

2.3.2 Tourism

Introduction

With its saltwater bays, marshes and numerous creeks, the Eastern Shore is one of the few unspoiled coastal areas on the Eastern Seaboard. Recreation for all ages includes deep water fishing, crabbing and shell fishing, camping, boating, sunbathing, biking, hunting, canoeing, kayaking and bird watching. The Eastern Shore boasts many homes of varied vintage from ante-bellum to Victorian to Sears Roebuck houses throughout its charming towns and fishing villages. Nature Conservancy tours of barrier islands are available by prior arrangement and federal wildlife refuges offers nature walks on the seaside marshes. Traditional villages and towns are surrounded by farmlands and water. It is rich in heritage and tradition and is surrounded by waters providing livelihood to its residents and recreation to its visitors.

Accomack County, located in the northern portion of the Eastern Shore, attracts most visitors due to its signature recreation and resort area of Chincoteague Island. It is Virginia's only resort island and is world famous for its oyster beds and clam shoals. It is also known for its historic districts in Accomac and Onancock as well as for sport fishing in Wachapreague. In addition, is the gateway to Assateague Island National Seashore and the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. Chincoteague Island is also home to wild ponies. Tangier Island and the connecting seasonal passenger ferry from Onancock are also growing destination attractions.

Northampton County, the southern portion of the Eastern Shore, attracts most of its visitors to Cape Charles, the largest town in the county, which has one of the largest concentrations of late-Victorian and turn of the century buildings on the East Coast. In 1989, the town was designated as a Historic District on the Virginia Landmarks Register and in 1991 was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Cape Charles is a railroad town serving as the headquarters for the Eastern Shore Railroad. It offers a commercial center with shops, restaurants, antiques, museums, medical services, public beach, golf, marinas, boat ramp, sports fishing, summer rentals, and bed and breakfast accommodations. The area south of Cape Charles in Northampton County is home to the Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge, Fishermen's Island National Wildlife Refuge and Kiptopeke State Park. In addition, Cape Charles is the location for the new Bay Creek development project. Situated on 1,729 acres on the southwestern tip of the Delmarva peninsula, at the confluence of three bodies of water (the Chesapeake Bay, King's Creek and Plantation Creek), Bay Creek is being developed as a new residential and marina community. The unique property of Bay Creek is an integral part of the town of Cape Charles and will be developed for housing and limited commercial and recreational uses, including golf, boating and beachgoing. *(Source: Bay Creek Project website)*

Current Conditions and Trends

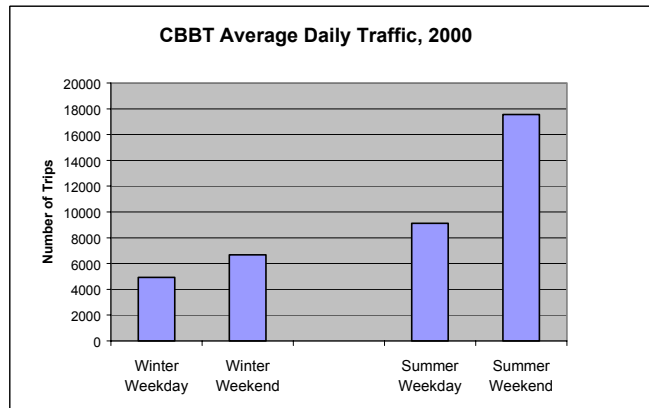
Seasonal Patterns

The Eastern Shore can be considered a seasonal destination area-- there are substantial increases in the number of visitors to the region's attractions and recreational areas during the summer and fall compared to the winter months.

CBBT Traffic

Tourists destined for the Eastern Shore, Virginia Beach or other points north or south travel US 13 by crossing the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel (CBBT).

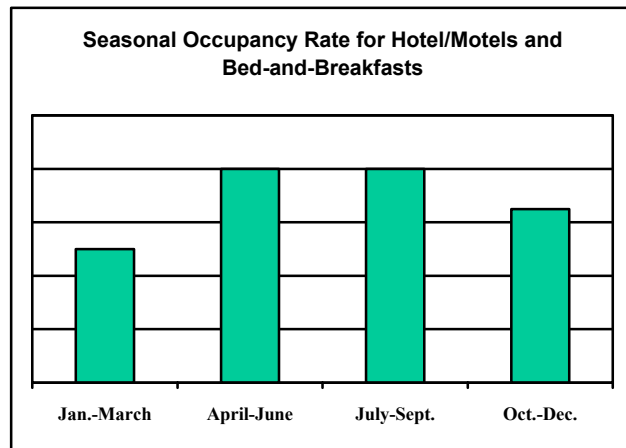
There is significant variation in average daily traffic on the CBBT based on the season and day of the week. Summer traffic is 2 to nearly 4 times greater than travel during the winter months and weekend traffic is



50 percent greater during the winter and 2 times the average weekday rate during the summer. On the first weekend in July 2000, bridge crossings reached a peak of nearly 22,000 vehicles in a one-day period. (Source: CBBT, 2001)

Lodging Occupancy

During their summer season (May to October), hotels and motels along the Eastern Shore report occupancy rates of 80 to 100 percent. During the winter months falls to approximately 50 to 65 percent.

