What is **your** history of the Eastern Shore of Virginia?

Changes in climate affect everyone, but coastal communities are most impacted.

People who live in areas where roads flood more often, where septic systems back up, and where saltwater gets into their drinking water feel it most. Agricultural land can be lost too.

The images/captions on the timeline represent key moments important to climate, agricultural, social, and economic history of the Eastern Shore.

What stories, places, events, industries, etc. contribute to your history of the Shore?

Climate events and flooding | Agriculture and food | Economy and transportation | Social and cultural | Other

what's nature doing?

what're we doing?

1550 | 1570 | 1590 | 1610 | 1630 | 1650 | 1670 | 1690 | 1710 | 1810 | 1830 | 1850 | 1870 | 1890 | 1910 | 1930 | 1950 | 1970 | 1990 | 2010 | 2020 | 2030

Accomac and Occohannock tribes inhabit the Eastern Shore.

1561 • Spain arrives
A Spanish ship blown off course ends up in the Chesapeake Bay.

1562 • Chesapeake on a Map.
The Spanish mapmaker Diego Gutiérrez identified the Chesapeake Bay. He called it Bahía de Santa María.

1569 • Spanish settlement fails.
The Spanish settlement of Ajacán survived only one year. In 1571, Don Luis, who had been captured as a boy led a massacre on what as probably the York River.

Little Ice Age.
The Little Ice Age reaches Virginia, causing drought in Jamestown and Roanoke

1607 • The English settle Jamestown.

1619 • Enslavement.
One in five African descendents on the ESVA were enslaved at this time.

1635 • Town of Pungoteague est.
The town of Pungoteague was established as the first town in Accomack County and the first county seat.

1643 • County boundaries.
Accomack established in the Virginia colony in 1634 as one of the eight original counties. In 1642, the county was renamed to Northampton and divided into Accomack and Northampton Counties in 1663.

1700 • Indigenous people pushed out.
Accomac and Occohannock people became victims of land theft.

1821 • Tsunami in Chincoteague and Assateague.
An underwater landslide caused the tsunami that may have been over 20 ft tall.

1860 • Shore rejects Confederacy.
Chincoteague unanimously votes to stay with the Union to maintain access to northern markets and demand for Eastern Shore seafood.

1860 • Oldest court records.
Weather delays prevented Accomac and Northampton Court Records from being shipped to Richmond, VA, which protected them from being lost in the Richmond fire. These court records are the oldest continuous court records in the United States.

Descendants of the original patentees of Northampton County continued to own extensive tracts of land, producers of agricultural commodities, and employers.

1870s-1880s Agricultural production.
Shift of agricultural production towards sweet and white potatoes.

1870-1910 • Population growth.
The combined population of Accomack and Northampton Counties grew by 67%.

1874 • NYPAH Railroad.
In 1874, white and black residents of Northampton County voted to raise money for New York, Philadelphia, & Norfolk Railroad construction. NYPAH construction begins in 1876 on the Eastern Shore by the Worchester Railroad.

1883 • Cape Charles.
Cape Charles is established as a town to support the railroad industry.

1884 • Railroad completion.
The New York, Philadelphia, and Norfolk Railroad (later renamed Bay Coast Railroad) was completed, connecting the entirety of the Shore to the Delmarva peninsula.

1889 • Oyster industry success.
The growing oyster industry led to construction of wharves across the Eastern Shore at Chincoteague Bay, Franklin City, Greenbackville, and Swan's Gut Creek.

1890-1910s Agricultural products.
Oats, corn, oysters were the common agricultural products.

1890-1925 • Farm industry growth.
The number of farms in the two counties increased from 2,997 to 4,606 while the average acreage decreased from 86 to 46.1.

1915 Northampton and Accomack had an enforced shortfall in oyster or clam per acre.

1900 • Eastern Shore Produce Exchange is founded.
Eastern Shore farmers and businessmen sought to improve the exports position in the volatile national produce market by incorporating as the Eastern Shore of Virginia Produce Exchange.

1905 • Gas-powered boats lead to aquaculture decline.
The health of oyster farms declined as illegal dredging and the introduction of the gasoline power boat negatively impacted aquaculture.

