A. Introduction
The Northern Neck Planning District Commission (NNPDC) is the regional government agency serving the four counties of the Northern Neck. The counties included in the NNPDC are: Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond and Westmoreland. The Northern Neck is surrounded on three sides by water, to the north by the Potomac River, to the east by the Chesapeake Bay, and to the south by the Rappahannock River. While there are lowlands in Northumberland and Lancaster County, there is considerable topography on the Northern Neck, with the highest elevation of 200 feet occurring in Westmoreland County. There are many creeks and rivers that bisect the counties of the Northern Neck. In Westmoreland County some of the larger tributaries are Monroe Bay/Creek, Nomini Creek, Lower Machodoc Creek, Yeocomico River in Westmoreland County. In Northumberland County, the Coan River, Little Wicomico River, Great Wicomico River, Indian Creek and Dividing Creek are some of the larger waterbodies. In Lancaster County, Dymer Creek, Antipoison Creek, Carter Creek, and the Corrotoman River are the major waterbodies that connect as well as divide the County. Richmond County has Lancaster/Morattico Creek at its southern end with Farnham Creek, Totuskey Creek and Cat Point Creek, to the North, which all drain into the Rappahannock River.

Activities that take place in the coastal zone of the NNPDC include farming, forestry, and fishing. In the last twenty years there has been an increase in waterfront residential development, with many homes being second homes or retirement homes. With the current economic downturn, the pace of waterfront residential construction has slowed considerably. Waterfowl hunting is a popular sport in the Northern Neck, and in most creeks you will find at least one duck hunting blind on stilts in shallow water. Recreational boating is popular in the Northern Neck in the warmer months, from powerboats, to sailboats to personal watercraft to kayaks, canoes and stand up paddleboards. There are twelve canoe and kayak water trails that have been created in the Northern Neck, through Virginia Coastal Zone Management Grant funding, which can be accessed through the Northern Neck Tourism’s webpage (northernneck.org). In Reedville, Northumberland County, Omega Protein, an industrial menhaden processing company, is the last of the fish factories that process menhaden into oil and fish by-products on the East Coast. The menhaden fishery is the largest in Virginia by volume, and contributed $88 million to Virginia’s economy in 2014. The Commonwealth’s 2015 allowable menhaden harvest was set at 158,700 metric tons, of which Omega Protein harvested the vast majority. In addition to industrial fishing, there are a substantial number of watermen that employ pound and gill nets to harvest fish from local waters. Fish harvested include rockfish, croaker, perch, spot, and flounder. In addition to net fishing, there is a local hook and line commercial fishery for rockfish as well. Many watermen also harvest blue crabs. Most of the crabs are caught employing crab pots, but some also use trotlines. There are substantial harvests of oysters in the Rappahannock River with rotational harvest areas in the


lower Rappahannock River in the Fall and oyster aquaculture increasing at such a rate that a local county staff person noted it was like “a gold rush on leasing state bottom land”. An oyster hatchery was established in Northumberland County a few years ago and oyster aquaculture featuring spat-on-shell setting technique in cages, in floats and on oyster bottom is increasing.

The NNPDC is interested in enhancing, retaining and increasing working waterfront industries in the Northern Neck region because they are an integral part of the culture and history of the region. In the late 1800’s, and early 1900’s almost all transportation of goods and persons to the Northern Neck was by steamboat, and there are generations of Northern Neck families that have worked on the water. The independent spirit and hard work ethic of those that work on the water is an iconic ideal for many in the region. Many of the working waterfront businesses are small businesses and the Northern Neck Economic Development Plan identifies small business growth and entrepreneurship as priorities for the region. In addition, the economic diversity that working waterfronts provide help to create a more resilient local economy.

B. History of Working Waterfronts in the Region

Before Europeans settled in the Northern Neck, Native Virginians used nets to capture migrating shad, sturgeon, and other fish. Native Virginians also plied the water in dugout canoes, constructed using fire and hatchets to hollow out tree trunks. Native Virginians would harvest oysters from oyster bars that at that time, were so abundant, that they were uncovered at low tide. Oyster middens, which are piles of oyster shells that were discarded by Native Virginians after eating the shellfish, are prevalent along and near the shoreline in most areas of the Northern Neck. When the English colonists arrived, all transportation in the New World was by boat, as there were few roads. After Jamestown, colonists moved up the James River and northward on the Chesapeake Bay and created plantations. The Northern Neck was one of the first areas settled outside of Jamestown. Plantations would grow corn, but mostly tobacco for export back to England, with manufactured goods being imported on the return trip.

