



Working Together for the Commonwealth

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) jointly visited the Hampton Road Bridge-Tunnel Expansion Project and Fort Wool on Thursday, June 24, 2021.

“The purpose of today is to highlight the interagency collaboration with VDOT and DWR on the HRBT Expansion Project,” said Stephen Brich, P.E., VDOT Commissioner. “This partnership between these agencies will help deliver the HRBT Expansion project to the traveling public and help provide a safe and viable habitat for the seabirds.”



(Left to Right Jim Utterback, VDOT HRBT Expansion Project Director, Stephen Brich, VDOT Commissioner; Robert Cary, VDOT Deputy Commissioner at Fort Wool)

DWR escorted Stephen Brich, VDOT Commissioner; Robert Cary, VDOT Deputy Commissioner; Richard Walton, VDOT Chief of Policy; and Jim Utterback, VDOT HRBT Expansion Project Director to Fort Wool to observe the seabird activity there. VDOT leadership witnessed firsthand how well the birds have adapted to their new home at Fort Wool and the adjacent barges.

“At Fort Wool you will be able to see the totality of the work that we are doing from predator patrol to the success of the nesting,” said Becky Gwynn, DWR Deputy Director. “This year we are seeing about the same number of birds on Fort Wool and about forty percent more birds using the barges. There are about 10 to 12 thousand birds on Fort Wool right now and about one thousand birds between the three barges.”



PICTURED ABOVE: Birds at Fort Wool

After a brief question and answer session, DWR concluded the field visit by gifting VDOT Commissioner Brich with a bird decoy used to attract the seabirds to their new home off the South Island.

Next on the agenda was a visit to the HRBT Expansion Project's South Island!

The HRBT Expansion Project team provided an overview of the project for DWR Deputy Director Gwynn and her staff. They saw what the project will look like after it is complete, viewed the inner workings of the South Island construction focusing on the Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) launch pit, and finished with a time-lapse video of the construction of Mary the TBM.

HRBT Project Team took DWR on a walk on the South Island to see the construction up close. Martha Gross, VDOT's HRBT Expansion Project Tunneling and Island Manager, led the onsite tour by giving a quick overview of the construction activity underway on the South Island. Then Larissa Ambrose, VDOT's HRBT Environmental Manager, guided the VDOT and DWR guests to see the Border Collies that encourage the seabirds to choose a nesting site off the South Island. "After today's tour we [DWR] recognize how large and complicated the project construction on the South Island is" said Becky Gwynn, DWR Deputy Director.



PICTURED ABOVE: VDOT and DWR at the HRBT South Island

The onsite visit highlighted how successful Commonwealth agencies can be, even though they have a different focus, when they work together.