1905 • Tanley Colored Fair.
The Tasley Colored Fair was an African American fair that had agricultural, culinary, and sewing exhibitions.

1907 • Onancock Race Riots.
Black residents in Onancock began to organize for better wages, which was met in rage and opposition by white residents.

1910s-1920s Black farmers lost their land, partition, and default; depopulated, especially bay frontage.

1920-1930 • Decline of oyster production.
Eastern Shore oyster production declined by 42%, from 4.8 million lbs. to 2.8 million lbs.

1920 • Oyster Harbor dredged.
Oyster Harbor is dredged to make harvesting easier and results in Oyster becoming an important fishing village.

1920 • Poultry industry.
Perdue and Tyson Foods become established on the Eastern Shore.

1920 • Exchange Supply Company.
The Eastern Shore Produce Exchange organized a subsidiary called the Exchange Supply Company, through which members were enabled to purchase fertilizer, seed potatoes, containers, and other supplies.

1920 • Agricultural revenue.
The Produce Exchange contributes to the Eastern Shore's agricultural prosperity. The Exchange had revenues of $19 million.

1921 • Onancock High School opens.

1925-1940 • Farm closures.
Between 1925 and 1940, the number of farms in Accomack and Northampton declined from 4,606 to 2,960.

1928 • Peak agricultural production.
Agricultural production peaked as farm machinery, pesticides, and fertilizer increased potatoes, onions, and cabbage outputs. In 1928, the production of sweet and white potatoes exceeded its market value which led to declines in the farming industry.

1930 • Barrier Island relocation.
Residents of the Barrier Islands relocated to the mainland due to the natural erosion and hurricane impacts that made the island inhabitable. Many residents placed their homes on barges and towed them to the mainland.

1930 • Rosenwald School opens.
The local African-American community, the State Literacy Fund, and the Julius Rosenwald Fund built a school to educate African American children during legalized segregation.

1930s • Eelgrass decimated from disease and hurricanes.
Bay scallops on the Eastern Shore become locally extinct due to habitat loss. By 2005, restoration efforts by WBM scientists lead to surging population.

The decline of eelgrass beds leads to bay scallop decline and habitat degradation, especially bay frontage.

The town of Cape Charles flooded in 1933

1942 • Wallops Island Airbase
The Navy built an airbase and launch range at Wallops Island.

1946 • Misty of Chincoteague.
Misty the horse that inspired the series "Misty at Chincoteague" written by Marguerite Henry was born in 1946. The series was inspired by the real-life story of the Beebe family and their adoption of a wild mare to a wild horse. Misty and the Chincoteague ponies have attracted tourists to see the wild ponies at Assateague Island.

1953 • Mary N. Smith School.
The all-Black Mary N. Smith School was built in Accomac. It integrates in 1970 and closes in 2004.

1955 • Produce Exchange closes.
The Eastern Shore Produce Exchange dissolved due to a decrease in farming acreage on the Shore as well as competitive market conditions that affected the production, marketing, and transportation of Eastern Shore goods.

1980s • The Farm Crisis.
Across the United States, farmers faced financial crisis as land prices and interest rates increased while debt from farm expansion incentives and loans remained the same. Eastern Shore farms consolidated as farmers were priced out of their lands.

1980s • Canning factories close.
Canning Factories in and around Cape Charles closed, costing 1,500 workers their jobs. Webster's Company Inc. had been in Cherton since 1920.

High volume agricultural production increased the demand of lumber as farmers need more containerized boxes for agricultural packaging

St Marie Luther King AME Cape Charles - First Baptist Capeville

1966 • Rosenwald School closes.
The Cape Charles Rosenwald School closes as school districts are integrating post- *Brown V. Board of Education*.

1962 • Ash Wednesday Storm.
Foundation of Chincoteague Island. Coffins popped out of the ground at the cemetery.

1977 • The Great Freeze.
Between mid-December 1976 and mid-February of 1977, the Shore experienced record cold temperatures, and the Chesapeake Bay froze.

1990s • Priorities of the Shore.
The Eastern Shore of Virginia determined six priorities for development and growth: agriculture, seafood/aquaculture, tourism, manufactures/crafts/local products, research/education, and new industry.

