Tourism Business Resilience for Coastal Virginia

Presentation to the Joint Subcommittee on Coastal Flooding
September 25, 2017
Project Background

- Project focus: building resilience of the tourism industry in coastal Virginia, with Virginia Beach Oceanfront tourism businesses as the testbed

- Rationale: Tourism contributed $1.4 billion to the Virginia Beach economy in 2015, generating 12,924 jobs

- Three parts
  1. Assess resilience of tourism businesses at the Virginia Beach Oceanfront
  2. Develop self-assessment tools for use by coastal Virginia tourism businesses to improve their resilience
  3. Analyze legal and policy framework related to Virginia Beach tourism resilience

---

Assessment Methodology

- Assess tourism business owners and managers through interviews

- Five dimensions of business resilience
  1. Business planning and operations
  2. Vulnerability
  3. Preparation and recovery
  4. Communications
  5. Workforce

- Based on Mississippi/Alabama Sea Grant Tourism Resilience Index Self-Assessment
  - With additional input from Virginia Beach tourism stakeholders and City of Virginia Beach Emergency Management
Are tourism businesses resilient?

- Hotels were better prepared and more resilient compared to restaurants, retail businesses, and tourism attractions
  - Smaller, franchise hotels were less resilient than larger, brand hotels
- Extensive reliance on insurance and resources that come with insurance coverage
  - Some had seen increases in insurance rates
  - Most were not concerned about ability to maintain insurance coverage in the future
Accommodations

- Majority had undertaken extensive planning
  - Strategic, leadership and staff succession plans
  - Emergency plans
  - Continuity of operations plan
  - Evacuation plans

- Managers had experience with disaster recovery in recent years

- Low perceived vulnerability to flooding, but wind and rain from Nor’easters are a problem

- Difficult for employees to get to work during severe weather events
Policy Analysis

- Examined plans, codes, city policy and designated tourism financing

- Case studies - Florida, Gulf of Mexico, Myrtle Beach

- Recommend city should focus on increased communication departments handling tourism and resilience and with tourism industry

- City should encourage businesses to communication with each other for resilience
Self-assessment Tool for Coastal Virginia Tourism Businesses

- Simple method for businesses to determine resilience to coastal hazards, natural disasters, extreme events
- Provides suggested actions and resources
- Can be used by tourism business owners and managers throughout coastal Virginia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need to address...</th>
<th>Self-assessment (circle your answer)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate your organization’s vulnerability to flooding?</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there flooding on your property?</td>
<td>Yes, on a regular basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is wind-driven rain a problem for your business?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are strong winds a problem for your business?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How frequently do employees have problems getting to work during weather events?</td>
<td>Most of the time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendations

- Greater focus on communication
  - Between emergency management/resilience team, tourism professional organizations and businesses
  - Involve existing tourism networks and organizations in connecting businesses and encourage collaboration

- Interactive Business Resilience Self-assessment Tool
  - Interactive tool in development
  - Available on-line
  - Marketing and dissemination plan
Moving Forward

- Tourism Business Resilience Workshops
  - Helping businesses conduct self-assessment
  - Connecting businesses and encouraging collaboration between businesses
  - Bringing outside experts to learn best practices
  - Planned for winter 2018
Contact Information

Michelle Covi, PhD
ODU Climate Adaptation and Resilience
Virginia Sea Grant Extension Partner
mcovi@odu.edu
757-683-6598