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Shoreline Evolution: Richmond County, Virginia Rappahannock River Shorelines



Virginia Institute of Marine Science College of William & Mary Gloucester Point, Virginia

September 2011

Shoreline Evolution: Richmond County, Virginia Rappahannock River Shorelines

Data Summary Report

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September 2011



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1 Introduction

Richmond County is situated on the Northern Neck Peninsula in the eastern portion of Virginia (Figure 1). The Rappahannock River forms the southern boundary of this 192 square mile community. The County has 149 miles of shoreline on the Rappahannock River and Cat Point and Totuskey Creeks. Through time, the County's shoreline has evolved, and determining the rates and patterns of shore change provides the basis to know how a particular coast has changed through time and how it might proceed in the future. Along Chesapeake Bay's estuarine shores, winds, waves, tides and currents shape and modify coastlines by eroding, transporting and depositing sediments.

The purpose of this report is to document how the shore zone of Richmond County has evolved since 1937. Aerial imagery was taken for most of the Bay region beginning that year and can be used to assess the geomorphic nature of shore change. Aerial photos show how the coast has changed, how beaches, dunes, bars, and spits have grown or decayed, how barriers have breached, how inlets have changed course, and how one shore type has displaced another or has not changed at all. Shore change is a natural process but, quite often, the impacts of man, through shore hardening or inlet stabilization, come to dominate a given shore reach. In addition to documenting historical shorelines, the change in shore positions along the rivers and larger creeks in Richmond County will be quantified in this report. The shorelines of very irregular coasts, small creeks around inlets, and other complicated areas, will be shown but not quantified.

2 Methods

2.1 Photo Rectification and Shoreline Digitizing

An analysis of aerial photographs provides the historical data necessary to understand the suite of processes that work to alter a shoreline. Images of the Richmond County Shoreline from 1937, 1953, 1969, 1994, 2002, 2007 and 2009 were used in the analysis. The 1994, 2002, 2007 and 2009 images were available from other sources. The 1994 imagery was orthorectified by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the 2002, 2007 and 2009 imagery was orthorectified by the Virginia Base Mapping Program (VBMP). The 1937, 1953, and 1969 photos were a part of the VIMS Shoreline Studies Program archives. The historical aerial images acquired to cover the entire shoreline were not always flown on the same day. The dates for each year are: <u>1937</u> - April 1, 6,7 and 17; <u>1953</u> - October 2, 3, and November 27; <u>1969</u> - December 5 and 11. The exact dates the 1994 images were flown could not be determined, and the 2002, 2007, and 2009 were all flown in February and March of their respective years.

The 1937, 1953, and 1969 images were scanned as tiffs at 600 dpi and converted to ERDAS IMAGINE (.img) format. These aerial photographs were orthographically corrected to produce a seamless series of aerial mosaics following a set of standard operating procedures. The 1994 Digital Orthophoto Quarter Quadrangles (DOQQ) from USGS were used as the reference images. The 1994 photos are used rather than higher quality, more recent aerials because of the difficulty in finding control points that match the earliest 1937 and 1953 images.



Figure 1. Location of Richmond County within the Chesapeake Bay estuarine system.

ERDAS Orthobase image processing software was used to orthographically correct the individual flight lines using a bundle block solution. Camera lens calibration data were matched to the image location of fiducial points to define the interior camera model. Control points from 1994 USGS DOQQ images provide the exterior control, which is enhanced by a large number of image-matching tie points produced automatically by the software. The exterior and interior models were combined with a digital elevation model (DEM) from the USGS National Elevation Dataset to produce an orthophoto for each aerial photograph. The orthophotographs were adjusted to approximately uniform brightness and contrast and were mosaicked together using the ERDAS Imagine mosaic tool to produce a one-meter resolution mosaic img format. To maintain an accurate match with the reference images, it is necessary to distribute the control points evenly, when possible. This can be challenging in areas with lack of ground features, poor photo quality and lack of control points. Good examples of control points were manmade features such as road intersections and stable natural landmarks such as ponds and creeks that have not changed much over time. The base of tall features such as buildings, poles. or trees can be used, but the base can be obscured by other features or shadows making these locations difficult to use accurately. Most areas of the county were particularly difficult to rectify, either due to the lack of development when compared to the reference images or due to no development in the historical and the reference images.

