Town of Wachapreague, Virginia

FLOOD RESILIENCE PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

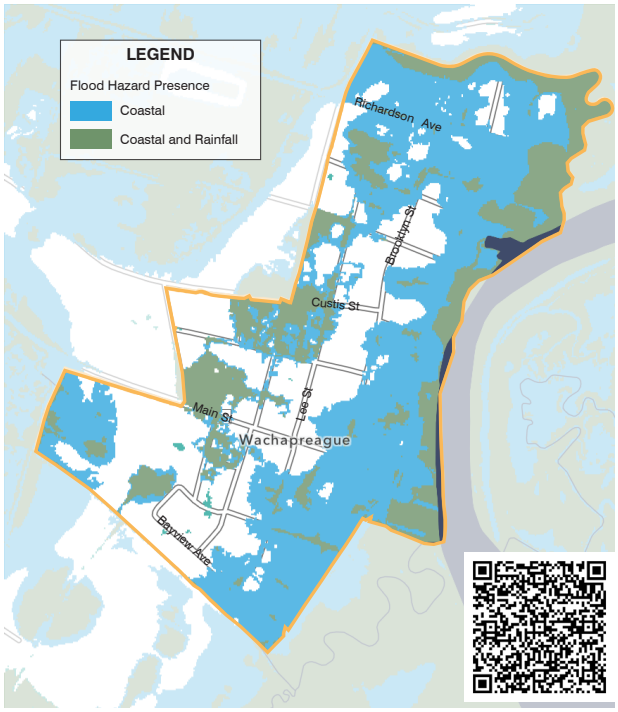
A Stronger, More Resilient Wachapreague

Wachapreague, known as the "Little City by the Sea," is a small coastal community on Virginia's Eastern Shore in Accomack County. The Town is defined by its strong connection to the water, extensive marshlands, and maritime history. Its surrounding tidal waterways, salt marshes, and barrier islands support fishing, aquaculture, recreation, research, and tourism while contributing to the Town's character, economy, and quality of life.

At the same time, Wachapreague's low-lying coastal setting makes the community vulnerable to tidal flooding, storm surge, sea-level rise, rising groundwater, and saltwater intrusion. These hazards can affect residents, waterfront businesses, critical infrastructure, natural resources, and industries that depend on access to the water.

The Town of Wachapreague developed its own Flood Resilience Plan through the Virginia Community Flood Preparedness Fund (CFPF) to better understand these risks and identify actions that strengthen long-term resilience. The identified entities in Flood Resilience Plan will advance and track the implementation of these actions.

Baseline Conditions (2020, 1% Annual Exceedance Probability Flood Extent)



Source: https://floodplan-vdcr.hub.arcgis.com/apps/vdcr::coastal-resilience-web-explorer/explore

OUR VISION

"Wachapreague envisions a resilient and prosperous community that preserves its simple, family-oriented coastal character, protects its natural resources, supports a vibrant waterfront economy, celebrates its active arts community, and embraces thoughtful growth that enhances quality of life for current and future generations."

OUR GOALS

01 Strengthen Flood Resilience

Address recurring coastal flooding, protect vulnerable structures and waterfront areas, and incorporate flood risk into future planning.

02 Improve Infrastructure and Public Services

Upgrade aging drainage, stormwater, sewer, utility, and waterfront infrastructure and improve long-term maintenance.

03 Strengthen Waterfront Access and Natural Resources

Protect natural assets, maintain waterfront access, support dredging, and preserve resources important to the local economy.

04 Foster Community Vitality and Historic Preservation

Support community engagement, preserve historic properties and landmarks, and encourage thoughtful redevelopment.

05 Expand Partnerships and Local Capacity

Build partnerships and increase access to technical assistance, grant support, and expertise needed to advance resilience projects.

06 Support Economic Development and

Leverage waterfront, historic, and cultural assets while supporting marine industries, aquaculture, tourism, and resilient growth.