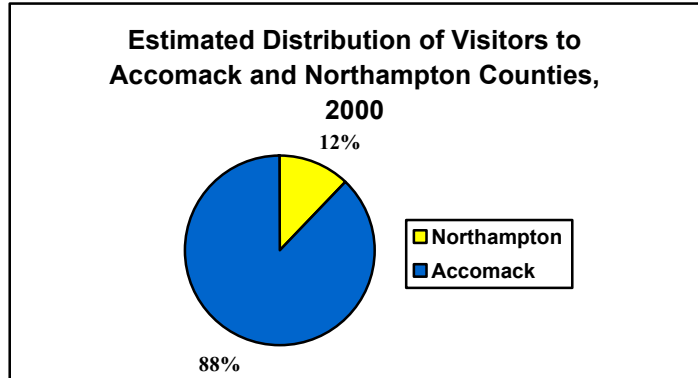


The number of visitors staying at bed-and-breakfasts along the Eastern Shore has increased substantially, at a rate of about 10% per year. They are at full occupancy during the summer season and report 50 to 80 percent occupancy during their off-season months. (Source: Interviews, 3/2001)

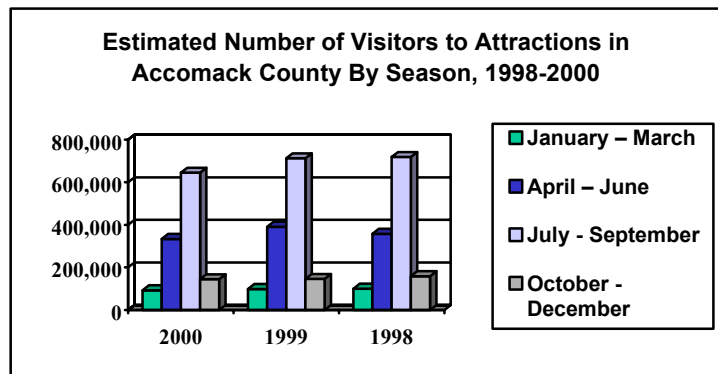
Area Attractions

The number of visitors to attractions varies substantially by County. In all approximately 1.3 million people visited the Eastern Shore in 2000.

Accomack County- Visits to Accomack County are seasonal, with a peak of over 600,000 visitors in the summer. There has been a slight decrease in the number of visitors to the County since 1998.



The number of visitors to Accomack County is substantial due to the attractions offered on Chincoteague and Assateague National Seashore. These destinations average 1.2 million visitors annually. During the high seasons, which are April to June and July to September, the number of visitors is more than four times greater than the number of visitors during the rest of the year.



(Source: Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce)

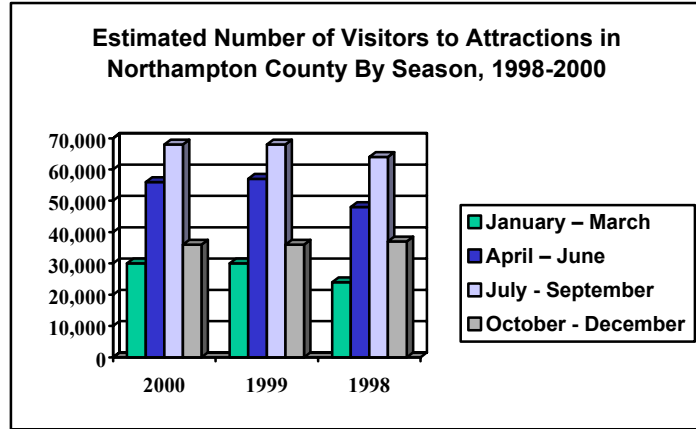
There are four campgrounds on Chincoteague: Maddox, which has 339 hook-ups and 250 tent sites, Tom’s Cove, which has 914 camp sites and 24 mobile home sites, Inlet View which has 300 sites, 4 cottages and 5 mobile homes and Pine Grove which has 150 camp sites. Each of these sites indicated that they are about 70 to 80 percent full during their busy season which is June through Labor Day. *(Source: Interviews 3/2001)*

Also located within Accomack County, close to Chincoteague, is NASA Wallops Flight Facility, an asset for the region, generating more than 800 salaried jobs. It is also the home of the US Navy and a NOAA facility and the newly developed Virginia Space Flight Center a commercial space port on Wallops Island. The NASA-Wallops Visitors Center estimates that they receive an average of 50,000-60,000 visitors per year.

