

Northampton County, VA

Northampton County residents will face increasingly severe weather-related hazards, such as heat waves, flooding, and storm surge.

As the frequency and intensity of local hazards change, it is important for all of us to protect communities and local habitats. Using the best data, scientists can project how long-term averages in daily weather will change in the future, and the effects this will have on localities.

Information on extreme weather and hazards can empower citizens, decision-makers, and other stakeholders to make informed risk-reduction decisions. With planning and preparation, Northampton County can reduce risks for all residents.



Changing Temperature Patterns

Human health, local fisheries, and infrastructure are all threatened by higher temperatures. At 95°F, it is hard to keep indoor areas and our bodies cool. Northampton County's summers are getting hotter. On average, Northampton County sees 1 day per year with temperatures above 95°F (1990-2019 average). Within the next 50 years (by 2070), Northampton County can expect a yearly average of 7 to 25 days above 95°F, with associated increases in cooling costs, reduced air quality, and heat-related illnesses.



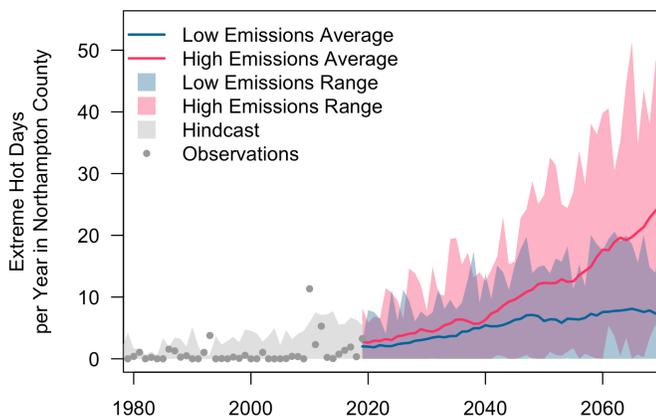
HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES

Heatwaves can kill people and pets. More than 100 Virginians have died from extreme heat between 2010 and 2019. Individuals at higher risk include children, pregnant women, older adults, outdoor workers, and lower-income residents.



DISRUPTED FISHERIES

Across the Mid-Atlantic, stream temperatures increased roughly 2.5 degrees F from 1960 to 2010. Warmer water stores less dissolved oxygen, which threatens the survival of rockfish, oysters, and soft-shelled crabs, and disrupts local fisheries and ecosystems.



The graph shows the number of days in a year with temperatures above or equal to 95°F. Dots represent observed annual days of extreme temperatures and the gray shading shows the hindcast¹. Two scenarios of the future are shown as a high-emissions scenario (RCP 8.5) in red and a low-emissions scenario (RCP 4.5) in blue.

Data:

- Future scenarios: Multivariate Adaptive Constructed Analogs (MACA)
- Observed data: Gridded Surface Meteorological Dataset (gridMET)

¹Hindcasts are model results for a historical period. Hindcasts are useful for comparing observations with model estimates.

Changing Rainfall Patterns

Heavy rainfall in Northampton County is increasing in frequency and intensity, causing property damage, septic backups, and impacts to water quality in wells, local streams, mold and indoor air quality issues, and the Chesapeake Bay. Annual rainfall in Northampton County will likely increase by an average of 2 inches (2050-2079 average compared to the 1990-2019 average).



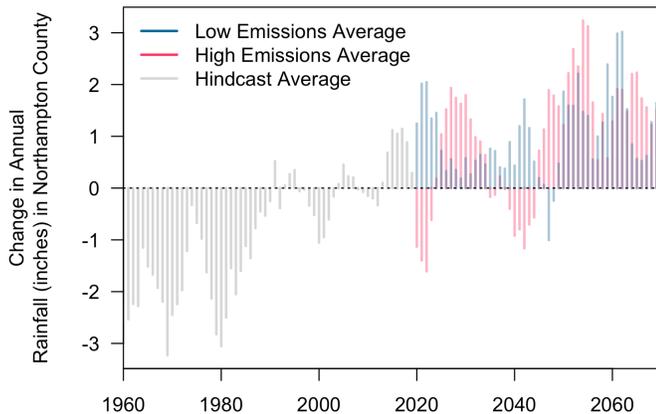
FLOODING

Heavy rain overwhelms infrastructure and drainage systems, causing property damage and covering roads.



REDUCED HUMAN HEALTH

Rising water tables cause septic backups and groundwater pollution, putting drinking water at risk of contamination. Changing moisture levels impact the spread of mold and illness, including tick- and mosquito-borne diseases as high humidity promote their activity.



The graph shows the change in annual rainfall compared to the average between 1990 and 2019. The gray lines show the hindcast. Two scenarios of the future are shown as a high-emissions scenario (RCP 8.5) in red and a low-emissions scenario (RCP 4.5) in blue. Data for the future scenarios are retrieved from MACA.

Data:

- Future scenarios: Multivariate Adaptive Constructed Analogs (MACA)

Sea Level Rise

As temperatures warm, land ice melts and seawater expands causing sea levels to rise around the world. Between 1950 and 2019, sea levels in Virginia rose roughly 1 foot leading to more frequent and severe coastal flooding, and property damage. Sea levels will rise an additional 1 to 6 feet in the next 50 years (by 2070), submerging property and permanently reshaping Northampton County's coastline.



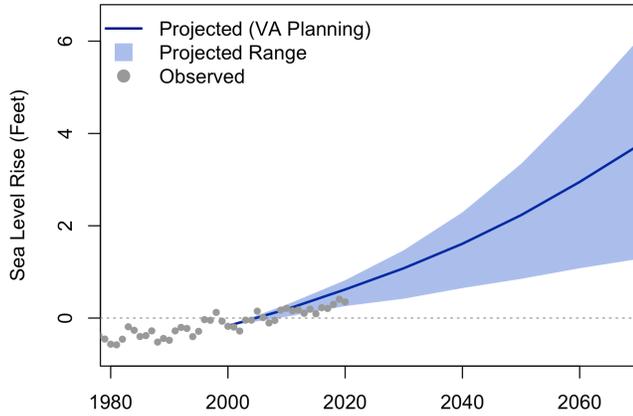
FLOODING

Rising sea levels allow tides, waves, and severe flooding to push further inland. This causes more frequent high tide flooding and increases the impacts of storm surge, putting low-lying housing, commercial property, and infrastructure at risk.



SALTWATER INTRUSION

As saltwater from sea level rise pushes further upstream and seeps into ground water, it threatens drinking water and agriculture. Saltwater intrusion can force farmers to abandon fields and municipalities to increase investments in desalination treatments.



The graph shows the projected change of sea level in feet above NAVD88 compared to the 1983-2001 average. The blue line shows the sea level rise scenario used for official planning purposes in Virginia. The blue shading shows the range between the low and extreme scenarios for sea level rise. Dots show the observed changes in sea level at Sewell's Point, VA.

Data:

- Future scenarios: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- Observed data: Permanent Service for Mean Sea Level (PSMSL)

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