In the late-1800’s, steamboats were the principal means of transporting people and goods around the Chesapeake Bay region. For decades steamboats and smaller sailing vessels were the Bay’s only practical means of transportation. Isolated rural communities depended upon their nearest river landing for machinery, supplies and store bought goods. In return, they shipped produce, tobacco, grain livestock and seafood to sell in the cities of Baltimore or Norfolk. Rural residents would travel on the steamboats to the larger cites for doctor’s appointments, shopping or for business. Arrival of steamboats to isolated rural steamboat landings became a real social event, and a connection to the outside world. In the Northern Neck, there were steamboat routes that connected the region to Baltimore and Norfolk, which docked in protected harbors along the Potomac River, Rappahannock River, and the western shores of the Chesapeake Bay. Some of the more notable steamboat landings on the
Rappahannock River side of the Northern Neck were Sharps, Morratico, Monaskon, Weems, Irvington, White Stone Beach and Westland (Windmill Point). Steamboat Landings on the Northern Neck side of the Potomac River included Colonial Beach, Kinsale, Lodge Landing, Walnut Point, Lewisetta, Cowart, Bundick and Coan Wharf Landing. At the peak of the steamboat era, 85% of all the oysters harvested in the world came from the Chesapeake Bay and were shipped by steamer around the world. Most often their journey started on a paddle wheel steamer. The devastating hurricane of 1933 destroyed most steamboat ports, which by and large, ended the Steamboat Era in the Chesapeake Bay.

In 1867, Elijah Reed of Sedgwick, Maine, brought the menhaden fishing industry to Northumberland County. Menhaden, an oily, unappetizing fish, used locally as fertilizer, had begun to replace the dwindling number of whales as a source for oil. Reed set up a factory for rendering the oil from the fish in the area between the Little Wicomico River and the Great Wicomico River. The remaining fish meal was sold to farmers as fertilizer. Through the 1870’s and 1880’s seven fish and shellfish rendering and packing houses were built in Northumberland County and by the turn of the century, the village of Reedville was the largest fish port (by volume) in the United States and one of the largest in the world. So much money was made of the menhaden fishery, Main Street in Reedville was called “Millionaires Row”. Today, there is only one menhaden processing facility in Reedville and it is the largest employer in Northumberland County.

Throughout the history of the Northern Neck, individual watermen would venture out in small sailing vessels and set fish nets, both gill and pound nets to capture various species of fish. These rugged individuals would also oyster and crab, and sell to independent crab and fish houses. The independent nature and strong work ethic of these individuals is still admired by many in the region.

In the 1920’s, Benjamin F. Lewis (1858-1950), a native of Mulberry Grove, Illinois, moved to Harry Hogan, Virginia on Northumberland County’s Yeocomico River, and invented the Chesapeake Bay Crab Pot. Mr. Lewis patented the crab pot in 1928, and perfected it ten years later. The invention changed the way crabs are harvested in the Chesapeake Bay, and the design is still in use today. Variations on the original crab pot design are used worldwide.

There is also a tradition of boat building on the Northern Neck, mostly traditional Chesapeake deadrise boats. George Butler of Reedville was a prolific builder, and many of the boats he made still ply the local waters. Another local Northumberland County boat builder was Odis C.W. Cockrell, and his son, Tiffany Cockrell who began building Chesapeake deadrise workboats in 1934. They initially built boats part time in the summer, and harvested oysters in the winter. After World War II, there were two cold winters where not much oystering was accomplished, and the pair decided to build boats year round. They began to build pleasure boats, and in 1949, Tiffany’s father decided to retire and turn over the business to his son. In the 1960’s they built wooden pleasure boats from 30 to 40 feet in length, and in the 1970s’ transitioned to building fiberglass boats. The Cockrell family has built over 150 boats since the 1930’s.
Another notable boat builder in Westmoreland County was Clarence Stanford from Colonial Beach, who operated Stanford’s Marine Railway from 1945 until his passing in 2006. Clarence Stanford constructed wooden vessels and was one of the top boat builders in the Mid-Atlantic, with many of his vessels still operating in local waters.

