

Inside Business

The Hampton Roads Business Journal



Saluting the Finest
Environmental
Stewards on the
Elizabeth 2026



ELIZABETH RIVER
PROJECT

RIVER STAR BUSINESSES

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- Elizabeth River Crossings
- Fairwinds Landing
- The Port of Virginia
- Woods Rogers

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- Pam Boatwright
- Christ & St. Luke's Episcopal Church
- SIMS Metal Management - Chesapeake
- Southern Bank and Trust Company
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- Wicker's Crab Pot Seafood
- Work Program Architects

BUSINESS PARTNERS DOING SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL

You, too, can be a star

Because the Elizabeth River is one of the mightiest military and industrial ports in the world, restoring this urban river to health depends on leadership from the business, community and government facilities that line its shore.

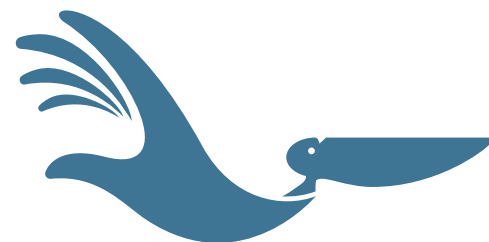
Thank you to this year's record 168 facilities who together are making environmental stewardship the business standard on the Elizabeth. The non-profit Elizabeth River Project salutes these business and government facilities and other organizations for reducing pollution voluntarily by 395 million pounds since the program started in 1997. Each year a committee of participant peers and technical experts recognizes new efforts documented for committee review. Often the company achieves additional benefits while reducing pollution or restoring wildlife habitat. A recent example: Since opening in 2023, Rivers Casino avoided 2.6 million pounds of emissions by adding new energy management efforts.

Free for any facility in the Elizabeth River area, River Star participation is most successful where it can make the most difference. That's usually with sites presenting large opportunities to reduce toxic pollution or restore and conserve wildlife habitat. We also welcome small businesses, non-profits, restaurants, and faith communities to do their part. If this sounds like you, there's a starring role for you in the restoration of your home river.

Among typical projects, our River Star facilities may help bring back the native oyster while addressing erosion with "living shorelines," add stormwater controls, or perhaps switch to pollution reducing technologies. Others improve energy efficiency, restore native plants and much more. In return, River Stars may not only discover cost savings, but also reduce liability and improve worker safety and morale. And then, as you're seeing here, there's the positive publicity awarded by media such as Inside Business, which each year sponsors this special report as well as a River Star Business Hall of Fame award to the top program participant.

Recognition is just part of the program. Elizabeth River Project also provides free assistance to help you identify and carry out projects, with technical staff and peer mentors at the ready.

Find out if your company is right for River Star Businesses. Contact Pam Boatwright, River Stars Businesses Program Manager, Elizabeth River Project: 757-828-5422, pboatwright@elizabethriver.org. Find out more at www.RiverStarBusinesses.org.



ELIZABETH RIVER
PROJECT

RIVER STAR BUSINESSES

ANNUAL RIVER STAR RECOGNITION LUNCHEON

presented by
Elizabeth River Project

THURSDAY,
JANUARY 29, 2026
11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

WHERE:
Chesapeake
Conference Center

COST: \$30

TO REGISTER:
757-399-7487

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Congratulations, River Stars!

The Elizabeth River Project launched River Star Businesses for organizational partners in 1997. Since then, River Star Businesses have become the finest environmental stewards on the Elizabeth.

POLLUTION
REDUCED:

395
MILLION POUNDS

WILDLIFE HABITAT
RESTORED, CONSERVED:

2,604
ACRES

OTHER MATERIALS REDUCED, RECYCLED OR
REUSED: MORE THAN A BILLION POUNDS

★★★ ADVANCING to MODEL LEVEL 2026

This year's best of the best... These River Star facilities lead the community in environmental stewardship through exceptional results in pollution prevention and wildlife habitat - and mentor others.

Cox Communications

Cox Communications has raised the bar for corporate responsibility, achieving Zero Waste to Landfill at two Chesapeake sites—two years ahead of schedule. The milestone makes Cox the first U.S. telecom provider to reach this benchmark, with diversion rates far above the national average.

