

VIRGINIA CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

May 25, 2022

AFTERNOON SESSION

PURPOSE AND AGENDA

Council briefing regarding City's potential participation in the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program in order to provide technical and financial assistance to property owners installing eligible living shoreline projects.

- Living Shorelines
- Virginia Conservation Assistance Program
- Participation in VCAP
- Potential MOU Elements
- Other Considerations
- Recommendations & Feedback

LIVING SHORELINES

Virginia Code defines a living shoreline as a shoreline management practice that provides erosion control and water quality benefits; protects, restores or enhances natural shoreline habitat; and maintains coastal processes through the strategic placement of plants, stone, sand fill, and other structural and organic materials.

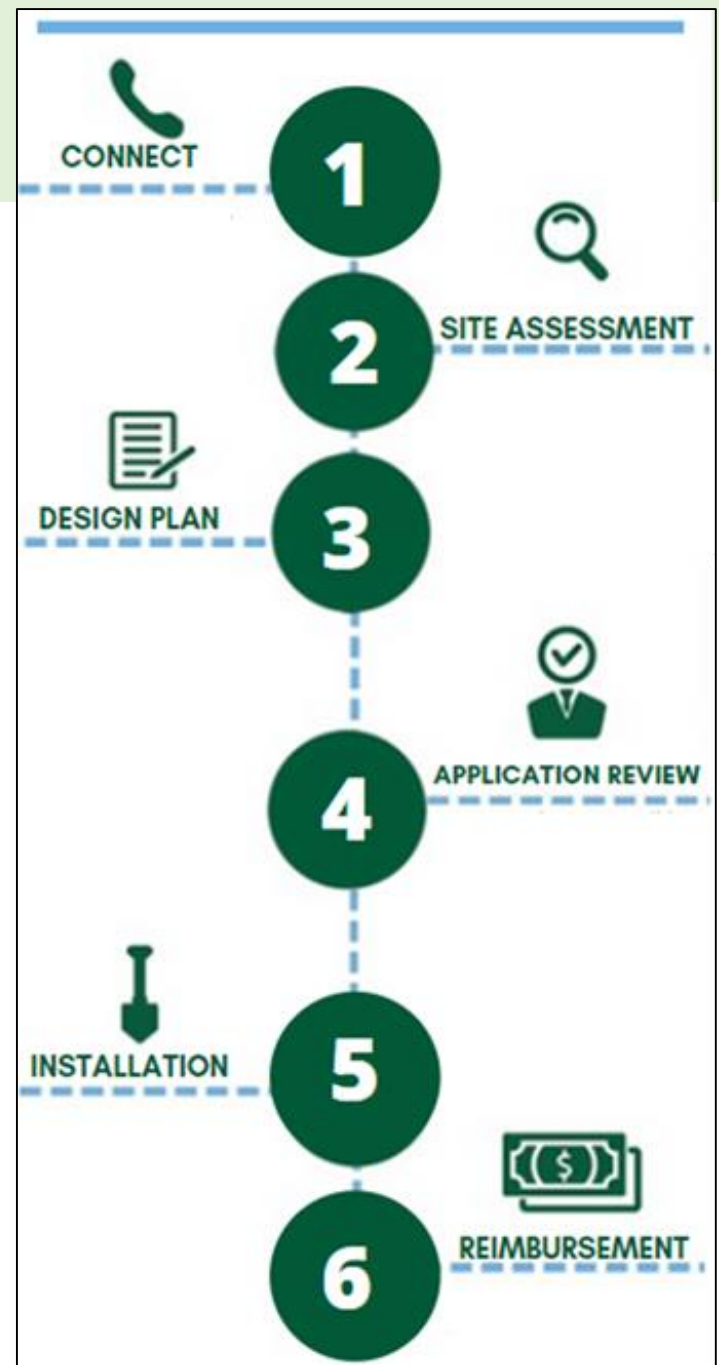


LIVING SHORELINES

- Living shoreline projects are both a priority and a challenge for City property owners.
- Recent changes to Tidal Wetlands Act and VMRC Tidal Wetlands Guidelines require a living shoreline unless the best available science indicates such an approach is not suitable.
- Living shorelines provide multiple benefits, including those associated with water quality and resilience, but can also be unfamiliar and potentially expensive.
- A potential option to provide support to property owners, via technical and financial assistance, is for the City to participate in the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP).

VIRGINIA CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

- An existing, statewide urban cost-share program administered by the regional Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs).
- Property owners receive technical assistance and financial reimbursement when installing eligible best management practices (BMPs) that improve water quality by reducing nonpoint source pollution – eligible BMPs include living shorelines.
- Property owners follow a six-step application and approval process and can generally receive reimbursement for 75% of the installation cost (currently, up to \$15,000).



PARTICIPATION IN VCAP



- VCAP participation is limited to localities within the associated SWCD's service area. Localities outside of the service area may participate by entering into an MOU with the nearest SWCD.
- Hampton is not located within a SWCD service area. For property owners to be eligible to participate, the City would need to enter into an MOU with the Colonial SWCD.
- This MOU would detail the roles and responsibilities of the City and the Colonial SWCD with respect to VCAP within the City.

POTENTIAL MOU ELEMENTS

- Initial term in line with the City's fiscal year;
- Focus on the installation of living shorelines specifically;
- City staff assist with initial screening of potential projects through the existing inquiry or permit review process;
- Colonial SWCD provide up to 20 initial site visits for interested property owners;
- Colonial SWCD provide technical assistance and financial reimbursement for up to 10 eligible living shoreline projects; and
- City contribute \$1,000 to Colonial SWCD for each living shoreline project, up to \$10,000 in total.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- In conjunction with VCAP, some localities have established local programs to provide additional reimbursement-based funding as a further incentive.
- Potential options for the City might include:
 - Expanding the existing Resilient and Innovative Neighbor (RAIN) Grant Program, which does not currently include living shorelines; and/or
 - Determine whether the in-lieu fees collected by the City's Wetlands Board could be utilized for this purpose.

RECOMMENDATIONS & FEEDBACK

- Staff recommends moving forward to coordinate with Colonial SWCD staff to draft an MOU, with the elements summarized previously, for Council's consideration and approval at a later date (potentially Council's July or August meeting).
- Additionally, Staff recommends conducting further research into the ability to expand the RAIN Grant Program and/or utilize the Wetlands Board in-lieu fees to provide additional financial support to property owners who install a living shoreline.

FEEDBACK AND QUESTIONS?