Understanding Flood Impacts in Wachapreague and the Eastern Shore

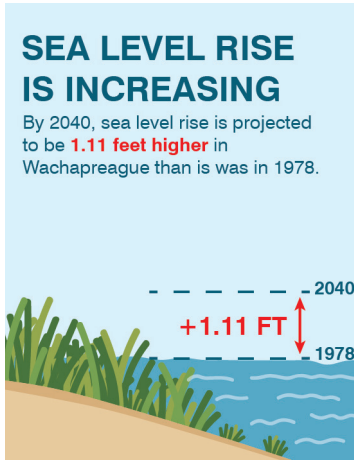
Wachapreague is primarily vulnerable to two flood hazard types: coastal flooding and rainfall-driven flooding.

Coastal Flooding - Occurs when tidal waters exceed the typical shoreline and inundate upland areas. Coastal flooding includes both repetitive tidal flooding and severe storm surge.

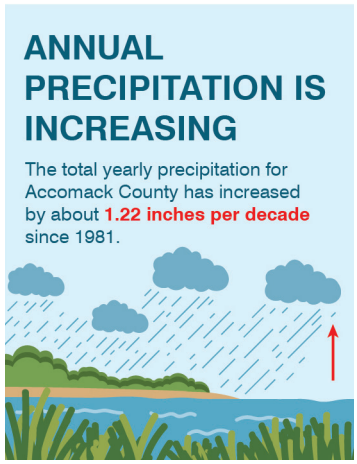
Rainfall-Driven (Pluvial) Flooding - this type of flooding occurs when heavy or prolonged rainfall exceeds the capacity of the ground, drainage systems, or other infrastructure to absorb and convey water, resulting in localized inundation.

Definitions provided by Virginia DCR within the Coastal Resilience Master Plan Phase II.

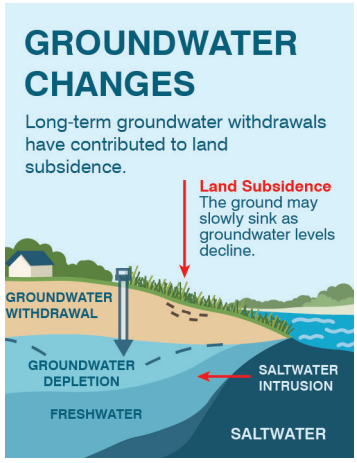
These hazards are increasingly influenced by sea level rise, groundwater conditions, salt marsh erosion, and compound flooding processes. Sea level rise can increase the frequency, duration, and severity of flooding, while compound flooding occurs when multiple flood drivers, such as storm surge, high tides, and heavy rainfall, occur simultaneously and produce impacts greater than any single hazard alone.



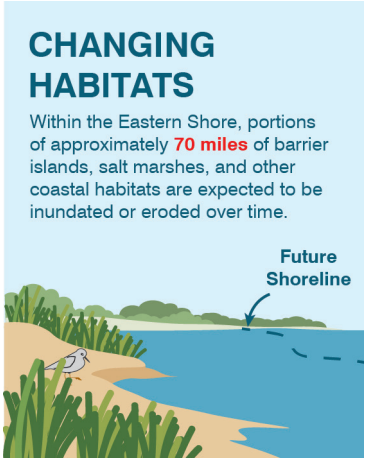
NOAA - Sea Level Rise



Virginia DEQ - Reported in the Groundwater Supply East of Interstate 95 (SJR 25, 2024)



Urban Sustainability Directors Network and the Carolina, Great Lakes, and Mid-Atlantic Regional Integrated Science and Assessments Programs - CHaMP Tool, 2026



Virginia DCR - as reported in the Coastal Resilience Master Plan Phase II, 2026

Community Feedback

As part of the public engagement process for this Flood Resilience Plan, two public workshop sessions were held at VIMS Seaside Hall on July 10, 2026. These workshops provided residents, stakeholders, and community partners with an opportunity to learn about local flood risks, share their experiences and concerns, and provide input on potential resilience strategies and actions for Wachapreague. Feedback received during the workshop reinforced concerns about flooding, emergency communications, transportation access, and waterfront impacts, while also highlighting strong support for actions that improve drainage, strengthen critical infrastructure, enhance emergency preparedness, and protect community assets from future flood risks.

Interactive boards were used to facilitate discussion during the public workshop sessions held at VIMS.

Example Actions Included in the Flood Resilience Plan:

- **Develop a working waterfront plan that strengthens local economy and retains historic character**
- **Develop a navigation channel protection and maintenance strategy**
- **Promote nature-based solutions, including living shorelines**