The Virginian-Pilot

SATURDAY | **10.07.17** | *Our 152nd year* | $1 in Hampton Roads; $1.50 in outlying areas

> We're talking about a humanitarian disaster if these people lose all this water supply."
>
> *Marine Capt. Jack Keldorph, part of the team repairing the Guajataca Dam in Puerto Rico*

Marines, sailors try to avoid crisis by shoring up Puerto Rico dam

STEPHEN M. KATZ | THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

Locals impressed with response but still concerned about uncertain future

By Courtney Mabeus
The Virginian-Pilot

GUAJATACA DAM, PUERTO RICO

The CH-53 Super Stallion swooped around and hovered low Friday as three Marines steadied themselves against the helicopter's whipping downdraft. They grabbed a cable dangling from an open hatch in its belly and hooked it to one of about five dozen concrete Jersey barriers that lined a road that traverses the troubled earthen dam.

The barriers are precious cargo. Marine Corps and Navy helicopter pilots have worked this week to shore up the busted spillway that runs along the Guajataca Dam in northwest Puerto Rico. It has suffered significant erosion following Hurricane Maria's heavy rains and now threatens people below.

For more than an hour Friday, Marine Capt. Jack Keldorph looped his hulking Super Stallion from the spillway to the dam, in a choreographed dance. With each loop, Keldorph, co-pilot First Lt. Robert Yannicky and other crew members dropped a

See **PUERTO RICO, PAGE 12**

Marines hook Jersey barriers to a CH-53 Super Stallion on Friday. Crew members dropped a 5,000-pound barrier on a twisted pile of concrete and rebar in the dam's spillway to repair the Guajataca Dam that was damaged by Hurricane Maria.

The high tides just keep on coming

WHY? Researchers blame a push from storms, the pull of the moon – and worsening effects of rising seas

KRISTEN ZEIS | VIRGINIAN-PILOT FILE PHOTO

Norfolk's Stockley Gardens area is flooded by a heavy rain and high tide on Aug. 29.

By Dave Mayfield | *The Virginian-Pilot*

NORFOLK

BACK ON Aug. 29, the rain came in buckets and an east-north-easterly wind rattled windows for hours. So the high tide that afternoon did what anyone would have expected: It rose and rose.

In the midst of that unnamed storm dashing up the coast, the flood gauge at Sewells Point in Norfolk measured a peak water level deep into the minor flooding stage. Lots of low-lying streets in Hampton Roads were swamped.

It was easy to explain.

But three weeks later, five straight flooding high tides caused seasoned weather watchers to scratch their heads. There were gusts in that Sept. 18-20 period, yet not like on Aug. 29, and barely a quarter of an inch fell over those three days at Norfolk International Airport, compared with nearly 4 inches on that one blustery day in August. At times during

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CATCH THE KING TIDE

You can join the Hampton Roads-wide citizen science project that will measure this year's astronomical high tide on Nov. 5. All you need is to register and download a smartphone app. Details: **www.pilotonline.com/kingtide**

"Fear the Blackfish": Washington creates new traditions as it joins submarine fleet

Commissioning ceremony is today in Norfolk

U.S. NAVY

The crest of the nuclear-powered submarine USS Washington

ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO

President Donald Trump issued new rules Friday to allow more employers to opt out of providing no-cost birth control to women by citing religious or moral objections.

Trump delivers for religious conservatives with 2 policies

U.S. will roll back access

FATAL DUI CASE WILL GO TO A GRAND JURY

A Great Bridge High senior was killed and another badly injured in the crash on Indian River Road in Pungo.

PAGE 3

Rats!

As the weather cools down, don't let critters start finding ways into your home.

HOME • LIVING

TIDE | *Sea levels have amplified storms' effects*

Continued from Page 1

those September days, the weather was downright pleasant, even as many streets were impassable.

So what riled the tides? Several things, some of which were as basic as the moon's position.

More important than the explanation, some scientists say, are what those flooding tides last month may foretell: As sea levels keep rising, Hampton Roads is likely to see more prolonged periods of high water when there's no obvious reason.

The region was more prone to flooding tides that week in September than in late August because of astronomical conditions. A new moon was to arrive Sept. 20, and in that phase its gravitational pull is stronger, driving tides higher. Because of that and other factors, the long-term tide charts predicted water levels would begin more than half a foot higher on average Sept. 18-20 than they would have on Aug. 29, before weather effects were taken into account.

