

NASA Causeway Bridge Replacement Project
Environmental Assessment

Appendix E
VMRC Coordination

From: Bruner, Douglas W. (WFF-2500) <douglas.w.bruner@nasa.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, February 21, 2023 12:07 PM
To: alicia.nelson@mrc.virginia.gov
Cc: Miller, Shari A. (WFF-2500) <shari.a.miller@nasa.gov>; Saecker, John R. (WFF-2280) <john.r.saecker@nasa.gov>; Kimberley, Ryan (FHWA) <ryan.kimberley@dot.gov>; Richert, Suzie <SRichert@wetlands.com>; Lindsey, Matthew R. (WFF-250.0)[Bluestone Environmental Group, Inc] <matthew.r.lindsey@nasa.gov>; Simko, Marianne F. (WFF-250.0)[Bluestone Environmental Group, Inc] <marianne.f.simko@nasa.gov>
Subject: FW: Letter to VMRC Artificial Reef Program

Dear Ms. Nelson,

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) that will evaluate potential impacts associated with replacement of the Wallops Island Causeway Bridge over Cat Creek at Goddard Space Flight Center's Wallops Flight Facility (WFF) in Accomack County, VA.

In August 2020, FHWA on behalf of NASA sent a scoping letter soliciting comments from the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC); FHWA received scoping comments from VMRC on September 22, 2020. In response to FHWA's submittal of a shellfish survey for review, VMRC provided comments dated October 15. Both sets of VMRC comments recommended that demolished bridge materials be considered for placement on artificial reefs in the area and that FHWA and NASA contact VMRC's Artificial Reef Program. As such, we respectfully request your review and comments regarding the feasibility of utilizing this demolition debris for artificial reef placement, and which materials would be applicable to the VMRC Artificial Reef Program.

Respectfully,

Douglas Bruner
Environmental Engineer
Code 250, Medical and Environmental Management Division
NASA Wallops Flight Facility
Building F-160, Rm C-166

Wallops Island, Virginia 23337

douglas.w.bruner@nasa.gov

Office (757) 824-2441

Cell: 651-276-9864

National Aeronautics and Space Administration



Goddard Space Flight Center

Wallops Flight Facility
Wallops Island, VA 23337

Reply to Attn of: 250.W

February 21, 2023

Alicia Nelson
Virginia Marine Resources Commission
Fisheries Management Division
Artificial Reef Program
380 Fenwick Boulevard
Fort Monroe, Virginia 23651-1064

Dear Ms. Nelson,

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) that will evaluate potential impacts associated with replacement of the Wallops Island Causeway Bridge over Cat Creek at Goddard Space Flight Center's Wallops Flight Facility (WFF) in Accomack County, VA. The EA is being prepared to satisfy NASA's and FHWA's obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Coast Guard are serving as cooperating agencies on the EA.

The existing bridge, which will be demolished, was constructed in 1959 and is approaching the end of its anticipated service life. It is 1,284 feet long, 27 feet wide, and has a cast-in-place concrete deck supported by four prestressed concrete beams on concrete piers. The bridge has had repairs including shotcrete and fiber reinforced polymer. Demolition debris may include concrete rubble, concrete panels of varying size, concrete girders, concrete piers and columns, and steel rebar. Maps and photos are provided in Attachment A.

In August 2020, FHWA on behalf of NASA sent a scoping letter soliciting comments from the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC); FHWA received scoping comments from VMRC on September 22, 2020. In response to FHWA's submittal of a shellfish survey for review, VMRC provided comments dated October 15. Both sets of VMRC comments recommended that demolished bridge materials be considered for placement on artificial reefs in the area and that FHWA and NASA contact VMRC's Artificial Reef Program. Therefore, we respectfully request your review and comments regarding the feasibility of utilizing this demolition debris for artificial reef placement, and which materials would be applicable to the VMRC Artificial Reef Program.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at douglas.w.bruner@nasa.gov or (757) 824-2441 if you have questions regarding this project.

Sincerely,

**Douglas
Bruner**

Digitally signed by
Douglas Bruner
Date: 2023.02.21
05:46:18 -05'00'