Cox's East Region Primary Distribution Center reached a diversion rate of 94.81% and the Live Oak Drive facility followed at 92.75%. Together, these sites have kept 840 million pounds of waste out of landfills, triple the U.S. average diversion rate of 32%. The payoff is significant: Cox reports \$3.2 million in annual savings and revenue from its zero-waste strategy.

Beyond waste reduction, Cox's Accessory Recovery Program embodies circular economy principles. Partnering with Eggleston Services, Cox refurbishes remotes and cables for reuse, supporting 70% of customers nationwide. The company also sources 100% green energy for Chesapeake operations and installed solar panels at its Crossways headquarters, producing 625 megawatt hours annually.

Employee engagement is central to Cox's impact. Volunteers regularly support habitat projects at Elizabeth River Project's Paradise Creek Nature Park, the Elizabeth River Trail, and Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Literacy initiatives bring environmental



Cox refurbishes remotes and cables for reuse while achieving Zero Waste to Landfill at two Chesapeake sites. Courtesy of Cox.

education to classrooms, with donations of books like *Compost Stew* and *Old Enough to Save the Planet*.

Through its Cox Conservation Heroes program, the company honors volunteers who protect out-

door spaces, reinforcing a culture of sustainability. Cox's Chesapeake achievements prove that bold corporate choices can reshape the environment for the better.

Hampton Roads Planning District Commission

Visitors arriving at the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission's Regional Building are now greeted by more than a parking lot—they see a living demonstration of how infrastructure can heal the environment. What was once asphalt has been transformed into an environmental showcase, proving that even ordinary spaces can help restore the Elizabeth River.

The redesigned lot features porous concrete panels and a bioretention facility that capture and filter stormwater runoff. Together, they can store 33,000 gallons—equal to 600 rain barrels—



Hampton Roads Planning District Commission's (HRPDC) newly transformed parking lot captures 33,000 gallons of stormwater runoff and features recycled tire parking stops and native plants. Courtesy of HRPDC.

and remove pollutants, including one pound of phosphorus and 7.5 pounds of nitrogen annually. Native landscaping adds another layer of impact: six trees, more than 60 shrubs, and over 2,200 perennials now provide pollinator habitat while

cooling the urban heat island effect, where paved surfaces trap heat and raise local temperatures. Remarkably, no parking spaces were lost, and an additional ADA space was gained.

HRPDC has also embraced clean transportation by installing four Level 2 electric vehicle charging stations. These chargers reduce reliance on fossil fuels while signaling the Commission's commitment to a sustainable future that benefits employees, visitors, and the wider community.

Their leadership extends to collaboration as well. HRPDC coordinated funding and design for Buckeye Chesapeake Terminal's living shoreline restoration, reducing thousands of pounds of pollution and helping native plants reclaim once-barren land. Together, these efforts reflect HRPDC's role as a River Star Business: A regional leader showing how practical, innovative solutions can improve water quality and inspire others.

★★ Advancing to Achievement Level 2026

Achievement Level River Stars document significant results in both pollution prevention and wildlife habitat.



Distinctly Real Estate replaced ornamental landscaping with native species that benefit wildlife and the river without the need for pesticides. Courtesy of Elizabeth River Project.

Distinctly Real Estate

Formerly Crescas, Distinctly Real Estate, in Norfolk partnered with Elizabeth River Project to replace non-native plants with 61 natives—Winterberry, Coneflower, Pink Muhly, and more—creating 450 sq. ft. of vibrant habitat that filters runoff and supports wildlife. Add LED retrofits, low-flow toilets, and zero pesticides, and you've got a River Star business shining bright for sustainability.



This site in Norfolk features certified native plant gardens while a new composting program improves soil health. Courtesy of Fred Heutte Garden.

Fred Heutte Garden

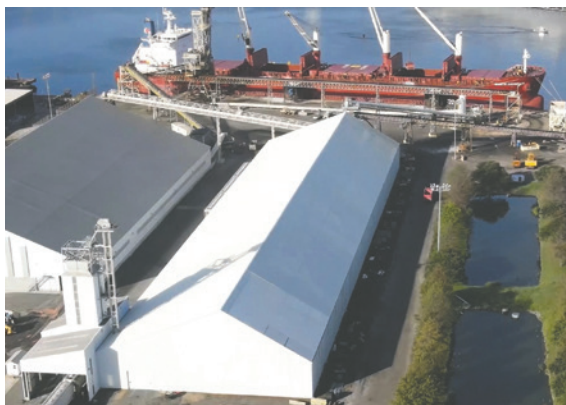
Fred Huette Garden is abuzz with native plantings! Earning the garden National Wildlife Federation habitat certification and Monarch Waystation status, their native plants filter stormwater, feed pollinators, and thrive without chemicals. Volunteers, including Norfolk Master Gardeners, remove invasives, recycle, and compost. With 2,000+ pounds of produce grown on-site donated annually and vibrant community festivals, the garden thrives as a hub of ecological impact.



