



Citizens
for a Better
Eastern Shore

CITIZENS FOR A BETTER EASTERN SHORE

SHORELINE

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Culture on the Eastern Shore of Virginia*

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Eastern Shore Health Rankings...

...Another Disappointing and Discouraging Report Card

By Mary Miller

Once again, both Eastern Shore counties have been ranked “among the least healthy” counties in Virginia, by the annual County Health Rankings & Roadmaps (CHR&R) of the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, which is supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (www.county-healthrankings.org).

But unlike many rural counties, the Shore is considerably more medically well-served, and has many opportunities for exercise and outdoor activities. There is a hospital, while rural hospitals are closing elsewhere. There are professional medical offices and services from Cape Charles to Chincoteague. There is a recently opened express care center. There are 5 Rural Health facilities. There are ambulance services and pharmacies in both counties. There are walking trails, recreation facilities, beaches, and YMCAs. The availability of health care services and wellness opportunities begs the

question: why is the Shore population ranked as “among the least healthy” in Virginia?

Aside from the national demographics of large segments of the rural population – poverty, aging, food insecurity, isolation, etc. – there appear to be other factors involved.

Research from medical publications, academic reports, local public health offices, and regional news sources indicate that several barriers to accessing health care are consistent from one rural area to another. And many of them might apply to the Shore.



Healthcare Barriers

- Transportation challenges – either no reliable personal transportation or not enough public service. The cost of travel across the Bay or to Maryland for medical consultation or hospital care is out of reach for many Shore households.
- A shortage of support personnel – social workers, mental health professionals, and educational outreach teams – stretches thin the available medical professionals.
- Lack of in-home internet/broadband service limits telemedicine service.
- The lack of health insurance, or difficulty paying premiums or copays, discourage many from even seeking needed medical care.

See **Health**, *Cont'd on page 3*

Return to Our Roots

Saturday, April 20

10 AM - 3 PM

Exmore Town Park

Free concerts:

Paul Pesco, a nationally known guitarist, singer, and songwriter;
Alvy Powell, internationally known bass baritone

Celebrate the convergence of 3 national events – Earth Day 2024, National Parks Day, and National Volunteer Week. Enjoy a full agenda of music, fun, and informative activities, plus vendors, food and beverage, kid-friendly games, and free health screening.

Park events are FREE. Celebrate in the Park until 3 pm. Then, in the evening, “Back to Our Roots” transitions to the legendary Do Drop Inn in Weirwood, featuring more entertainment representing the rich musical legacy of our region.

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SAVE THE DATE!

The CBES Picnic and Annual Meeting is scheduled for June 2. Food, fun, and friendly folks celebrating community on a beautiful bayside farm. Information at cbes.org, or call 757-678-7157.

Here We Go Again ... Development vs Our Zoning

By Arthur Upshur

In Northampton County, there is currently a proposal to re-zone 5.89 acres of lot 112-A-94 from Agricultural/Rural Business (2.74 acres) and from Mobile Home Park (3.15 acres) to Hamlet/Residential. This will enable a developer from across the Bay to develop a portion of this land into 10 planned house lots. The land is located near the southern tip of the Eastern Shore at the intersection of the Seaside Road and Cedar Grove Drive.

There is a lot of local opposition to the proposal. More than 350 residents have signed a petition in opposition. It is not a simple discussion, because the developer has presented the development as a way to increase workforce housing for our community. Since the conversion of so much housing stock to short-term rentals, lower-cost housing options have been in short supply, particularly for new residents such as new teaching staff at our schools. The Planning Commission has recommended approval of this proposal to the Board of Supervisors by a 4-3 vote. I think this was a mistake by our Planning Commissioners, and hope that the Board of Supervisors will consider this application carefully and decide not to rezone this property.

Rezoning at any time is a risky action and needs to be very carefully considered. It creates a potential windfall for owners of lands that are rezoned. In this case for example, we will be taking land that formerly was restricted to a single house per 20 acres on agricultural land and changing it so that 10 homes will be built on just under 6 acres of the land. Zoning restrictions partially set the value of the land. By allowing more development or more intensive use of the land, this rezoning will create a lot of profit opportunity for the developer. This is why rezoning often includes proffers, or offers from a developer to provide value to the county in return for the extraordinary returns the county is offering by rezoning. There are no proffers on hand in this case.