Then came a hurricane named Jose.

If it had taken a different path, Jose might be cursed in the same breath as Harvey, Irma and Maria.

It peaked as a Category 4 hurricane with winds of 155 mph, but skirted the Caribbean and finally died, after an odd loop, well off New England. It never made landfall.

Jose did, however, make an impact – the only significant impact so far among 2017's big storms in Virginia's coastal region. Though it was just barely a hurricane when it crept hundreds of miles from shore in mid-September, it stirred up long, powerful waves that pushed extra water into the Chesapeake Bay over several days.

Jose's long-distance punch was a classic example of what makes autumn the peak period for flooding tides in Hampton Roads. During the hurricane season – this year's ends Nov. 30 – even dwindling storms far off the coast can drive the water higher.

And because of sea level rise, the effects of storms like Jose are being exacerbated. It doesn't take a hurricane like Matthew, which pummeled Hampton Roads a year ago, to cause problems. Disturbances way out in the Atlantic that once might have been waved off as inconsequential can now cause the entire region.

BILL TIERNAN | VIRGINIAN-PILOT FILE PHOTO

During high tide, the Lafayette River flooded the 200 block of Lafalette Ave. in Norfolk on Sept. 15. Similar sights are getting more common.

For Sewells Point, Ezer has calculated the number of hours per year that the water level is above various thresholds. Even for the most extreme scenario, he considered – 2 feet above a taller measure called "mean higher high water" – he found an overall increase in recent decades.

There was only one year each decade from the 1950s through the 1980s in which the water hovered for 10 hours or more above that level, his research showed. There were five such years in the 1990s, five in the 2000s and six in the seven years from 2010 through 2016.

For 2016, Ezer calculated more than 35 hours at 2 feet or more above mean higher high water at Sewells Point. During those hours, the water would have been above the minor flooding threshold.

Ezer and an ODU oceanography colleague, Larry Atkinson, have theorized that slowdowns in the Gulf Stream are a factor in some flooding tides across the mid-Atlantic, with the effect particularly noticeable at times when storms disrupt the current's flow. The Gulf Stream, because it's so powerful, is key to local sea levels, Ezer said, because it pulls water away as it heads farther into the ocean around Cape Hatteras.

Larry Brown, a National Weather Service senior forecaster in Wakefield, has been documenting tidal flooding in Hampton Roads level rise.

"A tropical system 1,000 miles away, if we start getting swells from it for a couple of days in a row, water will start to pile up in the bay," he said. "That can cause issues even if the weather doesn't seem like it's bad here."

He said some storms that caused only minor flooding in Hampton Roads a few generations back would now bring what's considered moderate flooding.

"It's not really that these storms are getting stronger," Brown said. "It's just the water level is starting out a half-foot higher than it was 30 or 40 years ago."

That increase in sea levels, exacerbated because the coastal land is sinking, is one of the fastest in the country.

Amid the growing threat, the weather service has expanded the number of tide gauges that have 72-hour flood forecasts in the mid-Atlantic. Jeff Orrock, chief meteorologist for the NWS in Wakefield, said forecasters start with the astronomical tide predictions, then add or subtract from that an anomaly that's based on water levels over the past five to 30 days.

At this time of the year, they tend to add more often than not, and recently have tacked on as much as a foot of water to the baseline high-tide forecasts.

The final ingredient in how high a tide is predicted to crest is the weather – particularly the speed, direction and duration of winds.

This year's highest astronomical tide – the tide that's predicted without any weather effects factored in – is due in Hampton Roads on the morning of Nov. 5. At Sewells Point, the forecast is for 3.41 feet above mean lower low water.

John Boon, an emeritus professor at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, said the convergence of two cycles around that time – a full moon and a lunar perigee– when the moon is closest to the Earth in its orbit – will set the table for higher-than-average tides.

That still may not translate into much flooding Nov. 5. Other tidal building blocks, like sustained, strong winds, would have to come into play. If flooding occurs, scientists like Boon say, sea level rise would have played a part.

