



Ecology in Partnership with Industry

Cape Charles/Northampton, VA

Cape Charles, Virginia, a small, picturesque town on the southern tip of Virginia's Eastern Shore, is a model for how ecology can work in tandem with industry, enabling both to thrive. Created by Northampton County and the Town of Cape Charles, the Sustainable Technology Park Authority has worked hard to incorporate natural habitat protection into overall plans for the town's Sustainable Technology Park. This work paid off with a \$200,000 U.S. EPA Brownfields Assessment Pilot award in September 1995, adding to a commitment of private, state, and federal funding that exceeds \$15 million and continues to grow. The project has blended environmental protection and business development to create an eco-industrial park that now serves as a model for similar projects nationwide.

The Cape Charles Sustainable Technology Park is only one piece of a county-wide, six-tier strategic plan called the Northampton County Sustainable Development Action Strategy. This plan was created through a cooperative effort between community officials and the public, following the county's designation as a rural Enterprise Community (EC) by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In August 1994, the President's Council on Sustainable Development selected Cape Charles as one of four sites for a national eco-industrial park demonstration project, to showcase advanced facilities in resource efficiency and pollution prevention. Community-wide interactive workshops held in February 1995 began the design and development process for the eco-industrial park. Included in the millions of dollars from various public and private sources toward redevelopment was a \$790,000 Rural Business Enterprise grant from the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration, which funded infrastructure improvements.

An abandoned, 25-acre dump once lay at the heart of the 200-acre eco-park. Seventy thousand dollars of EPA's \$200,000 Brownfields Assessment Pilot grant funded an environmental assessment of this site. According to Tim Hayes, Executive Director of the Sustainable Technology Park Authority, "This funding was vital to the success of the entire project, because access to the Park was contingent on redeveloping this brownfield."

Construction of the Park's first building—appropriately known as "Building One"—was completed in March 1999. Funded with a \$2.5 million county bond, this 30,930-square-foot facility includes a solar electric roof system that is the largest of its kind in North America, capable of generating 42 kilowatts of power for the building's tenants. Wetlands were created around the building as a natural landscaping enhancement, and the facility features



A walkway winds through natural habitat as part of the eco-park.

JUST THE FACTS:

- Funded with a \$2.5 million county bond, the eco-industrial park's first building is a 30,930-square-foot facility that includes a solar electric roof system capable of generating 42 kilowatts of power for the building's tenants.
- Wetlands were created around the building as a natural landscaping enhancement. The building also features indoor air quality monitoring, skylights for natural lighting, and stormwater runoff chutes.
- ProVENTO, a German-based energy company that develops and markets wind farms and sells the resulting energy to public utilities, plans to invest \$7.5 million to relocate its U.S. headquarters to Cape Charles' eco-industrial park.

Approximately one-half of the land in Cape Charles' Eco-Industrial Park was set aside as natural habitat, including a 30-acre Coastal Dune Natural Area Preserve and approximately 60 acres of other natural areas.

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The Park's first tenant was Energy Recovery, a manufacturing and research and development firm. Energy Recovery was followed soon after by Solar Building Systems, a company that manufactures the same photovoltaic panels used in Building One's solar roof system. Solar Building Systems has already hired 30 local residents to assemble solar panels. Many of these workers had been laid off from a local crab processing plant, where they developed a manual dexterity that served them well in their new jobs. Other companies that relocated to the Park include SEA, an environmental consulting firm, and Delisheries, a gourmet baking mix shop. Tenants are able to reduce the cost of their leases by meeting the Park's clean operating standards.

In April 2001, ProVENTO, a German-based energy company, announced plans to relocate its U.S. headquarters to Cape Charles' eco-industrial park. The company, which develops and markets wind farms and sells the resulting energy to public utilities, will invest \$7.5 million in both the headquarters and development of six 1.3-megawatt wind towers, a project that will bring 25 new jobs to Cape Charles. Then-Governor of Virginia James Gilmore said of the project, "The potential benefits that this company has to offer are tremendous. The six wind towers that ProVENTO will place on Virginia's Eastern Shore will create enough energy to supply more than 3,000 homes." Intended to be a wind energy showcase, ProVENTO wants to use this project as an introduction to the U.S. of the capabilities of modern wind technology. Felton Sessions, Chairman of the County Board of Supervisors, explained that "ProVENTO's decision [to locate in the Park] is a key milestone in establishing Northampton County as a showcase for state-of-the-art renewable energy companies." And former Virginia Secretary of Commerce and Trade Barry DuVal remarked, "As energy is an essential component to doing business, it is crucial that we look into the future to guarantee an environmentally friendly and continuous supply of energy. ProVENTO will diversify our energy sector and further confirm [Virginia's] pro-business climate."



Building One includes a solar electric roof system that is the largest of its kind in North America.

Approximately one-half of the land in the Park was set aside as natural habitat, including a 30-acre Coastal Dune Natural Area Preserve and approximately 60 acres of other natural areas. The entire habitat area, including walkways, trails, and a Chesapeake Bay overlook, is now open to the public. In 1999, the habitat area was included as a featured bird-watching site for the Seventh Annual Eastern Shore of Virginia Birding Festival.

In addition to the Department of Agriculture's Rural Business Enterprise grant for the Park, federal agency involvement has also contributed to the larger scope of the Northampton County Sustainable Development Action Strategy. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration funded development of the Action Strategy and helped with planning and design of the park and the Energy Recovery building. The U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife funded the park's Natural Area Preserve, as it has provided for other natural preserves within Northampton County. And in 1998, EPA awarded the Cape Charles Pilot an additional \$200,000 as a finalist in the interagency Showcase Communities program.

The Cape Charles/Northampton County, Virginia, Brownfields Pilot has been successful in combining the efforts of both government agencies and the community and is a refreshing reminder that industry and the environment can coexist and prosper. In addition, the Park is giving innovative companies the opportunity to establish themselves in Cape Charles and build a workforce from local talent.

CONTACTS:

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Or visit EPA's Brownfields Web site at:
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>