Other tourist attractions throughout the county include:

- Saxis – known for its fishing pier
- Parksley – Railway museum
- Onancock – museums, harbor, historic district, specialty restaurants, destination visitor cruising boats
- Wachapreague – sport fishing
- U.S. Route 13 – restaurants and motels accommodate travelers

Northampton County - Visits to Northampton County experience the same seasonal peaks as other locations on the Shore, with nearly 70,000 visitors in the summer. There has been a slight increase in the number of visitors to the County since 1998.



An average of 70,000 people visit the southern portion of the Eastern Shore, due to the natural attractions offered near Cape Charles, such as Kiptopeke State Park and the Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge.

Cherrystone Campgrounds, located in Cheriton, receive a substantial number of visitors, mostly during the summer months and are about 80-100% full during this season.

(Source: Interviews, 3/2001)

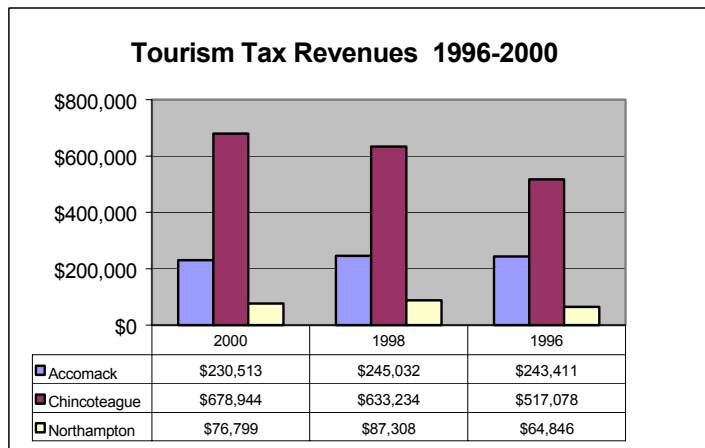
Tourism as a Generator of Economic Benefits

Tourism is a generator of revenue for the Eastern Shore, creating local jobs, earnings, and tax revenues:

Jobs -Approximately 20% of the jobs on the Eastern Shore are in the lodging and retail sectors. A significant portion of this employment is supported by tourist visitors to the Shore. The Eastern Shore Economic Development Commission estimates that approximately 1,700 jobs or 7% of all employment is attributed to tourism.

- **Earnings** -Jobs attributable to tourism generated up to \$18 million in personal earnings in 1998.

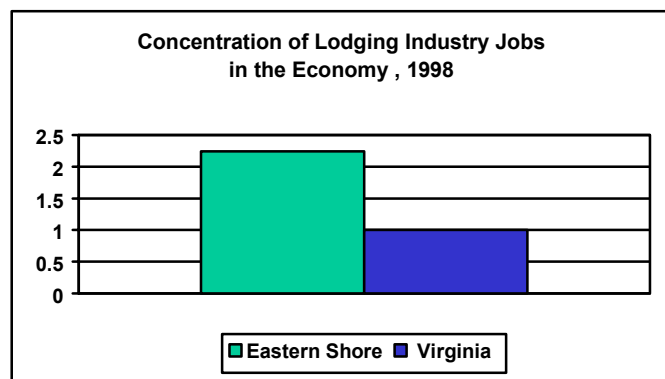
- **Economic Base and “New Money” Effects** -Dollars spent on lodging, retail and tourist-related services and activities by out-of-state visitors or from other parts of Virginia represent new spending on the Eastern Shore, not the respending of earnings generated on the Eastern Shore. The new money effects of tourism are a significant feature of its economic benefits. The Eastern Shore Economic Development Commission estimates that up to \$140 million was spent by tourists in 1998.