Girl Scout Council of the Colonial Coast

The Girl Scout Council of the Colonial Coast powers up with Daisy, a SmartFlower solar system producing clean energy and avoiding 5,518 pounds of emissions annually. Girls explore renewable energy through badges, including the Elizabeth River Badge, while composting, recycling, and a 7-acre nature sanctuary in Chesapeake make sustainability hands-on, inspiring the next generation of eco-leaders.

Headquartered in Chesapeake, the Girls Scout Council of the Colonial Coast's (GSCCC) 7-acre nature center offers hands-on nature and conservation experiences. Courtesy of GSCCC.



SeaGate Terminal

SeaGate opened its 4,000-sf green office on the Southern Branch in Chesapeake featuring solar panels that produced 16,794 kWh in 2025, avoiding 27,080 pounds of emissions. Upcycled furniture, LED lighting, and reusable water stations add sustainable flair. A new super sack bagging machine reduces waste and dust, while oyster gardening supports river restoration—making SeaGate a hub of innovation and environmental care.

SeaGate's new super-sack bagging machine not only saves product, but reduces waste and dust from their bulk terminal operations. Courtesy of SeaGate Terminals.

RECERTIFYING 2026

These River Stars "recertified" achievements documented three years ago by peer review. The stars reflect their level in the program

- ★ 120 Atlantic Street
- ★ Chesapeake Care Clinic
- ★ Church of St. Therese
- ★★ ForKids
- ★★★★ Great Bridge Battlefield & Waterways History Museum
- ★★ Naval Support Activity Hampton Roads
- ★★★★ Naval Support Activity Hampton Roads Lafayette River Annex
- ★ Portsmouth Humane Society
- ★ Sacred Heart Catholic Church
- ★★ Savior Martial Arts & Sk8 Dojo Roller Rink
- ★ South Norfolk Jordan Bridge
- ★ St. Julien's Creek Annex
- ★ Waterside Marina
- ★ Westside Produce & Provisions

★ Entering at Commitment Level 2026

Commitment Level River Stars documented significant results in either pollution prevention or wildlife habitat.



Bloom Wellness Collective

In Norfolk's EcoDistrict, Bloom Wellness Collective merges therapy with sustainability. Their 1,800 sq. ft. office shines with LED lighting, efficient HVAC, and a daylight-filled courtyard. Low-VOC paints and concrete floors improve air quality, while recycling bins handle paper and cardboard. River Star Homes brochures invite clients to protect waterways—proof that wellness and environmental care can grow side by side.

These mental health professionals are helping heal minds and the river with LED lighting, efficient HVAC, daylighting and low-VOC paints. Courtesy of Elizabeth River Project.



Norfolk ReCycle Factory

On North Colley, Norfolk ReCycle Factory revives bicycles and reimagines community. By refurbishing bikes, they divert waste from landfills. On-site, sediment and leaf litter become raised garden beds with fun educational signage, reducing impervious area and runoff while hosting native plants for pollinators. This River Star proves that every ride—and every repair—can spark cleaner air, greener spaces, and stronger connections.

By refurbishing bikes, Norfolk ReCycle Factory diverts waste from landfills and promotes green transportation. Courtesy of Elizabeth River Project.



Rivers Casino Portsmouth

Rivers Casino Portsmouth is betting big on efficiency. Since opening in 2023, new energy management efforts—including HVAC heat mapping, motion-sensor lighting, and cooler retrofits—cut usage by 1,925,780 kWh, a 10% drop equal to 2.6 million pounds of emissions. With Green Globes certification, reflective roofing, and water reuse, Rivers proves entertainment can run cleaner, smarter, and more sustainably.

