

## Reay and Priest Share Coastal America Spirit Award

VIMS researchers Walter Priest and William Reay were part of a group that recently received a prestigious national award for their efforts to help restore the Elizabeth River, a highly industrialized tributary of the James River and Chesapeake Bay that includes three "Superfund" sites.

VIMS, the Navy and its contractors, EPA, the Elizabeth River Project, Atlantic Wood Industries, and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality received the 2004 Coastal America Spirit Award to recognize their restoration work at the Atlantic Wood and Norfolk Naval Shipyard sites and the New Gosport landfill.

The Coastal America Spirit Award is presented to unique, multi-agency partnerships that demonstrate teamwork in restoring and protecting U.S. coastal resources. Coastal America is a partnership among federal, state, and local governments and private alliances to address environmental problems affecting the nation's coast, waterways, and wetlands.

Dr. Carl Hershner, head of VIMS' Center for Coastal Resources Management (CCRM), notes that "Priest and Reay have long and remarkable track records of providing extensive and usually unheralded technical

assistance to many groups in the region." Priest is affiliated with CCRM's Wetlands Unit. Dr. Reay heads the Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve system at VIMS.

The Atlantic Wood site, which was used from 1926 to 1992 to treat wood with creosote, sits on the industrialized waterfront of Portsmouth beside the Norfolk Naval Shipyard. Because the restoration project involved "cross-boundary contamination" between the two facilities, cleanup required unique legal agreements and partnerships among the award recipients.

The nearby New Gosport site contained more than 55,000 tons of abrasive blast material, contaminated soils, and lead-tainted paint chips from Navy ship-blasting operations. Original plans to excavate and dispose of the

material as hazardous waste far exceeded available funding. The restoration team instead decided to stabilize the lead-contaminated material in place. This innovative approach reduced project costs by \$1.4 million and allowed the remaining, non-hazardous materials to be re-used as a cap for a regional landfill.

For both projects, Priest and Reay provided technical advice on the design and construction of wetland and

riparian buffers that help stabilize the cleanup sites and filter pollutants before they enter the River and Bay.



Dr. William Reay (L) and Mr. Walter Priest (R) are recipients of the 2004 Coastal America Spirit Award.

## Schaffner Briefs U.S. Congress

VIMS Associate Professor Dr. Linda Schaffner testified before the House Committee on Government Reform in August that restoring the health of Chesapeake Bay will require effective interactions between monitoring programs and computer modeling.

The committee hearing, "A Model of Success? Monitoring, Measuring and Managing the Health of the Chesapeake Bay," was called in response to an August 5th *Washington Post* article on inconsistencies between what modeling and monitoring data say about the true status of efforts to clean up the Bay. The field hearing took place at Fort Monroe in Hampton.

The *Post* article contended that the computer model used by the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) to estimate pollution reduction in the Bay significantly overstates the Program's environmental achievements. The CBP is a regional partnership established in 1983 to restore the nation's largest estuary.

The Government Reform Committee, which is chaired by Congressman Tom Davis (R-VA-11th), convened the field hearing to help determine whether or not the Bay Program and its partners are using the best methods to measure and report progress in protecting and improving the health of the Bay.

According to the *Post*, several scientists affiliated with the CBP say that water monitoring measures pollution reduction more reliably than

computer estimates. Environmentalists say the model's exaggeration of Bay health shows that it shouldn't be relied on to measure progress.

Schaffner contends that modeling versus monitoring is not an either-or question.

"Attempts to weigh the relative merits of modeling or monitoring are misguided—they are two sides of the same coin," said Schaffner. "We need both and they should be used in concert to understand and verify where we are in our efforts to restore the Bay."

Schaffner also stressed the need for effective communication between the modeling and monitoring communities, particularly in light of the geographic and administrative complexities inherent in a regional collaboration such as the CBP.

"Good communication and exchange of information between monitoring and modeling efforts is essential," noted Schaffner. "Although this needed level of communication may be relatively easily established and maintained when a program is small, it can be considerably more difficult to attain when a program is large or when different agencies are responsible for modeling versus monitoring programs."

The CBP includes representatives from Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia; the District of Columbia; the Chesapeake Bay Commission (a tri-state legislative body); the Environmental Protection Agency; and participating citizen advisory groups.

Schaffner, who also serves as president of the Estuarine Research Federation, credited the CBP with fostering a spirit of cooperation among the scientists who study the nation's largest estuary.

"[The] program has done a good job of soliciting science input on the issues, asking scientists to review programs, recommendations and strategies, and practicing science-informed management," says Schaffner. "The holistic view that many of us working in the Bay's science community have of the Bay and its ecosystem can be attributed to the structure and synthesis the CBP has promoted."

She also called for an increase in funding for estuarine research and for nutrient reduction in support of efforts to restore the Bay's water quality.

Schaffner was asked to testify by Congressman Ed Shrock (R-VA-2nd), whose district comprises parts of Hampton, Norfolk, and Virginia Beach and the counties of Accomack and Northampton on Virginia's Eastern Shore. Rep. Shrock is another member of the Government Reform Committee.

For Dr. Schaffner's complete testimony, visit [www.vims.edu/topstories](http://www.vims.edu/topstories). A complete list of hearing participants is available at <http://tomdavis.house.gov/cgi-data/news/files/112.shtml>

## VIMS Dedicates Hargis Library



VIMS honored Dr. Bill Hargis with a naming ceremony in the newly designated William Jennings Hargis, Jr. Library on August 2<sup>nd</sup>. The event brought a large crowd of Hargis family members and past and present VIMS employees to campus.