



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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VITA coordinates new mapping of Virginia's coastal areas -- Topographic data will help citizens, businesses and localities --

RICHMOND – New aerial mapping will provide better models of the earth surface that offer a variety of benefits to citizens, businesses and governments in Virginia's Tidewater area. One immediate benefit is improved emergency planning during hurricane season.

Mapping of the coast was coordinated by the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA) Geographic Information Systems (GIS) group in cooperation with the U. S. Geological Survey (USGS).

The USGS is using the data to create a more accurate national map. The map is instrumental in planning for hurricane storm surge modeling, which allows the state and localities to design better weather-related disaster response plans. Additionally, localities will have improved data for planning related to property assessment, utility corridors, future real estate development and urban modeling. Residents and businesses also may experience decreased insurance rates or those currently without flood insurance may determine that adding flood insurance would be a prudent measure because of this updated USCG map.

The new data is being utilized by the University of Virginia for coastal ecological impacts of sea level rise models and by the Nature Conservancy to update its inventory of wetlands and forest holdings.

The \$1.1 million project involved the use of Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR), a remote sensing system that utilizes 3-D laser imaging based on principles similar to radar to create topographic maps. More than 3,000 square miles, including 11 counties and two cities, along the coastal areas of Tidewater were plotted. Preliminary results now are being reviewed; complete data results will be available by the end of 2010 and will be available for free download.

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Page 2 of 2

“VITA worked with several groups to take advantage of grant money to create enhanced mapping information that will aid citizens, businesses and governments in the area,” said Commonwealth Chief Information Officer (CIO) Sam Nixon. “This will provide a variety of benefits, particularly for localities. Local government officials will be able to improve disaster planning. For example, they can use the maps to develop better evacuation routes for use during weather-related emergencies and to more accurately plan for land use and natural resource management.”

Mapping of the coast was coordinated by the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA) Geographic Information Systems (GIS) group in cooperation with the USGS. Coastal areas were mapped first because of the potential threats on coastal communities due to hurricane storm surge and other coastal flooding identified by the USGS. VITA is currently exploring funding opportunities for similar mapping for the rest of the state.

The mapping was funded by a combination of monies from the U.S. Geological Survey, Nature Conservancy and the University of Virginia. The 11 counties include: Accomack, Gloucester, Isle of Wight, James City, King and Queen, Lancaster, Mathews, Middlesex, Northampton, Northumberland and Surry. The City of Williamsburg and City of Suffolk also were included.

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NOTE TO MEDIA: Maps, technical diagrams and interviews are available to media.

About the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA)

VITA is the Commonwealth's consolidated technology services and solutions provider responsible for the operation of the state's technology infrastructure, governance, security and oversight of major IT projects, and procurement of technology-related goods and services on behalf of state and local governments.

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