Rivers Casino avoided 2.6 million pounds of emissions by adding new energy management efforts since opening in 2023. Courtesy of Rivers Casino Portsmouth.



Ten Top Market

Bright flavors meet smart design at Ten Top Market in Norfolk's Knitting Mill Creek EcoDistrict. Beyond chef-made meals, the market is tackling pollution prevention head-on. Composting food scraps and single-use items with Tidewater Compost keeps waste out of landfills and nourishes local soil. Paired with recycling, low-VOC paints, and efficient appliances, Ten Top's built-in fats, oils, and grease collection system stands out—protecting waterways with every meal served.

Owner, Rich Fraley, Jr. dishes chef-made meals and sustainability, composting food scraps and saving energy and water with efficient appliances. Courtesy of Elizabeth River Project.



Virginia Natural Gas

Virginia Natural Gas is modernizing energy with measurable results. Through its Steps to Advance Virginia's Energy (SAVE) program, 575 miles of aging pipelines have been replaced, cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 35% since 2012. Using Zero Emissions Vacuum and Compressor technology, natural gas removed during maintenance is recaptured instead of released, while advanced leak detection ensures prompt repairs. Beyond infrastructure, Virginia Natural Gas conducted a litter cleanup in Park Place, provides free home weatherization kits and energy audits, and partnered on the Elizabeth River Project's Ryan Resilience Lab to connect art, science, and climate resilience.

Virginia Natural Gas offers free energy-savings kits tailored to your home's needs to save energy and money. Courtesy of Virginia Natural Gas.

Sustained Distinguished Performance 2026

Sustained Distinguished Performance is awarded when a River Star completes a significant new initiative with no change in recognition level. The stars reflect the participant's level in the program.

★★★★ BAE Systems Maritime Solutions

Norfolk, 2011 inaugural Inside Business River Star Hall of Fame winner, has found an additional way to recycle 5 million pounds of blast grit—an abrasive material used to strip paint and rust from ships during maintenance.

★★★★ **Buckeye Chesapeake Terminal** and many partners constructed a wetland at their fuel terminal at Money Point and transformed a 5-acre moonscape into a thriving habitat (also see Hall of Fame).

★★★★ **Chesapeake Humane Society** harvests rain for irrigation and worked with the city to enhance and conserve a one-acre wooded natural area adjacent to the Adoption Center.

★★★★ **Chesapeake Parks, Recreation & Tourism** planted 1,500 native trees at Bells Mill and Rivers Edge parks, while also launching the Chesapeake Healthy Landscape program to promote greener, healthier community spaces.

★★★★ **Chesapeake Sheriff's Office's** Horticulture program added a greenhouse to grow vegetables from seed and began composting plant waste, turning organic material into nutrient-rich soil that reduces landfill waste, lowers emissions, and supports healthier gardens.



U.S. Coast Guard Base Portsmouth collected over 2,000 lbs. of old netting, tires, wood, plastics and other debris along the base shoreline on Clean the Bay Day. Courtesy of U.S. Coast Guard Base Portsmouth.

★★ **Christ & St. Luke's Episcopal Church** revitalized its green space with the help of Orbis Landscape Architecture which includes permeable pavers, rain gardens and butterfly habitat. The 2025 Jim Snell Community Conversation series featured environmental programming.

★ **Coastal Virginia Conservancy** and partners constructed and then seeded oyster reefs with baby oyster spat, creating habitats that naturally filter pollutants from the water.

★★ **Coastal Virginia Unitarian Universalists** added 15,600 watts of solar panels to reduce energy usage by about 25%.

★★ **Colley Community Center** added rain harvesting to water the conservation landscaping added last year, capturing rainfall that reduces polluted runoff into Knitting Mill Creek.

★ **Elation Brewing** won Virginia Green Travel Star Award for Brewery of the year in 2023 and 2025

for environmental efforts including composting food waste from the kitchen and coffee grounds from neighbor, Voyager Coffee.

★★★★ **Elizabeth River Crossings** continues to achieve energy and fuel savings while the Green Team volunteered 1,256 hours for local environmental efforts.

★★★★ **Elizabeth River Trail Foundation** launched the "Nature for All" initiative focused on enhancing environmental stewardship

along the trail through new collaborations.

★★ **Fairwinds Landing** is developing a green port in Norfolk and in doing so added multiple stormwater improvements, removed derelict pilings and recycled 79 million pounds of concrete.