- Tax Revenues** - Tourist development also offers an additional tax base. Revenues generated by taxes on lodging and meals are a significant addition to the Eastern Shore tax base. Both Accomack and Northampton Counties charge a 2% occupancy tax. In 2000, about 83 percent of Accomack County's tourist-related tax revenue was generated by Chincoteague. Proportions were higher in 1998 and 1996--about 87 percent of tourism tax revenue was generated by Chincoteague in 1998 and approximately 85 percent in 1996. Chincoteague also charges its own 2% occupancy tax (in addition to the 2% occupancy tax charged by the County) as well as a 2% meal tax. The tax revenues generated decreased slightly in both Accomack and Northampton Counties between 1998 and 2000, while the tax revenue generated in Chincoteague increased. (Source: Accomack County and Northampton County Commissioners of Revenue and Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce)

Comparison to Virginia

Because of the Eastern Shore's location and natural amenities, tourism plays a larger role in its economy than the industry does for the state as a whole. For example, on the Eastern Shore, the percentage of jobs in the lodging industry is more than twice as great as the percentage of lodging industry jobs in the entire state of Virginia.



Overview of Eastern Shore Destinations

Northampton County - Northampton County, the southern portion of the Eastern Shore, attracts most of its visitors to the Cape Charles area. Cape Charles, the largest town in the county, has one of the largest concentrations of late-Victorian and turn of the century buildings on the East Coast. In 1989, the town was designated as an Historic District on the Virginia Landmarks Register and in 1991 was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Cape Charles is a railroad town serving as the headquarters for the Eastern Shore Railroad. It offers a commercial center with shops, restaurants, antiques, museums, medical services, public beach, golf, marinas, boat ramp, sports fishing, summer rentals, and bed and breakfast accommodations. Southern Northampton County is home to the CBBT Visitor Center, Eastern Shore Wildlife Refuge and Kiptopeke State Park, which offers camping, fishing, boating, hiking, hawk observatory and bicycle trails.

Cape Charles is also the location for the new Bay Creek development project. Situated on 1,729 acres on the southwestern tip of Cape Charles, at the confluence of three bodies of water (the Chesapeake Bay, King's Creek and Plantation Creek), Bay Creek is being developed as a new residential and marina community. The property is being developed for housing and limited commercial and recreational uses, including golf, boating and beachgoing.

Eastville, the county seat offers an historic courthouse as well as other historic sites including:

- The Clerks Office – 1830
- Confederate Monument – 1914
- Debtors Prison – 1743
- Eastville Inn – 1780
- Monument to an Indian Chief Debedeavon

Exmore, the second largest town in the county, is a commercial center with shopping, restaurants, railway museum, Bed and Breakfast and motel accommodations.

Nassawadox also offers shopping, restaurants and the location of the Shore Memorial Hospital.

Oyster and Willis Wharf are quaint fishing villages with boat ramps and a marina.

Silver Beach – YMCA Camp and summer cottages
Smith Beach – Summer Cottages
Barrier Islands
The Nature Conservancy Program and Oyster Lodge
Cobb Island Station
Indiantown Park

Accomack County - Accomack County, located in the northern portion of the Eastern Shore, attracts most visitors due to its signature recreation and resort area of Chincoteague Island. It is Virginia's premiere resort island and is world famous for its oyster beds and clam shoals. It is the gateway to Assateague Island National Seashore and the Chincoteague Wildlife Refuge. Chincoteague Island is also home to wild ponies, where they offer rides in their Pony Center. Beaches and sand dunes, bird watching (over 260 species of birds), ponies, and a lighthouse, are some of the attractions offered at Assateague Island National Seashore.

Other growing destination attractions include:

- **Tangier Island** - Cut off from the mainland by the Chesapeake Bay, Tangier Island is a quaint mix of old and new. A cruise down Onancock Creek and out across the bay brings visitors to the Island. The Island was discovered by Captain John Smith in 1608, but wasn't settled until 1686. It is also home to the working watermen crabbing industry.
- **Town of Onancock** - unique in its location as it is encompassed by the curving of a deep-water creek on the Chesapeake Bay. Activities include sailing, kayaking, fishing, crabbing, water skiing, arrowheading, and a variety of other water sports. Restaurants, bed and breakfasts, a post office, movie theatre, and other small shops are located in this town. A walking tour of historic Onancock clearly reflects its heritage. Those who visit enjoy Onancock's tree-lined streets along with its 19th

century homes. Stately Victorian homes are throughout town. There is a collection of homes that retain their wraparound porches and decorative trim as well as earlier styles of architecture. Onancock is home to Kerr Place, the Eastern Shore Historical Society. Built in 1799, it houses a collection of furniture and historical items relating to the Shore's history. This is a State designated Historic District. The town boasts a newly renovated wharf and boat ramp complementing its deep-water harbor and is a destination for cruising sailboats.