1990s • Northampton County.
Northampton County rejects proposals for a private prison and for a facility to treat contaminated soil shipped in from northern states.

1992 • Coastal Resource Protection Grant.
The Northampton County Board of Supervisors received grants from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to research innovative ways to balance economic growth with coastal resource protection.

1995 • Bayview rejects prison proposal.
Virginia proposed the construction of a maximum-security prison in Bayview. Members of the community protested the development and defeated the proposal in 1995.

1998 • Bayview Citizens for Social Justice.
A historic, rural, African-American community formed the Bayview Citizens for Social Justice organization to improve the standard of living for its people. 90% of Bayview residents lived in substandard housing with 85% having no indoor plumbing. This group advocated for residents and developed affordable housing.

2005 • First DWR state wildlife action plan.
The Department of Forestry created a State Forest Plan

In 2002, the ESVA's Nature Conservancy established Nature with an already land were voluntarily conserved

1997 • Eelgrass restoration begins.
William & Mary's Batten School & VIMS launch the largest and most successful seagrass restoration project in the world.

From 1985 to 1996, Accomack and Northampton Counties experienced an unprecedented growth rate

In 1996, we as state came about Christmas Eve

In 1996, we as state Oregon above high tide and Tropical Storm Josephine

In the summer of 1996, we had 97 of hot and humid days, as Hugo's eye at Bermuda and reached our coast 100 F and humid

August 2002 Accomack County refused offers to facilitate 911 service in the Eastern Shore of Virginia

Downstream a part The National Guard Reserve Unit from Norfolk to work on tractors and combines. The FBI-CA Canal 1 work, and school shut down for 2 weeks

Winter the last Ice Age Cape Charles Cities Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel Hurricane Isabel Hurricane Dorian Closure of Bay Coast Railroad

2025 • Bay scallops return after local extinction.
After the eelgrass meadows are restored, the bay scallops who live there begin to come back. A recreational fishery may be possible in the future.

2021 • ESVA drought watch issued.
Drought affected major tomato crops. In 2023, workers didn't get paid because they didn't have work.

2021 • Flood markings.
Constant flooding in Bayford left high water markings on the exterior of buildings.

Jan 12, 2019 • Winter Storm Harper.

Sept 5, 2019 • Hurricane Dorian.

Oct 7, 2018 • Hurricane Michael.

Feb 11, 2021 • Winter Storm Orlena.

Jan 21, 2022 • Winter Storm Izzy.

Jul 8, 2021 • Tropical Storm.

2023 • Hurricane Isabel.

2018 • Closure of Bay Coast Railroad.
The Bay Coast Railroad closed operations from Hallwood to Cape Charles due to a negative cost benefit

Experimental Shrimping Industry.
Due to increased temperatures of waters off the Eastern Shore of Virginia, women traveled for white shrimp in an experimental fishery that ensures harvesting because of the warming waters.

2020 • Sewer pipe updates.
Hampton Roads Sanitation Department will construct a system of sewer pipes approximately 102,000 feet in length along with two wastewater and potable wastewater flows from the Towns of Nassawadox and Exmore and existing sewer customers in Accomack County to the Onancock Wastewater Treatment Plant. Installation of above-ground septic systems now cost ~$20,000.

2020 • Broadband access.
Broadband Internet is made a priority on the Shore through grants to increase access in rural areas during the pandemic.

2020 • COVID-19 Pandemic begins.
Hospital officials in Virginia this spring reported a spike in COVID-19 cases at the Perdue poultry processing plant in the Eastern Shore city of Accomac. Virginia became the first state in the nation to mandate coronavirus workplace safety rules as a result of the outbreaks in poultry factories.

2021 • Rail to Trail.
The decommissioned railroad is acquired to be converted into 49 miles of the ESVA Rail Trail, a walking and biking trail.

In June 2020, an estimated 2,000 people attended a Black Lives Matter protest in Cape Charles

Accomack County approved property of Accomack Christian Academy

In June 2020 Cape Charles moved its local economy by focusing on tourism

In June 2020, we unfortunately attributed to the ESVA