This proposal is troubling for several reasons. First, the developer seeks to expand an existing hamlet to include the new housing development. Our Hamlet designation was designed to preserve a number of existing small clusters of housing that were historically “grandfathered” in because they did not fit with surrounding zoning and existing zoning rules (see Mary Miller’s article, “The Hamlets of Northampton County,” *ShoreLine*, January 2024). As a designation, it was meant to protect the owners by recognizing their area as a defined community and protecting them when any infill development happened so it would be consistent with the residential community. To be clear, as Mary Miller’s article more fully explained, there is no mechanism for hamlets to be expanded or to create new ones outside of a change in our zoning ordinance and through revising our comprehensive plan, which articulated their original purpose.

The second issue with this application is that the developer is proposing to eliminate a mobile

home park to allow the construction of his new homes. That means that 4 trailers and their occupants will be displaced. It has increasingly been the case that single-wide mobile homes are our best low-cost, low-price housing option in the county, and eliminating a mobile trailer park is hardly consistent with county goals of increasing available affordable housing.

The third issue is that the new homes proposed will be unlikely to help our current housing shortage. There were no conditions offered or placed on the proposed housing. It seems likely that these will be marketed and sold to new residents of our county from across the Bay. Their location makes them a viable option for commuting across the bridge. They may also be bought by investors for short-term rentals. In any case, the developer will sell them at the highest price he can, and they are likely to be sold at higher prices to off-county investors than to lower-income county residents. While I share the broad concern in our community of lower-cost housing options, this is neither a part of the solution or really of any benefit to our local community.

Finally, I should point out that this development removes agricultural land from production and creates more housing density in an area that is recognized as a sensitive ecological area so close to the southern tip of the Eastern Shore. This too is in direct contradiction to our planning process.

Again, I believe in allowing more housing on the Eastern Shore, particularly if we can find a way to increase its density and lower its price to increase overall housing availability. We are currently experiencing a building boom, but only with high-price homes that are more profitable to build. Our zoning restrictions should encourage more development in and around our

See Development, Cont'd on page 3

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Editorial Board

Donna Bozza Sue Mastyl
Eleanor Gordon Mary Miller
Arthur Upshur

Staff Photographer

Cecil Watts

Editor/Design

Sarah Morgan, *Savoy Studio*

Contact Us

P.O. Box 882, Eastville, VA 23347
(757) 678-7157
info@cbes.org • www.cbes.org

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- A cultural reticence about seeking medical help, especially in a small community, includes worries about privacy.
- And literacy and education issues often leave many rural residents unable to understand and comply with health care instructions, or work their way through the insurance or medical systems.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services indicate that rural Americans often experience significant health inequities. “Compared to urban Americans, rural Americans are more likely to have heart disease, stroke, cancer, unintentional injuries, suicide risk, and chronic lung disease, and have higher death rates from Covid-19” (<https://www.cms.gov/blog/addressing-rural-health-inequities-medicare>). Medicare covers 1 in every 3 adult residents who live in rural areas. Telemedicine has become an essential tool for both Medicare and Medicaid, as many rural areas face increasing provider shortages and transportation challenges.

The availability of health care services and wellness opportunities begs the question: why is the Shore population ranked as “among the least healthy” in Virginia?

Northampton and Accomack Health Rankings

The statistics that contribute to the Shore’s “least healthy” rankings include both health outcomes and other health factors that contribute to the outcomes.

Compared to other Virginia counties, **Northampton** has almost twice the premature death rate, and a 30% higher injury death rate. The premature death rate among

Black residents is almost twice that of White residents. Adult obesity and physical inactivity rank higher, as does diabetes. Sexually transmitted infections, HIV prevalence, and teen births are higher than other counties. Child and infant mortality, children in poverty, food insecurity, and children in single-parent households rank much higher than in other Virginia counties.