- **Town of Accomac** - State Designated Historic District. Within a short radius of this town, one will find more restored colonial architecture than in any other place in America, with the exception of Williamsburg. Debtor's Prison was built in 1784 as the jailers residence and adapted as a debtors prison in 1824. The building is a fine example of an eighteenth century tradesman's residence and remains essentially unchanged since 1784.
- **Town of Melfa** - home to the Turner Foundry and Gallery, where one can view the bronze sculptures of world-renowned artists William and David Turner. The Gallery displays both miniature and life-sized examples of their works on wildlife and waterfowl.
- **Town of Wachapreague** - home to a scenic fishing village, known as the Flounder Fishing Capital of the World. Charter boats leave for fishing trips offshore and in the seaside inlets. (Source: Accomack County websites)

Types of Tourism on the Eastern Shore

Recreation, Fishing, Boating

Recreational facilities along the Eastern Shore include the following:

- Oyster - Quaint fishing village with modern boat ramp. Located nearby is Silver Beach, which is a community with rental cottages.
- Cape Charles boat ramp -- 40-60 trailers use the boat ramps during the summer – almost at capacity (70 is capacity)
- Smith Beach- Community with rental cottages and
- Smith Island, named by Captain John Smith in 1608, now the site of the Cape Charles Lighthouse which is the most powerful of the Virginia lights.
- Willis Wharf is a small fishing village with restaurant, public dock, marina, B&B accommodations and boat ramp.
- Parks
- Beach Access (Assateague Island National Seashore (ocean), Cape Charles (bay), Kiptopeke State Park (bay))
- Water activities – canoeing, kayaking, crabbing, deep-water fishing, boating
- Campgrounds
- Boat ramps
- Sports facilities
- Golf courses
- Recreation centers – YMCA
- Movie Theaters

- Roller Rinks
- Ball fields
- tennis courts
- Boating facilities
- County Parks
- State Park
- Wildlife Refuges – Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge, Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, Saxis Wildlife Management Area

Eco-Tourism

EcoTourism is actively promoted along the Eastern Shore. There are sustainable tourism events such as bike tours given by the Eastern Shore Wildlife Refuge and the Chincoteague Wildlife Refuge, as well as barrier island tours offered by the Nature Conservancy. These tours educate tourists and promote awareness of the importance of environmental protection and conservation. There are also Virginia Coastal Birding Trails, Chesapeake Bay Water Trails, and Annual Birding, Seafood, Harvest, and Oyster Festivals.

- ***Virginia Coastal Birding Trails*** - The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is developing this trail to increase tourism to the Eastern Shore. DCR asked local governments and ANPDC to nominate sites for the Birding Trail and work with the Tourism Commission on this initiative.
- ***Between the Waters Bike Tour*** - The first Between the Waters Bike Tour began in Nassawadox in 1992 and can be considered an EcoTourism event. It has grown to include 750 riders on this bike tour. It gives the rider the opportunity to be exposed to the rural, natural area. Bike routes are flat loops that wind along back roads and provide scenic stops overlooking the Chesapeake Bay and the marshes and barrier islands of the Atlantic Ocean. There are also historic sites and private homes.
- ***Island Exploration Program*** - The Nature Conservancy developed a new program in Spring 2000, called the Island Exploration Program. It was created to introduce the barrier island system to local residents to increase local awareness of the natural resources of the Eastern Shore and promote the importance of the protection of the Eastern Shore's ecosystem.
- ***Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel Family Fun Day, 1999-2000*** – Instead of crossing the bridge in their cars, 12,000 residents walked across the bridge-tunnel and 5,000 rode their bikes.

Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism is a growing sector in the tourism industry, that is based on natural resources, history and culture of a region. With a history spanning almost 400 years, the Eastern Shore is rich in many scenic, historic, natural, cultural and recreational sites that are of interest to tourists, however the sites are not connected or promoted in an effective way. Signage is nonexistent and maps and guidebooks are outdated. In response to the increased interest in heritage tourism, Northampton County is developing a Heritage Trail

with VDOT Transportation Enhancement funds. It would be a marked driving/bicycling route along scenic back roads linking historic sites, natural areas and recreational facilities. It would include the towns of Chincoteague, Parksley, Accomac, Onancock, Onley, Wachapreague, Belle Haven, Exmore, Nassawadox, Eastville, Cheriton, and Cape Charles. The trail will highlight and promote natural assets of the region, including Kiptopeke State Park, Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge, and Assateague Island National Seashore. It will celebrate the cultural diversity and feature museums and historic sites. *(Source: Accomack County Comprehensive Plan)*

Bicycle Touring

Bicycling and bicycle facilities are an important part of tourism development. For example, a 50-mile Capitol-to-Capitol Bikeway is going to be built from Williamsburg to Richmond. Counties and cities throughout Virginia are preparing bicycle plans to be eligible for VDOT funding to develop bicycle facilities. The only Eastern Shore local government with an adopted bicycle plan is the town of Chincoteague. Both Accomack and Northampton Counties have authorized the development of an Eastern Shore Bicycle Plan.

