



## Norfolk Southern Enters Hall of Fame for Businesses “Doin’ right by the river”

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**Norfolk** – (Jan. 22, 2021) – Norfolk Southern’s Lamberts Point terminal took top honors yesterday at the Elizabeth River Project’s annual event recognizing businesses who document voluntary achievements to reduce pollution and restore wildlife habitat.

The terminal installed one of the largest privately funded “living shorelines” in the region, three football fields long, made up of restored wetlands, oyster habitat and stone armor to control an eroding bank through natural approaches. Combined with pollution reduction efforts, Norfolk Southern’s achievements earned the Elizabeth River Project’s Inside Business River Star Hall of Fame award for 2021.

“It has been so exciting to see the living shoreline project at Norfolk Southern come to fruition,” said James Squires, CEO of the railway. The company said it not only created new wildlife habitat but saved 75% over the cost of a traditional approach to stemming erosion.

The non-profit Elizabeth River Project recognized 23 businesses, government facilities and non-profits for “doin’ right by the river,” the slogan of its annual River Star Businesses Recognition Event, this year held virtually. Achievements of the facilities are reviewed by peers prior to recognition.

**Despite COVID-19, the facilities over the last year documented reducing pollution entering the Elizabeth River by 11 million pounds** and restored or conserved 495 acres of wildlife habitat. “I should’ve known that businesses along

the Elizabeth River wouldn't be stopped by a little thing like a pandemic," said Jamie Mitchell of HRSD, serving as mistress of ceremonies. HRSD is the 2016 Hall of Fame winner for the program.

In fact, the virus seemed to create extra momentum for the program in some cases. In July, at the height of the pandemic shutdown, engineers and volunteers donned boots and masks at the Naval Support Activity Hampton Roads' Lafayette Annex to build an oyster reef. They were so exuberant over the chance to work outside together on something positive that a photographer captured them literally leaping in the air (see attached photo).

The Navy facility received three-star, Model Level recognition at the event as did the Elizabeth River Trail Foundation. Cheryl White, Executive Director of the Foundation, said the trail has seen a sharp increase in users during the pandemic. The trail has conducted multiple projects supporting the restoration of a healthy Elizabeth and increased public awareness, including wildflower meadows, a new kayak launch and original river art recently installed next to Larchmont Library.

Two-star, Achievement Level recognition went to Coastal Virginia Unitarian Universalists for projects including a new vegetated buffer along the Eastern Branch; Lady Fern's Native Plants for projects including rain harvesting; the law firm of Pender & Coward for extensive community service, and the Retreat at Harbor Pointe for efforts including earning EarthCraft certification while creating a robust restored shore.

The railway's Squires noted: "I continue to urge others to adopt Elizabeth River Project's approach of forming close partnerships with businesses who want to do the right thing for the environment. It is such a constructive approach and it has produced amazing results for the Elizabeth River."

The Elizabeth River Project's River Star Businesses program is free and comes with technical advice and public recognition for organizations with significant opportunities to reduce pollution or restore wildlife habitat in the Elizabeth River "watershed," or drainage area. This includes much of Norfolk, Portsmouth, Chesapeake, and Virginia Beach.

For more information or to get involved, visit [www.elizabethriver.org](http://www.elizabethriver.org) or contact Pam Boatwright, program manager, [pboatwright@elizabethriver.org](mailto:pboatwright@elizabethriver.org).

PHOTOS