Accomack County rankings are very similar to Northampton’s. The disparity of the premature death rate between Black and White residents is about 33%, and the uninsured rate is higher than in other counties. But the health factors and outcomes of injury death rate, adult obesity, physical inactivity, diabetes, sexually transmitted infections, teen births, HIV prevalence, child and infant mortality, children in poverty, food insecurity, and children in single-parent households all ranked higher than in other Virginia counties.

Montgomery County, Virginia, Study – Availability vs Access

A study was undertaken by the National Institute of Health (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22812680/>) to try to find answers to why many of Montgomery County’s rural residents were not accessing even the limited available medical services. “The objective of the study was to investigate and describe the perceptions, beliefs and practices that impact healthcare utilization among underserved populations in Montgomery County, Virginia.” By directly interacting with the community, the study hoped to discover cultural medical care mindsets, perceived health care barriers, and coping strategies.

Interestingly, many of the perceived barriers to health care access mirrored other studies and reports – lack of transportation and insurance, too many complications in obtaining affordable care, and difficulty navigating the systems. Other, more personal or cultural barriers included choosing between dollars for health care or living expenses, knowing about but rarely using preventive care, and using health care dollars for children and neglecting adult wellness. Many residents coped by delaying care until it became obviously necessary. They also sought financial and transportation help from others, and attempted to use community resources to navigate the health care system.

Recommendations included establishing care policies that were culturally relevant, addressing the real and perceived barriers when possible, and enhancing coping strategies to increase accessibility to available health care in the community.

Most of the Shore’s health care access issues are probably not new to local medical care providers. But the community might not be aware that while availability of health care seems adequate on the Shore, access to it may be problematic for many residents.



Development, *Cont'd from p. 2*

towns, creative re-use of existing buildings to add more housing stock, and enabling new opportunities using the new sewage line to allow higher-density residential areas. The Board of Supervisors should not be seduced by yet another attempt to subvert our zoning to allow profitable development outside of our planning. We do not need to weaken our zoning and allow poorly thought out expansion based on developers’ using creative ways to work around our zoning ordinance. We do need to debate how we can help develop more housing that can be priced to benefit our local community. I hope the Board of Supervisors will vote against this proposal. Instead, I hope they will continue to concentrate their efforts on how they can help our community support the low-cost housing needs in Northampton County.

Citizens are encouraged to voice their opinions regarding this Zoning Map Amendment. The Northampton County Board of Supervisors will meet on Tuesday, April 9, 2024, at 6:00 PM in the Board Chambers located at 16404 Courthouse Road in Eastville to conduct a public hearing. Let your voice be heard!



Living Shorelines Gain Ground Around the Bay but Face Hurdles

By Timothy B. Wheeler

This article was excerpted, with permission, from the Bay Journal.

A growing number of nature-based shoreline stabilization projects are being installed around the Bay. Such living shorelines use native vegetation, often in combination with low rock sills just offshore, to create a waterfront marsh and protect it from wind-driven waves. One such project, in Portsmouth, VA, involved a 718-foot living shoreline, with 400 tons of sand, 2,400 concrete oyster “castles,” and 2,500 plugs of marsh grasses. Even with volunteer labor from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) and the Elizabeth River Project, the project cost nearly \$90,000. Fortunately, a grant from the Virginia Environmental Endowment covered 75% of that, while CBF’s Chesapeake Oyster Alliance kicked in \$10,000. Property owner Christian Berner said the family’s share was only about \$12,000. Without the financial help, it wouldn’t have happened, he said.

Living shorelines have been encouraged in the Chesapeake region for decades, and have been required in Maryland since 2008 and in Virginia since 2020 unless property owners can prove they won’t work. Still, the shift to living shorelines has been slow.

A Tough Sell

Scientists say there’s ample evidence that living shorelines are more resilient than bulkheads in protecting waterfront property, even against big storms. Even so, they can be a tough sell. “There’s a lot of work to do to convince people that living shorelines are providing comparable protection as armoring,” said Donna Bilkovic, a marine ecologist at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) Center for Coastal Resources Management.