★★★★ **Friends of Indian River** is encouraging bird-safe building practices while continuing stewardship of Indian River Park and other sites.

★★★★ **General Dynamics NASSCO-Norfolk**, 2019 River Star Hall of Fame shipyard, holds strong as one of the top oyster gardeners on the river raising baby oysters for release on their living shoreline.

★★★★ **Hermitage Museum & Gardens** added electric horticultural tools for the grounds and realized a savings of 23% water used for irrigation by harvesting and other best practices.

★★★★ **HRSD**, 2016 River Star Hall of Fame winner constructed 198 oyster habitat blocks from excess concrete to be used for restoration projects in the Elizabeth River.

★ **Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Norfolk** is reducing energy use by phasing in LED lighting and installing a cool, reflective roof that lowers heat absorption, cuts cooling demands, and helps reduce urban heat island effects.

★★★★ **Keep Norfolk Beautiful/Norfolk Environmental Commission** coordinated the inaugural Live Green Norfolk, a free, family-friendly sustainability festival to promote environmental awareness and action.

★★★★ **Lady Fern's Native Plants**, most recent River Star Hall of Fame winner, converted more turf into pollinator habitat at her nursery in Norfolk while also participating in a native tree incentive program called Throwing Shade.

★ **Monumental United Methodist Church** avoided 4,996 pounds of air emissions by converting all parking lot fixtures to LED.

★★★★ **Nauticus** unveiled new exhibits featuring the Elizabeth River and includes ways for community members to become more resilient to rising waters. The museum was awarded the Virginia Green Travel Leader Attraction for 2025 for its stewardship efforts.

★★★★ **Naval Station Norfolk** and partners removed 11 derelict vessels, which can leak oil, fuel, and other pollutants into waterways. The base also created a 5,000 square foot pollinator garden providing habitat for Monarch butterflies throughout their lifecycle.

★★★★ **Norfolk Department of City Planning** constructed a 230-foot living shoreline on the Lafayette River building



Norfolk State University students and faculty sub-divide native wetland grasses grown in the university's greenhouse for restoration plantings. Courtesy of Elizabeth River Project.



General Dynamics NASSCO-Norfolk have been long-time proud oyster gardeners, helping the come-back of this keystone species. Courtesy of General Dynamics NASSCO-Norfolk.

on prior restoration efforts and protecting bridge abutments.

★★★★ **Norfolk Environmental Storm Water Management**, 2022 River Star Hall of Fame winner, continued to lead the region in restoring wetlands with a 2-acre living shoreline at Riverside Memorial Park cemetery that also incorporates stormwater filtration and innovative "geobags" to stabilize steep slopes.

★★★★ **Norfolk Naval Shipyard**, 2017 River Star Hall of Famer, completed Phase 2 of a state-of-the-art waste water treatment plant that allows for treatment of two different waste streams.

★★★★ **Norfolk Southern Lambert's Point**, 2021 River Star Hall of Famer, hosted two oyster reefs with partners just offshore of their living shoreline. One is a voluntary sanctuary reef

totaling 5 acres and the second is a mitigation reef.

★★★★ **Norfolk State University**, in partnership with Elizabeth River Project, developed a Bay-wide model for urban restoration while the campus continued energy and sustainability efforts.

★★★★ **The Port of Virginia**, 2012 River Star Hall of Fame winner, is leading the way as the greenest port on the East Coast by adding a fleet of electric forklifts, expanding its use of electric cranes, and renewing its program to retrofit diesel trucks for cleaner performance.

★★ **SIMS Metal Management Chesapeake** replaced one of its largest pieces of equipment with an all-electric model and added a new metal recovery technology that keeps about 600,000 pounds of metal particles out of the landfill annually.

★ **Starving Artist Café** switched to compostable takeout containers, straws and cookie wrappers, while also helping the community and river by adding pet waste stations and fishing line recycling bins.

★★★★ **US Coast Guard Base Portsmouth** has added three pollinator gardens, as well as Wood duck and Bat houses to further enhance the 90 acres of natural buffer on the base.

★ **Virginia Department of Environmental Quality Tidewater Regional Office** launched "Purple air sensors," a community science monitoring effort to give real-time and easy-to-read information denoting air quality.