In Lancaster County, specifically the Weems area, the Rappahannock Marine Railway was built in 1905 primarily for the repair and maintenance of the large menhaden boats in the area. However several vessels were also built on the site. A one hundred and four foot tugboat and a one hundred and twenty eight feet fishing vessel were built at Rappahannock Marine Railway before it changed hands in 1917 and the name changed to Humphrey’s Railways. Humphrey’s Marine Railways and Lumber Corporation which was the official name of the company, and built 11 vessels, 10 of them being fishing vessels, with lengths ranging from sixty-two to one hundred and thirty-four feet. The most well-known vessel built at Humphrey’s Railways was the side paddle wheel steamboat, The Westmoreland, which was 100 feet long and was built in 1921. Humphrey’s Railways became Ampro Shipyard, Inc. in 1988, and is one of the working waterfront case studies that is highlighted later in this chapter.

C. Current Status of Working Waterfronts in the Region

In the Northern Neck of Virginia, the term `working waterfront' means real property (including support structures over water and other facilities) that provides access to coastal waters to persons engaged in commercial fishing, recreational fishing businesses, boatbuilding, aquaculture, or other water-dependent, coastal-related business and is used for or supports commercial fishing, recreational fishing businesses, boatbuilding, aquaculture, or other water-dependent, coastal-related business.

The status of working waterfronts in the region has declined in previous decades due to the decline of the oyster and crab populations. There are several abandoned oyster/crab houses in each county of the Northern Neck, and as the years go by, these structures continue to deteriorate. However, in the last few years oyster aquaculture has increased and leases on state bottomland in local creeks have also been increasing in coverage. Local marinas have remained relatively steady, but many have seen decreased profits. Boat building has declined, but there are still a few boat builders in business in the region.

- Working waterfronts are being used by recreational boaters and fishermen, industrial fishing operations, charter fishing boats, ecotourism tour boat operators, boat builders, watermen, marine construction businesses, marinas, and oyster aquaculturists.
- Working waterfront infrastructure benefits the region in many different ways.
  - Economic benefits of working waterfronts vary, depending on the county. Northumberland County has the highest economic impact in the region from working waterfronts, or ocean jobs, from the NOAA Coastal County Snapshots.
According to the NOAA 2013 economic data, Northumberland County leads the region with 429 employees, $16 million in wages, and $161 million in goods and services with 17.6% of the total jobs being maritime jobs. Second in the region is Westmoreland County with 425 employees, $10 million in wages and $70 million in goods and services from ocean jobs and 12.7% of the total jobs being maritime jobs. Third is Lancaster County, with 268 employees, $4 million in wages and $22 million in goods and services from ocean jobs and 5.9% of the total jobs being maritime jobs. Richmond County has the least economic benefit from ocean jobs in the Northern Neck region, with 96 employees, $1 million in wages and $1 million in goods and services and 3.7% of total jobs being maritime jobs.

Another way to measure the economic benefits of working waterfronts, and specifically the local fisheries impact is to examine the number of Virginia Marine Commission (VMRC) commercial fishing and shell fishing licenses sold in each of the counties, as well as the cost of those licenses. The table below comes from the 2015 Virginia Marine Commission Commercial Licenses and Permits dataset (the full 2015 dataset is included in the appendix), and shows selected data for the four Northern Neck Counties. The counties are abbreviated to two letters, LC = Lancaster County, NC = Northumberland County, RC = Richmond County, WC = Westmoreland County, NNK = Northern Neck (all four counties combined).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected 2015 VMRC Commercial Licenses and Permits</th>
<th>LC</th>
<th>NC</th>
<th>RC</th>
<th>WC</th>
<th>NNK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oyster Aquaculture Production Owner Permit</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shucking House Combined (from under 1,000 to &gt;200,000 oysters)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crab pot Licenses Combined (from 85 or less to 256-425 crab pots)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nets Combined (Pound Net, Staked Gill Net, Gill Net 600 &amp; 1200 ft.)</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>1113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table reinforces previous statements regarding the increasing activity in oyster aquaculture in the region, and that individual watermen harvesting oysters and crab are a significant portion of the working waterfront businesses in the Northern Neck region.

The total cost of commercial permits and licenses in 2015 to the VMRC are shown in the following table.
Table 3: Total VMRC Commercial Licenses and Permits in the Northern Neck (VMRC, 2015).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2015 VMRC Commercial Licenses and Permit</th>
<th>LC</th>
<th>NC</th>
<th>RC</th>
<th>WC</th>
<th>NNK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total License and Permit Fees Collected</td>
<td>68,127</td>
<td>121,734</td>
<td>36,622</td>
<td>68,339</td>
<td>294,822</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As one can see from the above table, there is significant revenue sent to the VMRC each year by individuals and businesses in the four Northern Neck counties. In addition, the revenues generated from the living resources legally harvested within the VMRC license and permit limits necessarily exceed the license or permit costs multiple times so there is substantial profit for the individual or business.