A mature living shoreline, planted over 15 years ago in Oyster, is preventing erosion along Sunnyside Drive, as well as providing more resilient marshland and habitat. Photo: ShoreLine Staff

Research has shown that bulkheads — and to a lesser extent, riprap, or revetments — harm water quality and habitat. Bulkheads and seawalls reflect wave energy, which then scours sediment and vegetation from the bottom. While the spaces between rocks in revetments can absorb some of the wave energy, causing less scouring, they still

provide less fish and wildlife habitat than fringe marshes found along natural shorelines. When between 10% and 20% of the shoreline is armored, studies have found adverse

ecological effects, including less fish diversity.

Maryland and Virginia have both made progress in getting property owners to install living shorelines, but the available data are incomplete. Before 2016, the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) issued waivers from the living shoreline requirement for about 80% of proposed projects. By 2020, that dropped to 68%, and 42% by 2022 – for sites that had no prior stabilization – with the remaining 58% approved for living shorelines. Still, MDE automatically grants waivers for any proposed bulkhead or revetment where some kind of hardened shoreline stabilization structure already exists.

MDE officials attribute their progress, in part, to the completion last year of a web-based mapping tool. Developed by VIMS with funding from the EPA, it shows where living shorelines are suitable for controlling erosion and where wave energy, shoreline height, and other conditions could make armoring more appropriate.

In Virginia, the number of permit requests to build living shorelines hit an all-time high in 2022 of 35% to 38% (depending on the metrics) of projects. Incentives to adopt living shorelines in Virginia include expert advice from the state and nonprofit groups, along with site visits by VIMS scientists and the Virginia Shoreline Erosion Advisory Service (SEAS).

Cost Concerns

Living shorelines don’t always cost more. But the cost is often high in places exposed to intense wind-driven waves, especially with the labor involved in planting and maintaining vegetation. In some cases, homeowners balk at the projected cost and may try armoring the shoreline without a permit. One study found that property owners are most heavily influenced by neighbors in deciding whether to go with a revetment or living shoreline.

“They haven’t incentivized living shorelines enough to be palatable to our customers,” said Chris Moore, a planner with Weems Brothers Inc., a marine contracting business

Every time somebody is allowed to “re-armour,” an opportunity to create a marsh is lost.

- CBF Senior Scientist Doug Myers

Electric Car Charging Challenges

Submitted by Glen Anders

I have written a few articles in the past about my electric car, a 2020 Tesla Model Y, Long Range version. I have addressed thoughts about owning an electric vehicle and taking a trip in an electric vehicle. I have about 45,000 miles on my car and have just returned from a 3,300-mile road trip that took me to Minneapolis, Minnesota, down the Great River (Mississippi) Road to Saint Louis, and back to the Eastern Shore. This article will discuss charging an electric vehicle, both at home and while traveling.

But first, a little bit about the different types of electric vehicles.

There are 3 types – gas-powered hybrid (Hybrid); plug-in hybrid (PHEV); and full electric (BEV). All 3 have batteries that are used in driving the vehicle.

The gas-powered hybrid (e.g., Toyota Prius) has a small battery that assists the gas-powered engine to improve fuel economy. There is no need to find a charging station to charge your car.

The plug-in hybrid (PHEV), such as a Honda Accord Hybrid, will allow you to drive about 30 to 45 miles on electric power only; the power is added to the battery by plugging the car into an electrical outlet or charger. The car will switch from electric power to gas power when the battery is discharged. There is no need to find a charging station.

The third type of vehicle is a Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV). They have a large battery to allow driving long distances, 200 to 300 miles. The Ford Lightning, Tesla Model Y, and the Ford Mustang Mach E are examples of fully electric vehicles. These cars rely on electricity only, and you must charge them to be able to drive. You can charge at home or you can find a charger through the car's navigation system.

