



Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) Update Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel Marine Colonial Birds

Introduction

Common Goals of the Secretaries of Natural Resources and Transportation

- Successfully provide the essential habitat needed for the well-being of the South Island marine colonial bird species.
- While practicing a robust approach to environmental stewardship, complete the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel (HRBT) Expansion project on time, on budget and with high quality.

Launch of the CTB Environmental Subcommittee

- Secretary Valentine established this brand new CTB Environmental Subcommittee this month.
- Secretary Valentine has made it clear that her goal in transportation is to develop and consistently implement the highest environmental standards without regard to any changes arising in federal law or in its interpretation.
- **The CTB's Environmental Subcommittee will focus on three broad areas:**
 - a. Greenhouse gas management
 - b. Climate resiliency
 - c. Other best practices in environmental stewardship
- Secretary Valentine has asked me to chair this new subcommittee to ensure the Transportation Secretariat implements the best practices available to us.

Marine Colonial Birds

- HRBT's South Island has historically included significant nesting by marine colonial bird species.
- Extensive coordination has taken place among VDOT and:
 - Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF)
 - United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- April is the beginning of bird nesting season and scout birds have been seen near the South Island
- Extensive preparatory work has been underway on the South Island in anticipation of the arrival of the birds this season. This work will ensure the South Island conditions support VDGIF's efforts to successfully establish alternative nesting habitat on Fort Wool and on barges.
- This work supports VDOT's HRBT construction project and VDGIF's efforts to provide alternative nesting locations for the colonial birds by making the South Island less desirable for nesting and encouraging them to relocate to Fort Wool and the barges.

Bird Management Plan

- The HRBT Expansion project requires the preparation of a bird management plan. This plan will:
 - Provide a toolbox of bird management techniques for the contractor; and,
 - Give direction on when to use these techniques.
 - Identify those responsible for the various steps of the plan over time to implement, keep records, train personnel and identify experts to help guide adaptive management to improve effectiveness.
- The Bird Management Plan is a living document. This means that VDOT will continue to learn and improve the plan based on our experience and observations.
- In addition to the Bird Management Plan, VDOT, in consultation with VDGIF, is putting a comprehensive monitoring plan in place to document bird activities (different behaviors), species, birds' responses to the contractor's adaptive management decisions and other observations.
- VDOT is also assembling a team of world-class experts to further supplement the Commonwealth's expertise that is afforded us through VDGIF. This will ensure we bring the best ideas from Virginia, as well as from across the country, to benefit the population of marine colonial birds.
- We are committed to delivering transportation projects with the highest standards of environmental stewardship. As such, the team will ensure the marine colonial birds are managed with the highest standards of environmental stewardship.

Goals and Next Steps

- VDOT is committed to working with our partners at VDGIF to support the bird population's relocation to Fort Wool and on barges.
- Additionally, VDOT will do everything we can to support VDGIF in identifying and providing a long-term suitable nesting habitat for the marine colonial birds.
- Currently, VDOT's contracting, procurement and construction experts are working side-by-side with their counterparts at VDGIF to assist in procuring the needed barges.

Thanks

- I want to personally thank Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources Josh Saks and the talented staff of the VDGIF for the outstanding relationship we have developed as we cooperate on this critical work. We are committed to delivering the Commonwealth's largest construction project while also ensuring a Virginia treasure - the colonial bird population - is cared for with the highest degree of environmental sensitivity.
- I'm pleased to now turn the presentation over to Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources Josh Saks, who will provide more details on VDGIF's efforts in establishing new alternative nesting sites.

Listen to [audio of the presentation](#) before the Commonwealth Transportation Board on March 17, 2020.