

Virginia Marine Resources Commission

380 Fenwick Road, Fort Monroe, VA

Habitat Policy Oversight Committee

August 26, 2026, 10:00am – 12:00pm

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Committee Members in Attendance:

William Bransom, Assoc. Commissioner and
Chairperson
David Rudders (VIMS)
Prof. Carol Considine (ICAR)
Richard Calvert (City of Portsmouth Wetlands
Board)
Mary-Carson Stiff (Wetlands Watch)
Lexy McCarty (Cherrystone Aquaculture)
Justin Shafer (City of Norfolk)

Ryan Green (CZM)
Kelsey Gray (VERA)
Ben McFarlane (HRPDC)
Christy Everett (CBF)
Joseph Grist, Commissioner (ex-officio)
Meghan Mayfield, Deputy Commissioner (ex-
officio)
Randy Owen, Chief MRC Habitat Division (ex-
officio)

Public in Attendance:

Megan La Peyre
Shannon Varnerr
Ian Blair
Alex Sabo

Jeff Flood
Greg Steele
Erica Deyesu
Sharon Neal

MRC Staff in Attendance:

Justin Worrell
Claire Gorman
Kirsten Travis

Kylie Harris
Olivia Upton

1. Introduction of New Members

The August 2026 Habitat Policy Oversight Committee (HPOC) meeting was convened at 10:00am by Chairperson Bransom. Commissioner Grist, who introduced Meghan Mayfield as VMRC's new Deputy Commissioner and Christy Everett as the newest member of the Committee.

2. Approval of Summary Minutes

The Committee discussed and approved the July 2026 meeting minutes as submitted.

3. Coastal Resilience Projects - State-owned bottomlands conveyance update

Greg Steele, Chief Resilience Officer with the Virginia Office of Resilience, presented an overview of the issues surrounding the USACE Norfolk District Office's needs for state-owned bottom conveyance for the City of Norfolk flood wall. The Virginia Office of Resilience has been working with USACE, the City of Norfolk, and the Office of the Attorney General on creating appropriate language

for specific conveyances of Baylor and non-Baylor state-owned lands by VMRC to the USACE for federal flood control projects. Commissioner Grist asked HPOC to be ready to provide feedback with a narrow focus on Corps civil works projects. He advised that such projects could additionally be proposed over state-owned submerged lands in non-tidal waters. Commissioner Grist and Greg Steele clarified that the proposed conveyances would be limited to Corps projects only and to within a project footprint plus any necessary mitigation areas.

4. Presentation by Dr. Megan La Peyre (VIMS)

Commissioner Grist introduced Megan La Peyre, Associate Dean of Research and Advisory Services at VIMS, who presented on her experience working with the Louisiana's No Net Loss program and the state's Master Plan. Dr. La Peyre discussed managing hydrology and sediment for coastal resilience and using science as a tool to support regulatory decisions and presented two studies of beneficial use of dredge material, data from which have been used to successfully create marsh habitat. The committee followed up the presentation with a discussion on data accessibility, the need for monitoring data for beneficial use, and the need to focus on using beneficial use to restore ecosystem services (e.g., fisheries, water quality, carbon sequestration, and nutrient filtering) rather than recovering land.

5. Update on potential Poplar Island, MD visit (e.g. BUDM use)

The committee discussed availability for visiting Poplar Island in Maryland to observe an example of beneficial use of dredge material for habitat creation and restoration of ecosystems services in the footprint of islands lost or disappearing due to sea level rise and erosion. The committee agreed on scheduling the Poplar Island visit for October 22, 2026.

6. Overview of Top HPOC topics of interest

The committee discussed potential topics of interest for this committee to focus on. Nine topics of interest were provided and the committee agreed to prioritize: 1) Sea Level rise impacts on regulatory boundaries, wetland migration, and ownership and 2) Beneficial use of dredge material and thin-layer placement.

Deputy Commissioner Mayfield emphasized the requirements of HB 390 and the Committee's charge to view and provide recommendations on Division policies, procedures, and priorities. She also discussed the need for a permitting handbook and the need to revise the Commonwealth's Joint Permit Application.

7. Public Comment

Ian Blair, Wetlands Watch, updated the committee on upcoming public events pertinent to topics discussed:

- September 10th: CCRM Tidal Wetlands [Virtual](#) Workshop
- September 11th: [Virginia-Virginia](#) TLP Regulatory Alignment Workshop
- September 16th: CBF & ICAR Marsh Challenges, Tradeoffs, and Opportunities for Action webinar

- September 17th: BU4U? Dredging and Beneficial Use Workshop

8. Future Meeting Planning

The committee discussed the schedule for future meetings. The next HPOC meeting is scheduled September 23, 2026, at 10:00 am to be located at MRC Headquarters. It was suggested that the meeting on October 28, 2026, be held virtually to accommodate the planned Poplar Island visit.

The meeting adjourned at ~~12:00 pm~~11:56 am.