Charging at home is easy and simple if you have a driveway or garage. All you need is a standard 120-volt receptacle and a "mobile" charging adapter. Most cars come with some type of adapter. You plug the adapter into the receptacle and into the car and you will start charging. While a 120-volt receptacle will put 4 miles per hour into your vehicle, you may need to upgrade to a 240-volt receptacle that can provide up to 30 miles per hour. A wall-mounted home charger can add up to 40 miles per hour, meaning that you can get a full charge in less than 8 hours. Wall-mounted chargers generally require an electrician to install the charger.

Once you have the charger installed, you just plug it in and forget about it. As I haven't been to a gas station since I bought my car, I expect I have not spent 19 hours getting gas at a gas station.

So, what do you do if you don't have a house, garage,

or driveway where you can install a charger? You will probably need to use a Fast charger, or Supercharger to charge your vehicle. A fast charger can add about 150 miles in 20 minutes. The Eastern Shore now has a fast charger in Exmore (Royal Farms) that opened last year. While this is not the most convenient way to charge your car, you can get 270 miles of range in about 45 minutes. Additionally, ANEC will be providing level 2 chargers in Chincoteague, Onancock, and Cape Charles. This will allow visitors to charge their cars while they are having a meal or are shopping.

While Level 2 chargers are not "fast" chargers, they will provide you with about 16 miles of range per hour. You usually see these types of chargers at hotels, restaurants, and some shopping centers. Usually, they are free and are provided as a convenience to customers. I have used these types of chargers all over the country. Most all charger locations can be found on Plugshare.com and I use the website to plan my trips.

Tesla has over 50,000 fast chargers in the United States and is building more every day. If you don't have a Tesla, EV charging stations are more limiting in your ability to fast charge; there are fewer of them and are spaced farther apart. Their reliability is also a problem for many people; many videos will show people getting to a charger and finding them non-operational. In an electric vehicle this can be catastrophic, as you can't necessarily drive to the next gas station a few miles away. But relief is on the way – Tesla is now opening many superchargers to other manufacturer's vehicles. As Tesla manufactures its own chargers and supports them to make sure they are usually always operational, traveling will be easier for all owners of electric vehicles. On one of my recent trips, I stopped at the supercharger in Easton, MD, where all types of electric vehicles can be charged at a Tesla Supercharger Station.

As most all EV manufacturers have plans to adopt the Tesla charging system (NACS), all electric vehicles will be able to charge at a Tesla supercharger. The other charging stations will also be upgraded to use the Tesla charging protocol. Additionally, gas stations and truck stops are adding charging stations to attract customers.

On my most recent road trip, I stopped at 27 superchargers and did not have to wait nor did I encounter any issues with charging. I have written in the past that it will take longer to get to your destination if you have to charge, but you also have an opportunity to stop every couple of hours to get something to eat or drink, check your email, or get some exercise while you are charging. The only time this gets old is when it is late in the day and

See **Electric Car**, *Cont'd on p. 9*

Charging at home is easy and simple if you have a driveway or garage.

The Role of the Board of Zoning Appeals

By Arthur Upshur

Lots of moving parts go into managing an area's zoning successfully. One is a good Comprehensive Plan that embodies the desires of the broad community. Another is a clear Zoning Ordinance that minimizes ambiguity and assists in managing growth and changes in land use. Finally, there is a need for trained staff to apply the code intelligently, consistently, and without bias.

While that sounds straightforward, the reality is not so simple. There are gray areas in zoning code interpretation, particularly as it applies to lots that were zoned under former Zoning Ordinances. This is where the work of the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) is needed. The BZA hears appeals to zoning decisions and can authorize variances or exceptions to buffers. Decisions are to be "in the public interest," and should ensure "the intended purpose and spirit of ... the Zoning Ordinance be observed and substantial justice done" (Northampton County Zoning Ordinance 154.2.228 – Powers and duties of Board of Zoning Appeals).

The Northampton BZA is made up of 5 individuals appointed for 5-year terms. As such, the Board does not answer to any political authority; instead, citizens rely on the judge of the Circuit Court to select individuals well-suited to this difficult task. In most cases, these 5 individuals are the final arbiters of the Zoning Ordinance, and the guardians of the buffer protections established by the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act. Although any decision by the BZA can be appealed to the Circuit Court, such appeals are rare.


