next five years.

Featured projects for the Accomack-Northampton region:

- Develop Bike and Hike Trail as part of the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail initiative.
- Develop and enhance regional water trails, including the Seaside Water Trail and the Bayside Water Trail incorporating Chesapeake Bay Gateways and the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail.
- Connect Eastern Shore towns and waterfront public access using multiuse trails.
- Develop small community parks and larger district parks to provide athletic facilities, sports fields, picnic areas, swimming and other recreational activities.
- Implement the East Coast Greenway.

Outdoor Recreation Economic Impact

Table 22.3 Per-Capita Spending on Parks and Recreation

Accomack-Northampton Recreational Planning Region

locality	dollars
Accomack County	17.29
Northampton County	18.16
Statewide	71.09

Source: Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, "Comparative Report on Local Government Revenues and Expenditures," 2016.

Outdoor Recreation Interface with Virginia Tourism

The Virginia State Tourism Plan was completed by Virginia Tourism Corp. in March 2013. In 2017, Virginia Tourism compiled "Nature & Outdoors" recommendations in Appendix 13 for each recreation planning region.

Regional Historic Resources

Occupying perhaps the most individual landscape in Virginia, the Accomack-Northampton region includes the two counties comprising Virginia's portion of the Eastern Shore as well as Tangier Island. Multiple small towns and communities are linked by Route 13, the region's only north-south highway, and are separated by stretches of low, level fields and pine forests. Bounded on three sides by the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, the region's residents have focused on the acquisition and use of marine resources for thousands of years. Archaeological sites along the Eastern Shore indicate the presence of significant prehistoric Native American occupations, as well as some of the earliest evidence for permanent European settlement in Virginia. Shoreline villages such as Saxis and Onancock contain dwellings and buildings reflective of the surviving waterman's culture in this region, while larger towns like Cape Charles contain the historic hotels, theaters and other amenities associated with earlier

Table 22.4 Virginia State Parks 2017 Attendance and Economic Impact

Accomack-Northampton Recreational Planning Region

state park	location	overnight visitors	day-use visitors	total visitors	economic impact
Kiptopeke	75,495	354,262	429,757	\$8.4M	\$8,645,852

Source: Virginia State Parks

Regional Health

Table 22.5 Health Trends

Accomack-Northampton Recreational Planning Region

locality	adult smoking (% of adults)	adult obesity (% of adults with BMI over 30)	physical inactivity (% of adults age 20 or over reporting no leisure time physical activity)	access to exercise opportunities (% population with adequate access to locations for physical activity)	air pollution – particulate matter (micrograms per cubic meter)
Accomack County	18	35	28	41	8.1
Northampton County	18	36	27	44	7.8
Statewide	17	27	21	81	8.7

Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

steamship and later automobile tourism. Visitors to the region can enjoy educational exhibits at the Poor House Farm (Barrier Islands Center), view the 1740 brick house known as Pear Valley, eat at the historic Exmore Diner and tour the Late Victorian-style Accomack County Courthouse. Adventurous visitors can book passage to Tangier Island and visit a truly unique and historic Virginia community.

Appropriate conservation activities may include installation of highway markers to commemorate historic locations and events, placement of historic properties on the Virginia Landmarks Register or National Register of Historic Places and placement of historic preservation and open space easements. Conservation targets include: 17th, 18th, 19th and early 20th century dwellings and commercial buildings/districts; historic schools and churches; resources associated with waterman history; and significant prehistoric habitation sites. Information about historic buildings, structures and archaeological sites is maintained in the permanent files of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and is available to local planners.

Table 22.6 Regional Historic Resources

Accomack-Northampton Recreational Planning Region

resource	location
Poor House Farm (Barrier Islands Center)	Northampton County
Pear Valley	Northampton County
Accomack County Courthouse	Accomack County
Tangier Island	Accomack County
Arlington Archaeological Site and Custis Tombs	Northampton County
King and Queen Courthouse Tavern	King and Queen County

Land Conservation

Table 22.7 Conserved Lands

Accomack-Northampton Recreational Planning Region

locality	easement acres	ownership acres
Accomack County	19,716.46	61,320.58
Northampton County	13,390.00	38,422.60
Total	132,849.64	

Source: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Protected Lands Inventory.

Natural Area Preserves and Natural Heritage Resources

Occupying Virginia’s Eastern Shore, the Accomack-Northampton Planning District plays an important role in preserving biodiversity on the East Coast — particularly for birdlife. Every autumn, migratory land birds funnel onto the Delmarva Peninsula en route to their southern wintering grounds and concentrate near the southern tip to feed and rest before continuing the journey across the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay and beyond. Other important biodiversity highlights of the region include globally rare sea-level fen communities and the federally and state threatened northeastern beach tiger beetle.

DCR recommends that conservation activities and land protection efforts in the region focus on unprotected Essential Conservation Sites and all unprotected portions of Natural Area Preserve resiliency areas. Secondly, strategic land conservation should expand upon existing managed areas and seek connectivity via protecting and/or managing intact ecological cores and natural vegetation cover between currently protected lands. Finally, attention on remaining unprotected natural heritage resources within the region should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The appropriate conservation activities and methods of protection will vary with each site but may include placing the site on Virginia’s Registry of Natural Areas; developing a voluntary management agreement with the landowner; securing a conservation easement through a local land trust; acquiring the site through a locality or local land trust; dedicating the site as a natural area preserve with the current owner; or acquiring the site as a state-owned natural area preserve.

Conservation targets of special significance in the region include:

- Migratory land bird habitat.
- Freshwater marshes and associated uplands in Accomack County.
- Sandy beach habitats and associated wetlands and uplands that support threatened northeastern beach tiger beetle

Information about the location of conservation sites and the natural heritage resources they contain, as well as management assistance, is available to local planners from DCR’s Natural Heritage Program. For more on the Natural Heritage Program, see Chapter 11 and Appendix 11.



Chincoteague ponies | Todd Wright/Virginia Tourism Corp.

Table 22.8 Natural Area Preserves

Accomack-Northampton Recreational Planning Region

preserve name	owner	locality
Cape Charles	DCR	Northampton County
Magothy Bay	DCR	Northampton County
Mark's and Jack's Island	The Nature Conservancy	Accomack County
Mutton Hunk Fen	DCR	Accomack County
Parkers Marsh	DCR	Accomack County
Parramore Island	The Nature Conservancy	Accomack County
Pickett's Harbor	DCR	Northampton County
Savage Neck Dunes	DCR	Northampton County
Wreck Island	DCR	Northampton County

Table 22.9 Natural Heritage Resources

Accomack-Northampton Recreational Planning Region

Number of occurrences of rare species and significant natural communities	415
Number of different rare species and significant community types (natural heritage elements)	132
Number of globally rare natural heritage elements	26
Number of species listed as federally endangered or threatened	4
Number of species listed as state endangered or threatened	8
Number of terrestrial conservation sites identified by DCR	64
Number of conservation sites with little or no protection	28
Number of partially protected conservation sites	32
Number of well protected conservation sites	4

Information as of Feb. 28, 2018. Source: Virginia Natural Heritage Program