- Societal benefits of working waterfronts include increased recreational opportunities for citizens to enjoy water based recreation activities, such as boating, paddle sports (canoeing, kayaking, and stand up paddleboards), fishing, crabbing, water skiing and swimming. These quality of life amenities make the Northern Neck a place where many choose to live as well as make the area a prime location for second homes, vacation homes, and retirement homes. In addition, the economic diversity that working waterfronts provide helps increase the resilience of the local economy to endure hardships while providing jobs.

- Cultural benefits include the aesthetic appeal of traditional working waterfront activities. Many persons enjoy watching a waterman methodically circling his crab pots, one by one, to empty, cull and rebait the crab pots. Others, such as artists revel in the working waterfront scenes of old crab boats, or skiffs tied up to dilapidated structures. As a culture, these scenes and activities help tie us to the past and give us a link to traditions that have been relatively constant over our lifetimes, and our forbearer’s lifetimes.

Working waterfronts are under threat from a variety of stressors. Loss of living resources has closed many oyster and crab houses on the Northern Neck that had operated for decades. Coastal hazards, such as tropical storms and nor’easter’s, as well as flooding are a threat to the area’s working waterfront, as they have been in the past. Sea level rise, coupled with coastal hazards are also increasing the vulnerability of some these working waterfront areas. Other threats to working waterfronts include the lack of legacy planning, where the death or retirement of the owner of the working waterfront business can lead to the closure of the business. In the recent past, waterfront residences have been constructed on the sites of former oyster and crab houses in at least two Northern Neck Counties. The grandfather clause of Virginia’s Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act allows structures to be built in the same footprint of buildings that existed prior to the institution of the Bay Act in 1989. This is appealing to citizens who want a home closer to the water’s edge, as any new construction is required by
the Bay Act to be setback 100 feet from tidal water or tidally connected wetlands. In both instances, the oyster or crab house was abandoned and in various states of dilapidation, but once those sites are transitioned to residential development, they rarely return to business use. In recent years, the economic downturn has slowed the threat to convert working waterfronts to residential use, as there is currently a surplus of waterfront houses on the market.

Working waterfronts remain important to the Northern Neck PDC and its member localities. The working waterfront economy is an integral component of the overall economy, and provides diversity to each county’s local economy. Recreation and tourism are important components of the local economy, and working waterfronts provide the gateway to enjoy water-based recreation, whether it is sightseeing, recreational boating and fishing, waterfowl hunting, or bird watching. Preserving working waterfronts is important to the culture and history of the Northern Neck, and provides a connection to the past that is important to many citizens of the Northern Neck. Small businesses are an integral component of the Northern Neck economy, and individual watermen and oyster aquaculturists are beginning to grow, strengthening the local economy.
Figure 1: Map of Working Waterfront Inventory in the Northern Neck Planning District.

Northern Neck Planning District
2011 Working Waterfront Inventory

Legend
- Working Waterfront Facilities Inventoried
Total Number of Facilities Inventoried = 123

This project was funded by the Northern Neck Planning District Commission and the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program at the Department of Environmental Quality through Grant NAO11NOS44100122 of the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, under the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended.
D. Working Waterfront Project Background

Funding to improve working waterfronts within the region was obtained from the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program, FY11, Section 309 Focal Area Grant. The grant was used to create a regional definition of Working Waterfronts for the Northern Neck that was vetted and agreed upon by county staff from all four Northern Neck jurisdictions. This grant also funded the creation of an inventory of working waterfronts within each of the four Northern Neck Counties.

The working waterfront inventory was drafted in ArcGIS and shapefiles were created for each county, and combined into a region wide Geographic Information System (GIS) data set. Various data sources were used, aerial photography, Virginia Department of Health, Division of Shellfish Sanitation watershed reports, as well as local knowledge to locate working waterfront infrastructure. In addition, each working waterfront site was detailed in a Microsoft PowerPoint slide show that shows an aerial photo of each site, the NOAA marine chart showing the water approach details of the site, and the attributes of the infrastructure on the site that are contained in the ArcGIS shapefile attribute file. County staff from all four Northern Neck counties reviewed the WWF Inventory map for their county and offered input as to additions and deletions for their respective WWF inventory. With the creation of the Northern Neck Working Waterfront Inventory, there is now a baseline (from the year 2012) for the region to be able to compare the status of working waterfront infrastructure sites into the future.