Boon helped create the Virginia Institute of Marine Science's Tide-watch system, which gives predictions and recent tidal records for 10 stations in Virginia and Maryland. He said he's found himself being asked more often in recent years why "the tides seem higher than normal."

It's pretty basic, he said.

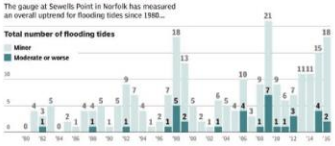
"I would generally say it has to do with what our current sea levels are."

And that they've been steadily rising.

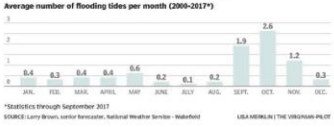
Dave Mayfield, 757-446-2341, dave.mayfield@pilotonline.com

TIDAL FLOODING ON THE RISE

The gauge at Sewells Point in Norfolk has measured an overall uptrend for flooding tides since 1980...



... and in recent years, October has been its peak month for flooding events.



*Statistics through September 2017

SOURCE: Larry Brown, senior forecaster, National Weather Service – Wakefield

LISA MERKLIN | THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

Help us Catch the King tide

The Pilot and other media are co-sponsoring a citizen science project called Catch the King. Volunteers will use smartphones to measure the highest astronomical tide of the year on the morning of Nov. 5. Go to bit.ly/catchtheking to register.

The registration deadline is Oct. 22.

Many fall ill after Chincoteague Chili and Chowder festival

Health officials seek source, ask attendees to fill out survey

By Ryan Murphy
The Virginian-Pilot

State health officials are trying to pinpoint the source of a number of gastrointestinal illnesses that may be linked to the Chincoteague Chili and Chowder Cook Off.

The annual event is put on by the Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company and typically draws around 2,000 people to the Eastern Shore community. It was held Sept. 30.

Many people fell ill after the event, most of whom complained of vomiting and diarrhea. Dozens of their stories have piled up in comments on the fire company's Facebook page.

One woman from Delaware said her husband had been sick since the night of the event and spent four hours in the emergency room Tuesday receiving fluids to counteract extreme dehydration.

Some out-of-towners said they were so sick they couldn't leave Chincoteague to head home, like Cindy Hadock Lakanal and her husband from Allentown, Pa.

"We were supposed to leave Monday morning. Jim was so sick I took him to the clinic on Main Street on Monday," Lakanal wrote on Facebook.

The Accomack County Health Department and the Foodborne Disease Team from the Virginia Department of Health are investigating, health officials said in a statement posted online earlier this week.

They ask anyone who got sick after the event to fill out a survey to let them know what they ate from which vendors while at the festival. The survey is available online at http://bit.ly/2wCldoL.

The Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company wrote on Facebook on Wednesday that it is working with health officials.

"This 18 year event has never experienced anything like this and rest assured we will be working diligently to make sure this never happens again," the group said.

Ryan Murphy, 757-446-2299, ryan.murphy@pilotonline.com

Norfolk man charged in fatal shooting at July party

Demetrius A. McGregor was charged with second-degree murder.

By Ryan Murphy
The Virginian-Pilot

NORFOLK

A Norfolk man was arrested Friday and charged with killing a man at a party in July, police said.

Demetrius A. McGregor, 32, of the 8600 block of Kearsarge Place, has been charged with second-degree murder in the death of 25-year-old Maxie Mock, police said Friday. McGregor also is charged with using a gun to commit the crime.

Police responded to a call around 3:25 a.m. July 30 for reports of two men with gunshot wounds, then to a call for gunshots heard at a party at an apartment complex in the 1500 block of Azalea Garden Road. When they got to the apartment, they found Mock's body.

Five others were injured by gunshots at the party.

McGregor is being held in the Norfolk City Jail without bond.

Ryan Murphy, 757-446-2299, ryan.murphy@pilotonline.com

Military

USS LEYTE GULF RETURNS TO NORFOLK AFTER 6-MONTH DEPLOYMENT

NORFOLK | The guided-missile cruiser USS Leyte Gulf and its crew of about 400 returned home to Naval Station Norfolk on Friday afternoon after more than six months at sea.

The ship conducted security operations in the Mediterranean, Middle East and elsewhere, including 50 days north of the Arctic Circle, the Navy reported. Crossing that latitude earned sailors entry into the "Order of the Blue Nose."

– From staff reports