Arguably, this aspect of the zoning process is not working as it should. Over the last couple of years, the BZA has approved almost all the appeals brought before it. According to the minutes posted on the county website, of the last 14 actions brought, 10 were approved, 4 were rejected. Of the 10 approved, 5 came despite staff recommendations that the variance or buffer exception be denied.

The BZA apparently does not receive the training on our zoning code to support the "intended purpose and spirit," nor have they demonstrated much commitment to upholding the Bay Act. They appear to believe that their purpose is to approve exceptions whenever possible, rather than to fairly apply our zoning law. The cases brought to them are only those that are appealing a ruling by the county zoning staff. Logically, since these are only those cases where the owners are challenging the rules, one would expect the reverse of our current experience – that approvals would be rare, assuming our county staff is proficient.

I have been attending BZA meetings regularly of late, as several of my neighbors have applied for exceptions and variances. In one case, despite letters of opposition from a number of surrounding neighbors, the Board approved the exceptions. That case was appealed by the county attorney,

and the decision was reversed. But what was telling is that the members of the BZA explained that their role was to approve variances whenever possible. One county staffer recently explained it to an appealing party, "the appeals board operates with a different set of rules than we do, so they might approve it."

This is clearly not what is intended for this Board, or what we need in our community to uphold our zoning. Every approved variance or exception weakens the zoning; it sets a precedent.

We have a new circuit judge now in Lynwood Lewis. We hope that he can reset the parameters for the BZA by appointing members that can ensure that our zoning and our Chesapeake Bay buffers are protected. The BZA serves a critical role in making sure zoning is being fairly applied, and county staff is professionally evaluating applications. Our hope is that they can become better partners with county staff in fairly applying zoning rules. 




Living Shorelines, *cont'd from p. 4*

in Easton, MD. "It's hard to say a living shoreline of some form won't work in most sites," said Wes Gould, Chief of Maryland's Department of Natural Resource's Shoreline Conservation Service. "But ... at what point financially is it unfeasible?"

There are opportunities to get financial help in Virginia. The soil and water conservation districts offer to reimburse 80% of the costs for a living shoreline on private property, up to \$30,000. The Virginia Environmental Endowment also has given grants for living shorelines, totaling \$3.8 million to several large projects. Even so, the Endowment's Senior Program Officer Roy Hoagland said, "I highly doubt that there is sufficient private funding currently available to help every homeowner's needs and desires." The state's SEAS service can also provide financial information.

Increased Resilience

"It's important for us to communicate that living shorelines are better, more resilient," said Heather Nelson, MDE's Wetlands and Waterways Program Manager. While living shorelines may initially cost more than a riprap revetment, there is some evidence that they are more cost-effective in the long term because they can be repaired more easily and cheaply. "They're softer, they can bend and bounce back." And that's not just for sites without prior stabilization. Every time somebody is allowed to "re-armor," said CBF Senior Scientist Doug Myers, an opportunity to create a marsh is lost. "We really do want to do a living shoreline if somebody is at the [point that] they have to replace a bulkhead." 

Solar Panels Approved for Poultry Farm

By Sue Mastyl

At their January 3 meeting, the Accomack County Board of Zoning Appeals approved a Special Use Permit for rooftop installation of a 577.15 kW solar system for a poultry farm in New Church. The 1,190 panels will be installed on 2 of the 12 poultry houses. The system will use net metering, so that credits will build up in the winter to offset the higher usage in the summer months.

The system will be financed through a grant from USDA's Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), which last year distributed \$266 million nationwide for energy-efficiency projects. According to Tim Sexton, of Solair-Green Energy Advisors in Delaware, the energy provided by this system will offset approximately 90% of the farm's total energy bill. This will have an "immediate impact on the farm's financial viability," he said, and "will lock in their electric rate for the next 20 years." Bill Davis, the poultry farmer, added that the houses are ideally situated, with a southern exposure and no obstructions. An engineer confirmed that the poultry house roofs can support the added weight and uplift associated with the solar panels.