Science/Technology

NASA-Goddard Space Flight Center's Wallops Flight Facility, located in northern Accomack County, was established in 1945 by the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, as a center for aeronautic research. Wallops Flight Facility is one of the oldest launch sites in the world. Visitors to the facility (about 50,000-60,000 per year) can learn about the history of aerospace technology: ancient Chinese and Greek stories of flight, the early 1900s with the start of powered flight, the contemporary era with the first flight of the Space Shuttle, and beyond. The Visitor Center is open to tourists, which includes a gift shop and picnic facilities.

Golf

The Eastern Shore Yacht and Country Club is located in Melfa, VA, on the banks of Pungoteague Creek and Chesapeake Bay. There are tennis courts, swimming pools, one 18-hole golf course and driving range, and a marina.

Bay Creek in Cape Charles is positioning itself as a golf destination with a regional and national draw. When complete the resort development will offer two signature 18-hole golf courses designed by golf legends Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus. One of the golf courses at Bay Creek opened to the public in the summer 2001, and is surrounded by woodlands and farmland bounded by the banks for the Chesapeake Bay to the west and Plantation Creek to the east. Membership is available and greens fees are not expected to exceed \$105 for most users. *(Source: Golf Magazine, March 2001)*

Origin of Travelers

Data showing the origin of travelers to the Eastern Shore is not currently available. Interviews with those employed in the local tourism industry suggest that in Accomack

County, a higher proportion of visitors from the north and those in Northampton County arrive from Hampton Roads and other Virginia destinations via the CBBT.

Second Home Development

Second home development along the bayside in both counties offers one of the greatest opportunities for growth in seasonal travel. Existing year round homes in Cape Charles and Onancock may also be converted to seasonal occupancy if demand is high. Probable locations for second home development include Cape Charles, Belle Haven, Onancock, Captains' Cove development and Chincoteague Island. Destination tourism would focus on Cape Charles, Onancock and Chincoteague.

Increase in Waterfront Sales and Property Values

Interviews with local real estate experts indicated that the sales price of bayfront property in Accomack County has tripled over the past two to three years. Properties have been sold largely to retirees coming from the Northeast (New York, Long Island, Southern New Jersey and Pennsylvania). Rental property prices have also seen an increase--about 50 percent (from \$325 per month to \$500 month) over the past two to three years. Large tracts of waterfront farms (50-150 acres) are becoming increasingly unavailable. The number of smaller lots of land sold (one-two acre lots) doubled in the last two years.

Real estate experts also suggest that within Northampton County, the price of bayfront property has tripled over the past two to three years and property has been mostly sold to second home buyers. Property has also been sold to retirees and some are buying property as an investment. There are very few bayfront properties left on the market. Historic homes are being restored and are also being sold to second homebuyers. Storefronts in Cape Charles have been sold and they are starting to be renovated.

Economic Effects

The development of properties for second home use can generate both short-term and long-term economic effects. The short-term effects include payments for labor services and materials in the home construction industry as well as related industries. Long-term effects include growth in retail and service industries to meet the needs of part time residents.

Fiscal Considerations

The development of properties for second homes may be considered a generator of economic development because the benefits in property taxes often exceed the costs of services that part-time residents may demand. For example, part-time residents often do not require school, utility, and emergency services to the same degree as full-time residents. Similarly, residents of retirement age living full or part time demand different types of services than families.

Lodging Opportunities

Bed-and-Breakfast Inns

Tourism initiatives have included the promotion of bed and breakfast accommodations in Cape Charles as well as in Onancock.

Number and Location -As of 1998, according to the Eastern Shore of Virginia Chamber of Commerce, there are 32 bed-and-breakfasts with a total of 108 rooms.

Town	Number of Bed-and-Breakfasts
Cape Charles	7
Chincoteague	5
Onancock	4
Exmore	3
Belle Haven	2
Locustville	2
Pungoteague	2
Harborton	2
Cheriton	1
Eastville	1
New Church	1
Tangier	1
Willis Wharf	1

Source: Bed and Breakfast Association On-Line

Factors Constraining Growth -Growth in the bed-and-breakfast industry on the Eastern Shore is constrained by the following factors:

- Limited number of locations suitable for development in terms of septic capacity
- Water supply for public use is limited in some locations
- Central sewage is a problem
- Lack of public access throughout the shore to beaches and nature/bike trails.
- Bike facilities need to be improved
- Information resources are needed such as updated maps and brochures to encourage heritage tourism and eco-tourism.