★★★★ **Virginia Zoo** had the second largest reduction in energy consumption of all municipal buildings, began composting, and piloted "Habitat Heroes" to encourage members to replace lawn—often ecologically problematic because it requires heavy watering, fertilizers, and provides little wildlife habitat—with native plantings that support pollinators and healthier ecosystems.

★★★★ **Volvo Penta of the Americas** assembly plant is implementing stormwater, energy, and process improvements to operations, including a standardized packaging and pallet pool to share among Volvo sites.

Buckeye Chesapeake Terminal



The new 12,919-square-foot wetland at Buckeye Chesapeake Terminal filters runoff and provides valuable habitat on the industrialized Southern Branch. Courtesy of Elizabeth River Project.

Buckeye Chesapeake Terminal has transformed its waterfront into a beacon of environmental stewardship, earning its place among the Inside Business River Star Hall of Fame. From oyster gardening to wetland restoration, Buckeye's efforts showcase how industry and nature can thrive side by side.

Since 2015, Buckeye has nurtured oyster populations along its Southern Branch shoreline, growing from an initial 3,000 oysters to 10,000 annually. Each year, the oysters are placed on the terminal's shoreline, strengthening the river's natural filtration system. In 2018, employees installed 1,080 oyster castles to create a reef, further enhancing habitat for aquatic life.

This spring, Buckeye partnered with Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, the Elizabeth River Project, the City of Chesapeake, and Wetlands Watch to construct a 12,919-square-foot wetland. More than 50 employees from across Buckeye's U.S. and Caribbean assets planted 15,100 native grasses in a single low-tide cycle—despite pouring



More than 50 employees from across Buckeye's U.S. and Caribbean locations planted over 15,000 wetland grasses in a single tide cycle despite pouring rain. Courtesy of Buckeye Partners.

rain. The new wetland sits atop a sand cap covering contaminated sediments, adjacent to a seven-acre restoration completed years earlier.

Just inland at Money Point, Buckeye is helping turn a moonscape into a thriving natural area. On the 5.3-acre "Rail Spur" parcel, once barren from herbicide spraying, native species now flourish. A variance to city ordinances allowed mowing and spraying to cease, opening the door for new plantings and design improvements.

Wildlife has returned in abundance. Two osprey platforms constructed by the terminal host active nests, and this

year a pair of bald eagles claimed one.

Pollution prevention has been equally impressive. Buckeye's installation of advanced vapor recovery technology has avoided more than 10,600 metric tons of greenhouse gases since 2021. The terminal also recycled 221,500 gallons of petroleum contact water between 2021 and 2025.

"Our team takes pride in restoring the river while reducing our footprint," said Krista Manley, Senior Manager, Environmental Projects and Remediation. "These projects show what's possible when industry and community work together."

Inside Business

The Hampton Roads Business Journal

RIVER STAR HALL OF FAME

The Inside Business River Star Hall of Fame recognizes one business each year that best exemplifies the spirit of the River Star business program. Results of "doing something beautiful" can be cumulative.

- 🌟 **2011 Inaugural Winner**
BAE Systems Maritime Solutions Norfolk
- 🌟 **2012 Winner**
The Port of Virginia
- 🌟 **2013 Winner**
**Kinder Morgan/
Elizabeth River Terminals**
- 🌟 **2014 Winner**
Old Dominion University
- 🌟 **2015 Winner**
**Win-Waste Innovations
(Wheelabrator Portsmouth)**
- 🌟 **2016 Winner**
HRSD
- 🌟 **2017 Winner**
Norfolk Naval Shipyard
- 🌟 **2018 Winner**
**Naval Support Activity
Hampton Roads Portsmouth Annex**
- 🌟 **2019 Winner**
General Dynamics NASSCO-Norfolk
- 🌟 **2020 Winner**
Naval Station Norfolk
- 🌟 **2021 Winner**
**Norfolk Southern Corp.
Lambert's Point**
- 🌟 **2022 Winner**
**Norfolk Environmental
Storm Water Management**
- 🌟 **2023 Winner**
Virginia Wesleyan University
- 🌟 **2024 Winner**
**Chesapeake Parks,
Recreation & Tourism**
- 🌟 **2025 Winner**
Lady Fern's Native Plants
- 🌟 **2026 Winner**
Buckeye Chesapeake Terminal