The solar panels carry a 25-year warranty; Sexton said he expects the system to run 30 to 40 years. At that point, "they're still producing, although at a reduced efficiency, so you may just have to add to the system." He also noted that recycling programs are being developed for solar panels.

When asked about the risk of fire, Sexton noted that they use micro-inverters, which convert from DC to AC current at each solar panel; older installations use string inverters, which convert to AC in a central location, typically near the main service panel, and need to be paired with rapid shutdown devices to meet code. Like the old Christmas lights, if one panel in the string develops an issue, all the panels will be affected. With micro-inverters, each solar panel is optimized independently.

Sexton added that a ground installation would be approximately 10% more expensive, plus taking away land from crop production.

Solar installations are becoming more common for poultry farms around the country, including in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware. This is the first installation on the Eastern Shore of Virginia; last fall, 2 poultry farms in Rockingham County and 2 poultry farms in Augusta County announced solar installations using the USDA grant program.



Solar panels on a poultry farm in Centreville, MD.

Listening to Snow Geese

They landed,
white liquid pouring onto
the field of green winter rye.

The snow geese have arrived,
too many to count,
pausing for a brief winter respite.

There's magic in the gray sky,
the biting north wind,
as long as we can hear the music.
Listen, they call to us,
we've traveled far
and now need to rest a bit.

Yes, we marvel at the
ballet of powerful white bodies
swirling together and
changing direction,

but it's that sound —
the percussion of a thousand wings
and hundreds of trumpet calls
that echoes and
resonates in our chest.
Enchanted by the music,
we are lightened and
lifted out of our heavy
winter clothes and
into the blue sky,
wondering
why we would ever rush spring.

— Patty McLaughlin



Photo by Deb Torguson



RECYCLING CORNER

By Sue Mastyl

What's Up With Those Red Bins?

You may have seen red bins in local gas station lots and shopping centers, for donation of used or worn clothing and shoes for recycling. The company, Better World Recycling, is actually a for-profit textile recycling company, although they may give a small portion of their proceeds to charity. Some bins may have signs for Green America Recycling; these also seem to be run by Better World. Their website states that their trucks “service every collection bin on a weekly schedule,” and that the company “is monitoring using sophisticated database tools,” so it is “serviced before reaching two-thirds capacity.”

In North Carolina, the Better Business Bureau “couldn’t find anything on them,” even though the company is registered in High Point, NC. It was previously registered in Maryland and Georgia, and was involved in a court case in Prince George’s County, MD.

Although statements on their website (<http://www.betterworldrecycling.org/>) imply that these clothes are distributed to people in developing countries, it’s more likely that they’re being sold in bulk and shipped to those countries for sorting, with most ending up in landfills – all of which belies the company’s claim that they “conserve precious natural resources and prevent greenhouse gas emissions.”

This is frustrating to long-standing charities such as Special Olympics, which has drop boxes at both counties’ convenience centers, the Moose Lodge in Belle Haven, and Lighthouse Ministries Thrift Store in Onley. They turn clothes, shoes, purses, and other textiles into rags and upholstery stuffing, and use the proceeds to fund equipment, training, and health screening for Special Olympics athletes. Goodwill CEO, Michael Elder, noted they are seeing fewer clothing items than in the past.

Since we now have a choice of drop boxes for our used textiles, it’s important to understand who will benefit.

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Spring Pea Salad

Easter eggs, daffodils, and fresh peas – it must be spring. Farther north, salmon loaf and boiled peas are the supper of springtime. Down our way, it’s the first covered-dish feast that features a pea salad. The traditional ones often have a mayo-based dressing and chunks of sharp cheddar. Here’s a fresh or frozen pea salad with feta cheese, English cucumber, and a simple sweet balsamic dressing. Ingredients are very adaptable to the portions you need. If using frozen peas, blanch the peas in boiling water for 1-2 minutes, drain, and plunge into a bowl of cold water with 10 or more ice cubes. Peas will stay firm and bright green for the salad.