Motels and Hotels

Number and Location -As of 1998 there were a total of 40 hotels/motels with 1,270 rooms.

Town	Number of Hotels/Motels
Chincoteague	22
Cape Charles	10
Onley	2
Melfa	1
Exmore	1
Parksley	1
Nassawadox	1
Tangier	1
Wachapreague	1

The town of Chincoteague in Accomack County offers the most lodging facilities, with a total of 55 percent of the number of hotels and motels along the Eastern Shore, while Cape Charles offers 25 percent of the lodging facilities along the Eastern Shore.

Occupancy and Future Capacity – High peak season occupancy rates suggest that further growth in overnight tourism will require an expansion of the Eastern Shore lodging market.

Factors Constraining Growth - Growth in the hotel and motel industry on the Eastern Shore is constrained by the following factors:

- Limited number of locations suitable for development in terms of septic capacity
- Water supply for public use is limited in some locations
- Limited locations to build new hotels/motels - Large chain motels often require highway visibility, however, there are limited number of sites that are suitable and visible along U.S. Route 13. Residents in the counties may wish to restrict location of hotels and motels along U.S. Route 13 or other major roadways to prevent strip development along large portions of the roadways.

Campgrounds

Within Accomack County, specifically within the town of Chincoteague, there are five campgrounds. Maddox, has 339 hook-ups and 250 tent sites, Tom's Cove, has 914 camp sites and 24 mobile home sites, Inlet View has 300 sites, 4 cottages and 5 mobile homes and Pine Grove has 150 camp sites, and Camper's Ranch has approximately 250 sites. Each of these sites indicated that they are about 70-80% full during their busy season which is June through Labor Day. These total about 1,900 sites. (Source: Interviews, 3/01)

Northampton County is home to Cherrystone Campgrounds located in Cheriton. The campgrounds are 80% occupied during the summer and the number of visitors per year have been increasing. The total number of campground sites is 725. During their busiest summer season, there are close to 600 sites used. There could be anywhere between 1-5 people per site. (Source: Interviews, 3/01)

Assets/Resources

- **Natural Resources/Bay and Ocean Waterfront/Parks/Recreation** - The Eastern Shore offers miles of uninterrupted sandy beaches, navigable waters, wildlife refuges and barrier islands. These features provide the major draw for tourist activities on the Shore. Since a portion of Eastern Shore (approximately 15 percent) lie in conservation ownership, important parts of this resource base are likely to be preserved for future visitors. These lands are owned by the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Nature Conservancy, and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation:
 - Virginia Coast Reserve – 40,000 acres
 - Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge – 1,600 acres
 - Mockhorn Island State Wildlife Management Areas – 9,000 acres
 - Assateague Island National Seashore
 - State Natural Area System Preservation Areas:
 - Wreck Island – 698 acres
 - Cape Charles Coastal Habitat – 29 acres
 - Savage Neck Dunes - 299 acres
 - William B. Trower of Bayshore – 35 acres
 - Indiantown Park – 50-acre county park
 - Kiptopeke State Park is a 375-acre state park

Source: Accomack County Comprehensive Plan

Bay Creek Development Project - With a combination of resort development homes, signature golf courses with a regional and national draw, and a country club, marina, and hotel/conference facilities, the Bay Creek development project has the potential to broaden the base of tourist activity on the Eastern Shore.

Needs/Deficiencies

- **Overnight Demand Constrained By Lodging Capacity** - High rates of occupancy during the summer seasons suggest that lodging capacity needs to be improved before overnight visitors will increase on the Eastern Shore. Hotel industry research suggests that occupancy rates in excess of 80% during peak periods indicate limited capacity in local lodging industries. However, financing for new hotel/motel lodging opportunities is connected to a broader consideration of national and regional demand and capacity, and is not limited exclusively to considerations of local demand.