Once the aerial photos were orthorectified and mosaicked, the shorelines were digitized in ArcMap with the mosaics in the background. The morphologic toe of the beach or edge of marsh was used to approximate low water. High water limit of runup can be difficult to determine on the shoreline due to narrow or non-existent beaches against upland banks or vegetated cover. In areas where the shoreline was not clearly identifiable on the aerial photography, the location was estimated based on the experience of the digitizer. The displayed shorelines are in shapefile format. One shapefile was produced for each year that was mosaicked.

Horizontal positional accuracy is based upon orthorectification of scanned aerial photography against the USGS digital orthophoto quadrangles. To get vertical control, the USGS 30m DEM data was used. The 1994 USGS reference images were developed in accordance with National Map Accuracy Standards (NMAS) for Spatial Data Accuracy at the 1:12,000 scale. The 2002, 2007, and 2009 Virginia Base Mapping Program's orthophotography were developed in accordance with the National Standard for Spatial Data Accuracy (NSSDA). Horizontal root mean square error (RMSE) for historical mosaics was held to less than 20 ft.

Using methodology reported in Morton *et al.* (2004) and National Spatial Data Infrastructure (1998), estimates of error in orthorectification, control source, DEM and digitizing were combined to provide an estimate of total maximum shoreline position error. The data sets that were orthorectified (1937, 1953, and 1969) have an estimated total maximum shoreline position error of ± 20.0 ft, while the total maximum shoreline error for the four existing datasets are estimated at 18.3 ft for USGS and 10.2 ft for VBMP. The maximum annualized error for the shoreline data is ± 0.7 ft/yr. The smaller rivers and creeks are more prone to error due to their lack of good control points for photo rectification, narrower shore features, tree and ground cover and overall smaller rates of change. These areas are digitized but due to the higher potential for error, rates of change analyses are not calculated.

The Richmond County shoreline was divided into 21 plates (Figure 2) in order to display that data in

Appendices A and B. In Appendix A, all of the digtized shorelines are shown, and the 2009 image is shown with only the 1937 and 2009 shorelines to show the long-term trends. In Appendix B, two photo dates and their associated shoreline are shown on each plate.

2.2 Rate of Change Analysis

The Digital Shoreline Analysis System (DSAS) was used to determine the rate of change for the County's shoreline (Himmelstoss, 2009). All DSAS input data must be managed within a personal geodatabase, which includes all the baselines created for Richmond County and the digitized shorelines for 1937, 1953, 1969, 1994, 2002, 2007, and 2009. Baselines were created about 200 feet seaward of the 1937 shoreline and encompassed most of the County's main shorelines but generally did not include the smaller creeks. It also did not include areas that have unique shoreline morphology such as creek mouths and spits. DSAS generated transects perpendicular to the baseline about 33 ft apart , which were manually checked and cleaned up. For Richmond County, this method represented about 43 miles of shoreline along 6937 transects. The End Point Rate (EPR) is calculated by determining the distance between the oldest and most recent shoreline in the data and dividing it by the number of years between them. This method provides an accurate net rate of change over the long term and is relatively easy to apply to most shorelines since it only requires two dates. This method does not use the intervening shorelines so it may not account for changes in accretion or erosion rates that may occur through time. However, Milligan *et al.* (2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d) found that in several localities within the bay, EPR is a reliable indicator of shore change even when

intermediate dates exist. Average rates were calculated along selected areas of the shore; segments are labeled in Appendix A and shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Average end point rate of change (ft/yr) between 1937 and 2009 for segments along Richmond's shoreline. Segment locations are shown on maps in Appendix A.

Summary

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The rates of change shown in Table 1 are averaged across large sections of shoreline and may not be indicative of rates at specific sites within the reach. Along many segments, rate of change is very low. Most change occurs at headlands, marshes or southwest or southeast-facing shorelines. The largest average rates occur on the Rappahannock River while the more fetch limited creeks have smaller average erosion rates. Segment L has the highest rate of change due to the loss of land at Waverly Point at the mouthof Totusky Creek and the barrier across Richardson Creek.