- 2 to 3 cups of fresh or frozen peas (blanched if frozen, boiled briefly if fresh)
- English cucumber
- Dried dill weed
- Salt and pepper
- About 4 oz of feta cheese, crumbled

Sweet balsamic dressing

- 3 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp dark brown sugar

Salad:

Prepare peas, drain, and spread on paper towels on baking sheet to dry. Using a mandoline, or very sharp knife, slice half of the cucumber into thin slices. Using a vegetable peeler, slice long thin slices from the other half-cucumber to line the serving platter. Toss the cooked peas with the thin cucumber rounds, chunks of feta, salt and pepper, and the dill weed. Add dressing, 1 tbsp at a time, until salad is moist and flavorful. Line platter with long cucumber slices, pile on pea salad, and set in small dish of extra dressing.

Dressing:

Stir brown sugar into balsamic vinegar until it has dissolved. Gradually add olive oil, whisking briskly. Or use a covered jar and shake everything until well blended and sugar is dissolved.

Mary Miller – The Kitchen Hive

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Menhaden Bill Delayed

As we mentioned in the December 2023 *ShoreLine* (“Menhaden – The ‘Biggest Little Fish””), last year the General Assembly asked VIMS to determine what would be required to study the localized depletion of menhaden in the Bay. VIMS has described the parameters of the study, which will take 3 years and will cost \$2.6 million. This January, the Studies Subcommittee of the House of Delegates unanimously tabled consideration of the bill to fund the study until 2025.

Although Omega Protein initially supported the study – since it would provide the necessary data to answer the question about whether their industry is depleting the local Bay population of menhaden – they appear to have successfully lobbied to postpone the bill, according to environmental advocates. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation called the efforts over the last year “wasted.”

On January 9, the Northampton County Board of Supervisors unanimously passed a “Resolution to Ban Industrial Menhaden Reduction Fishing in the Chesapeake Bay and Virginia State Waters” ([https://go.boarddocs.com/va/northco/Board.nsf/files/CZ7JRN4E75AE/\\$file/Industrial%20Menhaden%20Resolution%20Northampton%20County%20%201_4_2024.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/va/northco/Board.nsf/files/CZ7JRN4E75AE/$file/Industrial%20Menhaden%20Resolution%20Northampton%20County%20%201_4_2024.pdf)).



Electric Car, cont'd from p. 5

you want to be where you are going and you have to stop for a final charge.

While I love having an EV and would not ever go back to a gas-powered vehicle, I do understand that many people do not want to drive a BEV. The availability of hybrids and PHEVs offer many of the benefits of being able to reduce emissions, save money, and enjoy the convenience of not having to go to a gas station.



ShoreLine comment: *Although Level 2 chargers are being installed in downtown locations in Cape Charles, Onancock, and Chincoteague, we remain skeptical as to how much value these will provide. They will only give drivers an additional 30 to 40 miles of range even for a 2-hour shopping/dining stop, and these will not be free – there will be a \$1.50 parking fee, as well as charging for the electricity. We hope the Shore will move swiftly with DC fast chargers, which will be the most helpful for both local drivers and visitors.*



Do you have a passion for the ESVA? An interest in a cause that you feel would benefit your community? Do you attend public meetings on a regular or occasional basis just to find out what’s going on in your county or town?

If so, we would like to hear from you.

***ShoreLine* is looking for people who want to explore the advantages (and challenges) of living on the Shore, add to the civic conversation, and inform the public about ways they can help to promote healthy choices for the people and the environment of our special peninsula. Experience in journalistic writing is helpful, but not required. Please contact us at info@cbes.org to discuss your potential involvement in our news journal.**



Against the Current

WHRO Public Media and WORLD present a new documentary about life on the Eastern Shore and the challenges of living and working on the water.

Against the Current provides a powerful glimpse of how Virginia’s Eastern Shore residents are subject to the challenges of rising water’s effects on their lives and livelihood and through resilience and perseverance learn to co-exist and celebrate their rural home. How can this unique community shed light on the national conversations happening around these climate issues?

***Against the Current* will air on WHRO TV on April 24 at 8 p.m.**

Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore
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