- **Facilities Constraints** – Future growth in tourism may be constrained or limited to a small number of areas by lack of sufficient water/sewer infrastructure in many locations on the Shore. Septic requirements and water permits can work to limit the size and location of restaurants and lodging facilities. Roadway infrastructure particularly roadways leading to destinations off U.S. 13 may also be inadequate to meet future growth in demand.
- **Limited Number of Signature Destinations/ No High-End Resort** There is no signature high-end destination resort along the Eastern Shore that would serve as a landmark for the region. A destination resort would help promote the region as a select tourist destination, generate name-recognition, create new employment and generate more sales at restaurants and shops. The only resort area is on Chincoteague. This may change, however, with the new Bay Creek Development project underway.
- **Limited Beachfront/Waterfront Access** - There is limited beachfront and waterfront access for those who enjoy public beaches. In addition, due to increased second home and retiree home development, limited access to the waterfront will become more of a concern.
- **Wayfinding** - There are currently few signs or regularly updated guidebooks to help tourists locate main amenities such as wildlife refuges, historic sites and natural resource along the Eastern Shore.
- **Limited Meeting/Conference Facilities** - There are only two meeting/conference facilities along the entire Eastern Shore, located in southern Northampton County and in Chincoteague. This revenue generator is lacking, resulting in lack of capacity to conduct large group meetings/tours.
- **Toll as a Deterrent to Daytrippers** - There is a potential market for daytrippers from the Hampton Roads area, however, they may be discouraged by the current \$20 round-trip toll. To maximize the potential for day trip travel, Bay Creek golf course management may offer a rebate in green fees for these daytrippers.

Issues of Concern

- **Expansion of Economic Base and Job Opportunities** - Increased tourism would result in further job opportunities and increased economic development. The Eastern Shore is particularly dependent on the manufacturing and agricultural industries, which are declining nationally. In order to encourage a broad base of future employment opportunities, tourism is a likely candidate for encouragement, as it would help support job growth in service and retail industries that are on the rise in the region and nationally.
- **Expansion of Tax Base** - Occupancy and meal tax revenues where applicable can be expected to rise, with an increase in tourist activities. These taxes offer the counties

and towns that have enacted these provisions a significant opportunity to decrease reliance on property taxes.

- **Fiscal Concerns** – In every community there is concern regarding the sufficient provision of government services. As tourism, second homes, and the permanent population increases, the Eastern Shore counties and towns will be forced to examine service standards and property tax rates to ensure the balance between tax revenues and demand for services.
- **Increases in Population** – Unplanned increases in the full and part-time population and the effects that may ensue are a concern to many on the Eastern Shore. Population projections developed for the U.S. 13 Corridor Study anticipate population increases of 27 percent from 1997 to 2020. This represents an annual growth rate of 0.75 percent. It projects an additional 2,025 housing units south of Cape Charles and 226 housing units in the central area of the County. A growth rate of this magnitude will not consume all land potentially available for residential growth in Northampton County--there are currently over 5,500 undeveloped residential lots in the county and if all were developed, the population could double.

The following categories of impacts may be of special concern to the Eastern Shore:

- Impacts to Resources - Carrying capacity of schools, aquifers, septic and sewer systems, hotels, bed and breakfasts, road facilities and land resources will be impacted with increased tourism, second home development, and full-time residential population.
- Large-Lot Sprawl - Septic and zoning requirements call for large lots for housing development. Large, unplanned growth in second homes and tourist facility development and full-time population may contribute to the conversion of farm and woodland to large-lot parcels separated from each other and other amenities and the Eastern Shore, consuming open space, and encouraging vehicle use.
- **Traffic Congestion** – Seasonal peaks in visitors and a general increase in population attributable to increased economic activity may lead to traffic congestion or the need to invest in expanded facilities to meet peak demand.
- **Competition/Conflict with Agricultural Uses** - Residential development in proximity to active agriculture may result in conflicts over spillover nuisance issues, such as complaints regarding noise and odors from farm activities.
- **Preservation of Natural Resources and Rural Lifestyle** - The preservation of natural amenities and the rural lifestyle characteristic of the Eastern Shore is important to its current residents. It is also a selling point for the Eastern Shore tourism industry. Many on the Eastern Shore are concerned, however, that future success in growing the tourism industry will degrade the very features important to visitors and residents.

Careful planning is important if the balance between resources and economic development is to be achieved.

Issues of Special Concern to Low Income Residents

Further development of the tourism industry may generate jobs, local economic activity, and tax revenues. The chief concern to low income residents will be the equitable distribution of the benefits and burdens of this activity. Development of the industry may help replace jobs lost in other sectors but jobs in the industry may not offer the same level of pay as those lost. Economic improvement may be centered on locations nearest attractions, bypassing other areas and potentially pricing lower income residents out of the housing market in high demand areas resulting in community disruption and financial hardship. New recreational and service amenities may be generated by an increase in economic activity but they may involve expense that can not be paid by lower income residents.

Transportation and Tourism

Accessibility is important to the tourism industry and is influenced by both distance and cost of travel. The CBBT provides a direct link between the Eastern Shore and the Hampton Roads Metro area, however, the toll adds to the cost of travel. It is not yet clear if toll reduction proposals will result in policies that will reduce costs for daytrip tourism and it may be unlikely that any commuter toll reduction would decrease costs for overnight guests and those on through-trips.