

Eastern Shore of Virginia Resource Conservation & Development Council

Strategic Plan • 2021 - 2024



Introduction & Background

Strategic planning is an important process for all nonprofit organizations to undertake. It is a sanctioned time for analyzing your current environment, identifying opportunities, and envisioning the future. The purpose of strategic planning is to develop a three to five-year blueprint for the future to help guide the allocation of resources in order to achieve organizational and programmatic goals.

For nearly half a century Eastern Shore Resource Conservation & Development Council (ESRC&D) worked quietly in the background on a wide range of community development and land and water conservation and management issues. In 2011 direct federal support from the USDA – National Resource Conservation Service ended for the National Resource Conservation and Development program. Over the last decade ESRC&D operated as an independent, self-sustaining nonprofit organization. The organization maintains its relationship with the original four sponsoring agencies: Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District; Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission; Accomack County; and Northampton County. Each agency is responsible for appointing four Council members and both Counties continue to provide for the Council in their annual budgets.

ESRC&D's last Strategic Plan (2010 - 2014) was completed when the organization was still receiving direct federal support from the USDA. Over the last decade funding and projects have fluctuated as ESRC&D has sought to continue to fulfill its mission. ESRC&D is at a critical point in its history and evolution. The COVID-19 pandemic and recent changes in staffing have amplified the need for organizational assessment, strategic planning, and an honest conversation regarding sustainability. During the Spring and Summer of 2021, ESRC&D engaged in a planning process to determine if the organization has fulfilled its mission or if there is additional work that needs to be done and, if so, what needed role can ESRC&D fill.

Strategic Planning Process Summary

The planning process began with a situational analysis and environmental scan done through surveys of the sponsoring agencies and the community. The purpose was to identify current issues, identify opportunities, and to help guide the development of the ESRC&D Strategic Plan. All four sponsoring agencies responded to the survey and 62 individuals responded to the community stakeholder survey.

During the planning retreat the Council revised the mission, vision, and values of the organization. The Council then reviewed and discussed the analysis data, identified critical issues and opportunities, developed strategic goals, and discussed plan implementation. The plan is organized into *goals* and *strategies*. Goals are broad statements of what ESRC&D hopes to achieve in the next three or more years. Strategies are the methods for attaining the goals and generally take a year or more to accomplish.

Three organizational goal areas and three programmatic goal areas are included in the plan along with strategies for achieving each goal. In several instances, *tactics* were also identified as part of the planning process. Tactics are the action steps to be taken to achieve strategies and are generally developed during the creation of annual work plans.

Eastern Shore Resource Conservation & Development Council

Strategic Plan 2021

Mission Statement: To assist the Eastern Shore community in the beneficial stewardship of our natural and community development resources.

Vision Statement: An Eastern Shore that cultivates and nurtures the thoughtful use of resources to support a durable and thriving community.

Organizational Goals

- ❖ Communications
- ❖ Governance
- ❖ Sustainability & Resource Development

Goal 1: Increase public awareness of ESRC&D to highlight impact, current goals, and partnership opportunities				
Strategy 1: Improve communications between ESRC&D and its Sponsoring Agencies (A-NPDC, ES SWCD, Accomack County, Northampton County)		Responsible	Timeline	Measure of Success
Tactics	<i>Add standing agenda item to monthly ESRC&D meetings – “Reports from Sponsoring Agencies” which would be delivered by agency appointees</i>	<i>Appointed Council Members</i>	<i>Monthly</i>	<i>Increase in knowledge and awareness</i>
	<i>Provide quarterly reports to Sponsoring Agencies highlighting project activities</i>	<i>Projects Director</i>	<i>Quarterly</i>	<i>Submission of reports</i>
	<i>Present Annual Report to the Sponsoring Agencies at regularly scheduled meetings</i>	<i>Council Chair</i>	<i>Annually</i>	<i>Presentations made</i>
Strategy 2: Utilize website and social media to promote awareness and activities		Responsible	Timeline	Measure of Success
Tactics	<i>Conduct an audit of the esrcd.org website on at least a quarterly basis and refresh/update content</i>	<i>Projects Director</i>	<i>Quarterly</i>	<i>Increase in website visits/engagement analytics</i>
	<i>Post engaging content on social media at least 3 times per week</i>	<i>Projects Director</i>	<i>Weekly</i>	<i>Increase in engagement analytics</i>
Strategy 3: Increase outreach to community partners and the general public		Responsible	Timeline	Measure of Success
Tactics	<i>Table at community events (festivals, school programs, partner events, etc.)</i>	<i>Projects Director and Council Members</i>	<i>On-going</i>	<i>Increase in number of events attended on an annual basis</i>
	<i>Submit press releases, articles and op-eds to local media (WESR/Shore Daily News and ES Post)</i>	<i>Projects Director</i>	<i>On-going</i>	<i>Increase in number of articles submitted on an annual basis</i>

