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Governor Signs Bill Establishing Commonwealth Center for Recurrent Flooding Resiliency



Morris Foster

By [Brendan O'Hallarn \(bohallar@odu.edu\)](mailto:bohallar@odu.edu)

RICHMOND - Gov. Terry McAuliffe signed a bill during an Earth Day ceremony April 22 officially creating the Commonwealth Center for Recurrent Flooding Resiliency, a joint venture of Old Dominion University, the College of William & Mary and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS).

HB903, a bill proposed by Del. Chris Stolle of Virginia Beach, will allow the planned center to proceed. It is envisioned as a one-stop shop for scientific, socioeconomic, legal and policy analyses to build Virginia's flooding resiliency.

A total of \$2 million in state support over the next two years for the new center was included in the state budget introduced by McAuliffe and ratified by the General Assembly.

"These institutions will work together to provide critical research, policy and outreach resources," said McAuliffe, during a short address in the Patrick Henry Building adjacent to the capitol.

"Our budget includes nearly \$2 million over the next two years to help get this center up and running. This collaboration will help us continue our progress in protecting our natural resources and creating resilient communities across the Commonwealth, both essential elements in our work to build a new Virginia economy."

The center will leverage the strengths of Old Dominion and William & Mary-VIMS to provide support for state and local planners and decision-makers, and to help Virginia win critical federal funds to aid in training, technical services and outreach in the area of recurrent flooding and resilience research.

Stolle said the collaborative research taking place at ODU and the other local institutions is being followed far beyond Hampton Roads.

"The recognition and establishment of this center is testimony of the complexity of the impact of recurrent flooding," Stolle said. "Hampton Roads is a microcosm of coastal areas nationwide. If we can find resiliency solutions to our flooding issues here in Hampton Roads and the Eastern Shore, similar strategies can be implemented nationwide. It's absolutely essential we make this a collaborative effort. The entire nation is looking for us to come together and will benefit from the region working as a model to develop resiliency solutions."

Morris Foster, Old Dominion University's vice president of research, who attended the signing ceremony on behalf of the University, said the recognition by McAuliffe is significant.

"This bill and this center solidifies Old Dominion's leadership in sea level rise and recurrent flooding research and mitigation," Foster said. "It also is an important evolution of our ongoing partnership with William & Mary and VIMS in this area."

The Earth Day event also featured the signing of SB282 - the Virginia Shoreline Resiliency Fund. Sponsored by State Sen. Lynwood Lewis, the bill allows the state to offer low-interest loans to help residents and businesses that are subject to recurrent flooding. Money from the fund may be used to mitigate future flood damage.

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