The Northern Neck PDC partnered with the Middle Peninsula PDC and the Accomack-Northampton PDC in FY11 in the Rural Chesapeake Bay/Seaside of Virginia Working Waterfront Coalition Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program’s grant, Task 53. The Northern Neck PDC examined three case studies, all in Northumberland County that illustrated working waterfront businesses that were closed or in danger of closing, discussed the reasons they closed or were in danger of closing, and documented the issues associated with the closing of each business. The working waterfront case study that was part of the final products of the FY 11, Task 53 grant follows.

The Northern Neck PDC partnered with VIMS Sea Grant, the Middle Peninsula PDC and the Accomack-Northampton PDC in FY13 in the Developing a Working Waterfronts Plan for Virginia's Coastal Zone, Year 3 Grant, Task 92 from the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program. The Northern Neck PDC created a case study that examined a marine railway in Weems, which is located in Lancaster County on Carter Creek, a tributary to the Corrotoman River. The name of the business present at the location is Ampro Shipyard, Inc. Ampro Shipyard’s marine railway has deteriorated and the case study examined impediments to the future use of the site as a working waterfront business.
E. The Future of Working Waterfronts in the Region

The Northern Neck region hopes to foster a working waterfront friendly business environment to help small and large working waterfront businesses take advantage of the surrounding water resources to create a diversified regional economy. As mentioned previously, oyster aquaculture, utilizing cages, as well as spat-on-shell techniques to seed existing oyster beds, is on the increase. Water based ecotourism is another business that is gaining momentum. Charter boat fishing continues to be popular, especially when large striped bass are migrating in the spring and fall. While boat building on the Northern Neck has decreased from its heyday in the early 1900’s there are still opportunities in that sector of the working waterfront economy.

There are tools that the Northern Neck localities are already implementing to help working waterfront businesses. For example, Lancaster County has an innovative exemption in its non-conforming use portion of the county’s zoning ordinance for certain working waterfront businesses. Most counties have language that states that if a non-conforming use (structure or activity) is discontinued for a period of two years, then it shall be deemed abandoned and any subsequent use will be required to be in conformance with the zoning ordinance. Lancaster County chose to exempt the following uses from the non-conforming use section of the zoning ordinance: oyster houses, oyster shucking houses, crab houses, fish and food processing activities along with some agricultural uses.

In the past few years, oyster aquaculture has become more prevalent in residential areas, and the region has not had as many conflicts as other areas in coastal Virginia. In several instances, county staff have encouraged applicants to work out any contentious issues with any neighbors that have objections, such as voluntarily limiting the amount of equipment visible, hours of operation, or other conditions that address neighboring property owners concerns. Several examples of the local county Board of Supervisors decisions supporting oyster aquaculture follow. The Lancaster County Board of Supervisors approved a special exception September 27, 2012 that allowed Mifarms Oysters, Inc. to operate their year round oyster business, despite hearing protests from local citizens. The special exception was needed because of the commercial year round nature of the business in a residential zone. The owner of the business agreed to attend to the oyster cages to ensure the premise is not unsightly. On March 28, 2013, the Lancaster Board of Supervisors approved Sledd Oyster Company to operate a year round oyster business on Windmill Point Road, on a parcel of land which was once home to an oyster and crab house. In this case, the neighbors supported the operation. On December 12, 2013, the Northumberland Board of Supervisors voted 5-0 to grant a conditional use permit to Thomas Dale Gaskins Seafood to use and expand a residential pier for commercial purposes. Some neighbors expressed concern regarding impact on the creek, noise, and bringing a commercial business into a residentially zoned area. Several neighbors and watermen supported the request, and several were opposed to the request. One of the conditions the Board of Supervisors placed on the conditional use permit was that the owner of the business
and his father can only use the pier, and that the conditional use does not convey with the property when sold. On March 19, 2015, the Northumberland County Board of Supervisors granted a conditional use permit to install an upweller for the Walnut Point Oyster Company to expand its oyster growing operation on the Coan River near Walnut Point. There was opposition to the conditional use permit from neighbors on both sides of where the owner of the Walnut Point Oyster Company lives. In addition, there were citizens in opposition to granting the conditional use permit from as far away as Reedville. Opponents to the operation cited noise and traffic, as well as the effect on property values. The property in question is zoned waterfront residential, which allows commercial aquaculture as a conditional use. The owner of the operation noted that the conditions on the use permit limit him to the use of only one truck, and that his commercial seafood license covers all other aspects of his operation. The Northumberland Board of Supervisors voted 3-2 to approve the conditional use permit.