Goal 2: Strengthen the Council through governance best management practices				
Strategy 1: Create a Governance Standing Committee		Responsible	Timeline	Measure of Success
Tactics	<i>Establish a Governance Committee and meet on a quarterly basis</i>	Council	On-going	Quarterly meetings
	<i>Develop a Council member job description outlining expectations and share on the website and with sponsoring agencies</i>	Projects Director	By 12/22	Job description complete and shared
	<i>Educate community members on Council service and invite interested parties to seek an appointment</i>	Council Members	On-going	
	<i>Fill current vacancies and create a process to recruit future members</i>	Council Members	On-going	
Strategy 2: Seek to broaden diversity on the Council		Responsible	Timeline	Measure of Success
Tactics	<i>Reach out to groups on the Shore who represent under represented members of the community and invite them to serve</i>	Council Members	On-going	Increase in community representation on the Council
	<i>Consider revising by-laws to allow for at-large community appointments in addition to sponsoring agency seats on the Council</i>	Council Members		
Strategy 3: Conduct annual and strategic planning efforts on a regular basis		Responsible	Timeline	Measure of Success
Tactics	<i>Develop an annual work plan for adoption each July</i>	Projects Director	Annually	Plan adopted by Council

Goal 3: Continuously gauge the sustainability of ESRC&D based on community need and available resources				
Strategy 1: Determine community issues and opportunities		Responsible	Timeline	Measure of Success
Tactics	<i>Work with sponsoring agencies to identify community needs</i>	Projects Director	On-going	New project identification
	<i>Develop an annual survey to solicit community input regarding needs and opportunities regarding natural and community development resources</i>	Projects Director	Annually	Survey completed and results shared with Council
Strategy 2: Review annual and strategic plans to determine progress toward goals		Council	Annually	Goals met
Strategy 3: Develop an annual balanced budget		Treasurer and Projects Director	Annually	Budget adopted by Council each July
Tactics	<i>Review current and identify potential funding sources</i>	Projects Director	On-going	
	<i>Consider fundraising as a future income source</i>	Council		

Programmatic Goals

- ❖ Re-establish Eastern Shore Watersheds Roundtable
- ❖ Partner with sponsoring agencies
- ❖ Identify a niche project area