Douglas W. Bruner, P.G.
Environmental Engineer

1 Enclosure

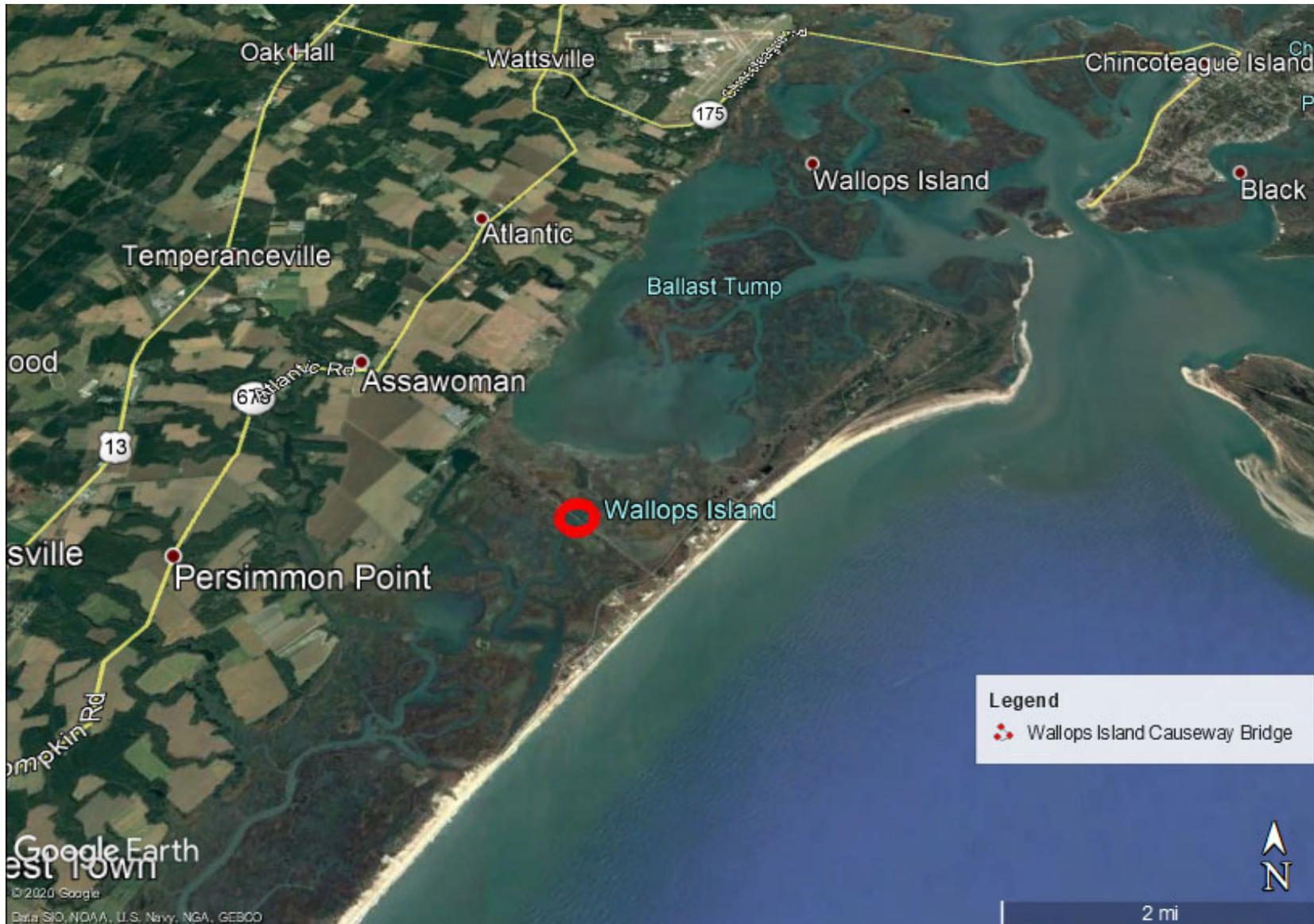
cc:

250/Ms. Shari A. Miller

780/Mr. John R. Saecker

FHWA/Mr. Ryan Kimberley

ATTACHMENT A, WALLOPS ISLAND CAUSEWAY BRIDGE MAPS AND PHOTOS



Satellite Imagery of project location and vicinity

ATTACHMENT A, WALLOPS ISLAND CAUSEWAY BRIDGE MAPS AND PHOTOS



USGS topographical map excerpt, Wallops Island, VA quad

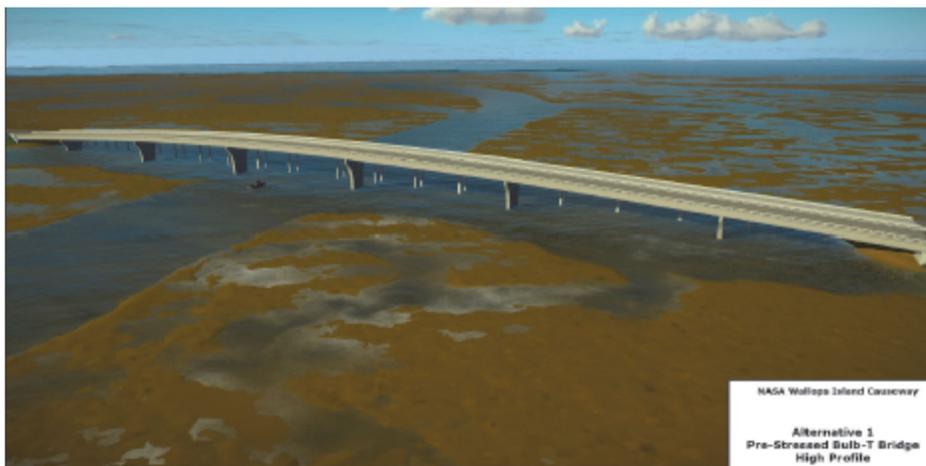
ATTACHMENT A, WALLOPS ISLAND CAUSEWAY BRIDGE MAPS AND PHOTOS



Existing bridge view looking east toward Wallops Island



View of existing bridge from the western abutment, facing southeast



Rendering of proposed bridge



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Marine Resources Commission
380 Fenwick Road
Bldg 96
Fort Monroe, VA 23651-1064

