

## Helping Local Governments Take the Lead on Sea Level Rise Adaptation

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This session will provide an overview of a system of practical approaches used to move adaptation action at the local government level in Virginia. We will also engage in a conversation about how to export them to other states and regions.

Nearly all sea level rise adaptation approaches involve changing private property land use decisions, a function controlled by local governments. Different localities have different understandings of the problem, different cultures and policies, and different resources available to address adaptation needs.

With hundreds of localities along the tidal shoreline, there is a fragmentation of adaptation policy, posing a major challenge to a coordinated shoreline approach that can move forward in unison (and in time).

Wetlands Watch has been working with local governments in Virginia since 2007 to advance a coordinated coastal adaptation strategy and has developed a set of approaches that may meet these challenges. We have found innovative policies in place now at the local level, and in local administration of state and federal programs, that are leverage points for understanding and action. We have also embarked on a program to develop new tools, policies, and guidance that can accelerate implementation of flooding protection.

We are conducting one-on-one confidential interviews with local government staff to identify needs and barriers to adaptation. We are using the FEMA Community Rating System to incentivize open space and habitat restoration as a means of reducing flood insurance premiums. We are looking at overlaps between these nature-based flood protection approaches and local government requirements in other areas, such as stormwater pollution permitting, to further incentivize adaptation. We are conducting research to make the case for additional adaptation investments and have used that information to help create the first-in-the-nation statewide adaptation revolving loan fund for localities. We have developed a smart phone app to crowdsource flooding information for local government officials and researchers. We have completed the first of a kind adaptation design project in an urban community, with those designs being awarded \$115 million in the HUD National Disaster Resilience Competition in January 2016.

With these approaches we are seeing acceleration of activity on adaptation in coastal Virginia. These same practices and policies have wide application in other states and can be replicated elsewhere at minimal expense.