Goal 1: Re-establish the Eastern Shore Watersheds Roundtable (DEQ Grant #17106)				
Strategy 1: ES Roundtable Coordination and Administrative Support		Responsible	Timeline	Measure of Success
Tactics	<i>Contact, engage, and establish Roundtable stakeholders</i>	<i>Projects Director</i>	<i>By 12/22</i>	<i>Roundtable membership confirmed</i>
	<i>Coordinate quarterly (4) Roundtable meetings annually</i>	<i>Projects Director</i>	<i>Quarterly</i>	<i>Meetings held</i>
	<i>Process contracts and payments, manage files and project documentation</i>	<i>Projects Director</i>	<i>On-going</i>	<i>Reports, filings, and invoices submitted on time</i>
Strategy 2: Development and initial implementation of an ES Roundtable Short-Term Strategic Plan		Responsible	Timeline	Measure of Success
Tactics	<i>Engage in a strategic planning process with Roundtable Members and community stakeholders</i>	<i>Projects Director</i>	<i>6 months</i>	<i>Development of a short-term (2 year) plan with measurable goals and objectives</i>
	<i>Identify additional deliverables related to the Chesapeake Bay Phase III WIP based on strategic plan implementation activities</i>	<i>Projects Director</i>	<i>TBD</i>	
	<i>Work with A-NPDC and Eastern Shore SWCD to determine roles and tasks for enhancing septic tank pump out assistance programs</i>	<i>Projects Director</i>	<i>TBD</i>	
Strategy 3: Establishment of ES Roundtable Internet Presence		Responsible	Timeline	Measure of Success
Tactics	<i>Management of ES Roundtable social media presence and project page on ESRC&D website</i>	<i>Projects Director</i>	<i>Initial page by 12/22, maintenance on-going</i>	<i>Increased visibility and outreach of ES Roundtable information and projects</i>
Strategy 4: Work with Dept. of Conservation and Recreation – Shoreline Erosion Advisory Service to accelerate the scale and rate of living shoreline implementation in rural coastal Virginia (DCR-NFWF grant 71893)		<i>Projects Director, Roundtable members</i>	<i>7/1/21 – 6/30/24</i>	<i>Increase in the number of living shorelines on the ESVA</i>

Goal 2: Partner with sponsoring agencies to identify opportunities for collaboration and potential value-added projects

Strategy 1: Use Northampton County’s 2040 Comprehensive Plan to identify potential projects		Responsible	Timeline	Measure of Success
<i>Tactics</i>	<i>Begin with existing list of potential projects and schedule a meeting with the County Administrator and/or Director of Planning to discuss opportunities for partnerships</i>	<i>Projects Director</i>	<i>By 12/22</i>	<i>Meeting complete, next steps identified</i>
Strategy 2: Monitor and or participate in the A-NPDC workgroups and committees to identify potential projects		Responsible	Timeline	Measure of Success
<i>Tactics</i>	<i>Climate Adaptation Workgroup – Virginia’s Coastal Resilience Master Plan –possible focus on living shoreline projects</i>	<i>Projects Director</i>	<i>On-going</i>	
	<i>ESVA Groundwater Committee – possible focus on septic systems.</i>	<i>Projects Director</i>	<i>On-going</i>	
	<i>Rail to Trail Workgroup</i>	<i>Projects Director</i>	<i>On-going</i>	
	<i>Waste Watchers/Greenworks Committee</i>	<i>Projects Director</i>	<i>On-going</i>	
	<i>Economic Development Committee - Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs), also known as the Eastern Shore Regional Economic Development Plan</i>	<i>Projects Director</i>	<i>On-going</i>	

Goal 3: Establish a niche in the community through targeted activities and projects

Strategy 1: Living Shorelines, Sustainable Landscapes, Native Plants, & Best Management Practices		Responsible	Timeline	Measure of Success
<i>Tactics</i>	<i>DCR-SEAS Grant implementation</i>	<i>Projects Director, ES Watersheds Roundtable</i>	<i>7/1/21 – 6/30/24</i>	<i>Increase in the number of living shorelines on the ESVA</i>
Strategy 2: Small Farm Outreach & Education		Responsible	Timeline	Measure of Success
<i>Tactics</i>	<i>Establish a working relationship with Virginia State University Small Farm Outreach Program</i>	<i>Projects Director</i>		
	<i>Establish a working relationship with Future Harvest – Chesapeake Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture</i>	<i>Projects Director</i>		
Strategy 3: Septic Systems and Other Groundwater Related Issues		Responsible	Timeline	Measure of Success
<i>Tactics</i>	<i>Engage with A-NDPC Groundwater Committee</i>	<i>Projects Director</i>		