Ann F. Jennings
Secretary of Natural and Historic
Resources

Steven G. Bowman
Commissioner

October 15, 2021

Federal Highway Administration
Attn: Ryan Kimberley
21400 Ridgetop Circle
Sterling, VA 20166

Re: Wallops Island Causeway Bridge Replacement - Shellfish
Survey

Dear Mr. Kimberley,

This will respond to the request for comments regarding the Shellfish Survey for the Wallops Island Causeway Bridge Replacement project, prepared by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), on behalf of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). NASA has proposed to replace the existing Wallops Island Causeway Bridge over Cat Creek at Goddard Space Flight Center's Wallops Flight Facility in Accomack County, Virginia.

The Shellfish Survey was conducted in response to scoping comments received from the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) in August 2020. Specifically, the FWHA conducted a presence/absence survey (Phase I) in May 2021 and a subsequent preliminary density survey of a representative portion of the oyster bed (Phase II). Results from this survey indicate the presence of oysters and mussels within the project area. Impacts are anticipated at the eastern abutment, western abutment, and northern edges of both the east and west intertidal areas. The applicant indicates that the proposed construction would result in little to no permanent loss of oyster habitat and that the proposed piers and abutments will not be located within oyster habitat. However, the temporary bridge would intersect with oyster beds in several places.

VMRC has coordinated with VMRC staff within the Shellfish Management Division and VIMS and offers the following comments regarding the shellfish survey: VMRC recommends the shell and clusters within the project footprint be relocated to an adjacent and un-impacted reef area. It is not necessary to move them back upon project completion. VMRC continues to recommend that stringent erosion and sediment control measures should be used during any construction or maintenance on the bridge to protect shellfish in the area. Additionally, VMRC recommends that demolished bridge materials be considered for placement on artificial reefs in the area. The VMRC Artificial Reef Program can be contacted to determine which materials would be acceptable for placement on artificial reefs.

Please be advised that the VMRC pursuant to Chapter 12, 13, & 14 of Title 28.2 of the Code of Virginia administers permits required for submerged lands, tidal wetlands, and beaches and dunes. Any jurisdictional impacts will be reviewed by the VMRC during the Joint Permit Application process.

An Agency of the Natural Resources Secretariat

www.mrc.virginia.gov

Telephone (757) 247-2200 (757) 247-2292 V/TDD Information and Emergency Hotline 1-800-541-4646 V/TDD

Federal Highway Administration
October 15, 2021
Page Two

Should the proposed project change, a new review by this agency may be required relative to these jurisdictional areas.

Please contact me at 757-247-8027 or by email at ben.nettleton@mrc.virginia.gov if you have questions. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben Nettleton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

Ben Nettleton

BN/tlb
HM



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Marine Resources Commission
380 Fenwick Road
Bldg 96
Fort Monroe, VA 23651-1064

Matthew J. Strickler
Secretary of Natural Resources

Steven G. Bowman
Commissioner

September 22, 2020

Federal Highway Administration
Attn: Ryan Kimberley
21400 Ridgetop Circle
Sterling, VA 20166

Re: Draft Environmental Assessment
Wallops Island Causeway Bridge Replacement

Dear Mr. Kimberley:

This will respond to the request for comments regarding the Draft Environmental Assessment for the Wallops Island Causeway Bridge Replacement Project, prepared by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), on behalf of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Specifically, NASA has proposed to replace the existing Wallops Island Causeway Bridge over Cat Creek at Goddard Space Flight Center's Wallops Flight Facility in Accomack County, Virginia.

The Wallops Island Causeway Bridge crosses over public shellfish grounds that are open for harvest. VMRC recommends that a survey of shellfish resources be conducted as part of the environmental assessment. Stringent erosion and sediment control measures should also be used during any construction or maintenance on the bridge to protect shellfish in the area. Additionally, VMRC recommends that demolished bridge materials be considered for placement on artificial reefs in the area. The VMRC Artificial Reef Program can be contacted to determine which materials would be acceptable for placement on artificial reefs.

Please be advised that the VMRC pursuant to Chapter 12, 13, & 14 of Title 28.2 of the Code of Virginia administers permits required for submerged lands, tidal wetlands, and beaches and dunes. Any jurisdictional impacts will be reviewed by the VMRC during the Joint Permit Application process. Should the proposed project change, a new review by this agency may be required relative to these jurisdictional areas.

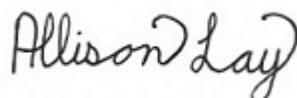
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Federal Highway Administration
September 22, 2020
Page Two

If you have any questions please contact me at (757) 247-2254 or by email at Allison.lay@mrc.virginia.gov. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allison Lay". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Allison Lay
Environmental Engineer, Habitat Management

AEL
HM