Segment	Location	Average
Name		Rate of Change
		(ft/yr)
Α	Rappahannock River	-0.4
В	Rappahannock River	-0.7
С	Rappahannock River - Mulberry Island	-0.6
D	Rappahannock River	-0.5
E	Cat Point Creek	-0.6
F	Rappahannock River	-0.5
G	Rappahannock River	-2.1
Н	Rappahannock River	-1.5
	Rappahannock River	-0.7
J	Rappahannock River	-0.8
K	Totuskey Creek	-0.5
L	Rappahannock River - Richardson Creek	-3.1
М	Rappahannock River	-0.4
N	Rappahannock River	-0.4
0	Farnham Creek	-0.4
Р	Rappahannock River	-1.0
Q	Lancaster Creek	-0.8
R	Morattico Creek	-0.4



Figure 2. Index of shoreline plates.

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Appendix A

End Point Rate of Shoreline Change Maps

Shoreline change rate segments are shown on the top map. The calculated rates of change for each transect within the segment were averaged to determine an average rate of change as shown in Table 1 of the report.

Note: The location labels on the plates come from U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps, Google Earth, and other map sources and may not be accurate for the historical or even more recent images. They are for reference only.

Plate 1	Plate 8	Plate 15
Plate 2	Plate 9	Plate 16
Plate 3	Plate 10	Plate 17
Plate 4	Plate 11	Plate 18
Plate 5	Plate 12	Plate 19
Plate 6	Plate 13	Plate 20
Plate 7	Plate 14	Plate 21













	Richmond County Virginia Plate 5
	1937 Shoreline 2002 Shoreline
	——— 1953 Shoreline ——— 2007 Shoreline
	1969 Shoreline 2009 Shoreline
oions ƏƏk	1994 Shoreline
)	Shoreline Rates of Change
	 Medium Accretion: +5 to +2 (ft/yr)
	Low Accretion: +2 to +1 (ft/yr)
	Very Low Accretion: +1 to 0 (ft/yr)
	Very Low Erosion: 0 to -1 (ft/yr)
	Low Erosion: -1 to -2 (ft/yr)
_	 Medium Erosion: -2 to -5 (ft/yr)
2009	 High Erosion: -5 to -10 (ft/yr)
254750	Very High Erosion: < -25 (ft/yr)
octors Creek	Shoreline Vinds Vi
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A	Rich	mond C Virginia Plate 10	ounty a
	19	37 Shoreline	2002 Shoreline
	19	953 Shoreline ——	2007 Shoreline
	19	969 Shoreline	2009 Shoreline
		994 Shoreline	
ener X	Shoreli	ne Rates	of Change
Y	•	Medium Accretion	n: +5 to +2 (ft/yr)
2	•	Low Accretion: +2	2 to +1 (ft/yr)
	•	Very Low Accretion	on: +1 to 0 (ft/yr)
	•	Very Low Erosior	n: 0 to -1 (ft/yr)
	•	Low Erosion: -1 t	o -2 (ft/yr)
	•	Medium Erosion:	-2 to -5 (ft/yr)
9	•	High Erosion: -5	to -10 (ft/yr)
AC	•	Very High Erosio	n: < -25 (ft/yr)
Carter ek	SI.	oreline Studies	
K	1,000	Program	1,000
and the second			Feet





nnock r	Richmond County Virginia Plate 12
	1937 Shoreline 2002 Shoreline
<u>G</u>	1953 Shoreline 2007 Shoreline
\backslash	1969 Shoreline 2009 Shoreline
	1994 Shoreline
	Shoreline Rates of Change
	Medium Accretion: +5 to +2 (ft/yr)
	• Low Accretion: +2 to +1 (ft/yr)
	 Very Low Accretion: +1 to 0 (ft/yr)
	 Very Low Erosion: 0 to -1 (ft/yr)
	Low Erosion: -1 to -2 (ft/yr)
	 Medium Erosion: -2 to -5 (ft/yr)
2009	High Erosion: -5 to -10 (ft/yr)
River	Very High Erosion: < -25 (ft/yr)
	Shoreline Vinds Vi
all a	Feet



















Appendix B

Historical Shoreline Photo Maps

Note: The location labels on the plates come from U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps, Google Earth, and other map sources and may not be accurate for the historical or even more recent images. They are for reference only.

Plate 1	Plate 8	Plate 15
Plate 2	Plate 9	Plate 16
Plate 3	Plate 10	Plate 17
Plate 4	Plate 11	Plate 18
Plate 5	Plate 12	Plate 19
Plate 6	Plate 13	Plate 20
Plate 7	Plate 14	Plate 21




















































































































































