As evidenced by the above local land use decisions by both the Northumberland and Lancaster Boards of Supervisors, the local county governments are willing to encourage use of the waterfront for oyster aquaculture businesses, despite the majority of the waterfront being zoned residential.

When the working waterfront inventory for the Northern Neck was completed in FY11, there was limited funding for researching the infrastructure characteristics of the hundreds of working waterfront businesses that were cataloged. Research on the attributes consisted of a web-based search for attributes such as whether the business had ice, refrigeration, freezers, winches available for off-loading seafood or equipment, travel lifts for transporting vessels out of the water, whether gear was allowed to be stored on site and additional details on the infrastructure on site. As a result of the limited amount of research, many of the data fields for the infrastructure at the inventoried working waterfront sites were tagged with “unknown”.

These data gaps in the working waterfront inventory should be addressed in the future so that the baseline from which to compare any loss of working waterfront capacity can be accurately gauged into the future.

Action steps to help preserve and protect working waterfront in the region could include language added to the County’s Comprehensive Plan indicating the preservation, protection and enhancement of working waterfronts as a county policy into the future.

Lancaster County, in its last revision of the County’s Comprehensive Plan, added such language. In Chapter 7 of the Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan, on page 7-17, Objective III-A states County land use policy should “Preserve and promote our maritime heritage, the watermen who continue it, and our waterfront recreational and service industries. On the next page of Chapter 7, page 7-18, Strategies to implement Objective III-A include:

- Identify active commercial fishery operations and ensure that County land use decisions on nearby properties are not necessarily detrimental to these waterfront activities.
Educate the public on the contributions these heritage industries make to the economy of our area, as outlined above, which far exceeds the sales value of their product.

- Identify and encourage the adaptive reuse of vacant or failing waterfront commercial properties. Consider the use of historic tax credits, Community Development Block Grants, or the use of public or privately generated funds to stabilize such properties or develop new uses.

- Consistent with land use and water quality and environmental considerations, seek out and encourage new waterfront commercial enterprises including such things as aquaculture, maritime museums, boating instruction schools, restaurants accessible to boaters, seafood retail stores, marinas, charter fishing operations, retirement communities, etc. Actively help such water-oriented businesses identify suitable sites for their particular enterprise. The adaptive reuse sites discussed above, as well as our waterfront villages and hamlets, could be prime candidates for locating such new enterprises.

- Increase efforts to identify and develop waterfront public access sites and promote multiple uses for such sites. For example, a public fishing pier in an appropriate location could be opened up for three mornings a week to commercial fishermen, oystermen and crabbers to tie up and sell their catch to the public. Canoe and kayak launching public access sites could be linked as part of the County’s developing blue water trail system and used for point-to-point scenic paddling gatherings or paddling races.

- Actively educate the public and promote the maritime heritage and waterfront oriented recreational, cultural and business activities of our County. Examples of opportunities for such education and promotion would include our outstanding maritime museums and the picturesque waterfront villages most are located in, Belle Isle State Park and the various recreational opportunities it offers, our marinas and the facilities they provide, boat races and shows, fishing derbies, maritime and seafood festivals, steamboat landing reenactments, tall-ship visits, etc.

Encouraging the other three counties in the Northern Neck, Northumberland, Richmond and Westmoreland Counties to adopt similar language in their Comprehensive Plans would be a good action step in the Northern Neck region, as the Comprehensive Plan is used as guidance when making individual land use decisions.

Another action step to help protect and preserve working waterfronts in the Northern Neck region would be to encourage the other three counties in the Northern Neck, Northumberland, Richmond and Westmoreland Counties to look into revising their non-conforming zoning ordinance language and consider exempting certain working waterfront uses from the non-conforming clause as does Lancaster County (see the Weems/Ampro Marine Railway case study above for specifics). This would allow flexibility to allow the restarting of abandoned oyster and
crab house businesses if the living resources rebound and there is need for additional seafood processing facilities into the future.