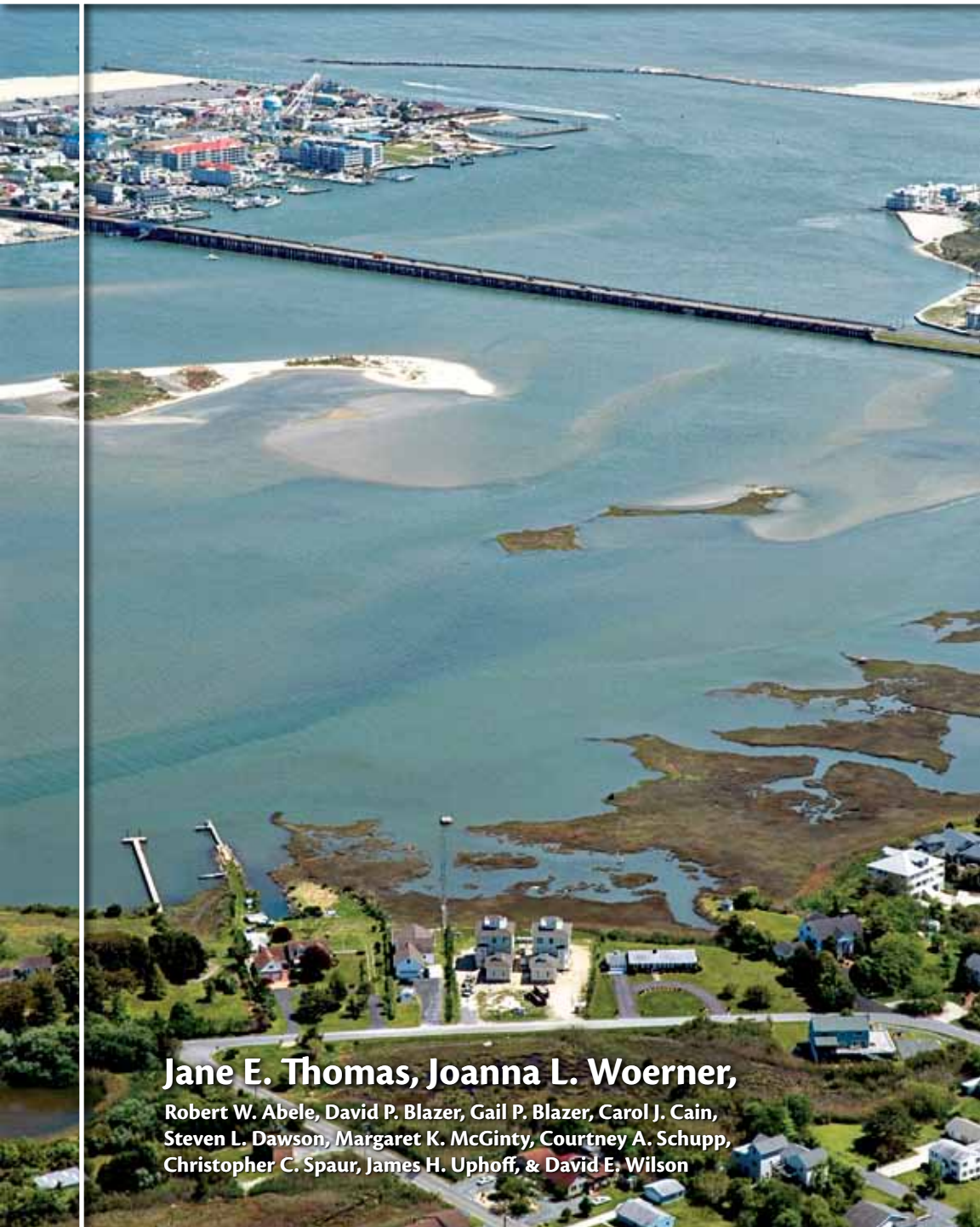


6. Isle of Wight Bay



Jane E. Thomas, Joanna L. Woerner,

Robert W. Abele, David P. Blazer, Gail P. Blazer, Carol J. Cain,
Steven L. Dawson, Margaret K. McGinty, Courtney A. Schupp,
Christopher C. Spaur, James H. Uphoff, & David E. Wilson

CONCLUSIONS

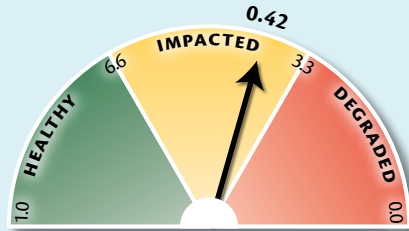
The ecosystem health of Isle of Wight Bay is impacted

Isle of Wight Bay ranked as impacted for both estuarine and watershed health. Water quality was better in the well-flushed open bay than in the tributaries, and good scores for bay benthic communities and sediment quality were balanced by poor results for brown tide, hard clams, seagrass, and stream benthic communities. This resulted in Isle of Wight Bay's overall ecosystem health ranking as fourth of the Coastal Bays. For more information, see Chapter 2—*Ecosystem Health Assessment*.

ISLE OF WIGHT BAY ISSUES

Although the following issues are presented here as pertaining to Isle of Wight Bay, they also apply to other Coastal Bays subwatersheds.

How healthy is Isle of Wight Bay?



Dead-end canals can create ecological problems

There are at least 111 canals adjacent to the Coastal Bays, 59 of which are in Isle of Wight Bay. Most of these canals were built between 1960 and 1980 by development projects that dug the canals to create residential waterfront lots. Dead-end canals are problematic for several reasons. They usually have only one opening. Most were dug through wetlands with the

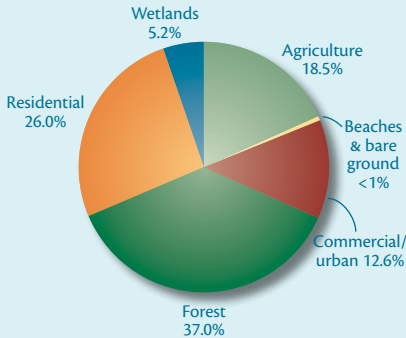


Aerial view of Isle of Wight Bay, with Ocean City and the inlet in the background.

Isle of Wight Bay & watershed facts

Watershed area (km ²)	51.8
Average bay depth (m)	1.22
Surface area of bay (km ²)	21.1
Watershed area: surface area	2.45
Bay water volume (m ³ × 10 ⁶)	22.85
Watershed area: water volume	2.27
Flushing rate (days)	9.45
Population	18,570

Land use in Isle of Wight Bay subwatershed

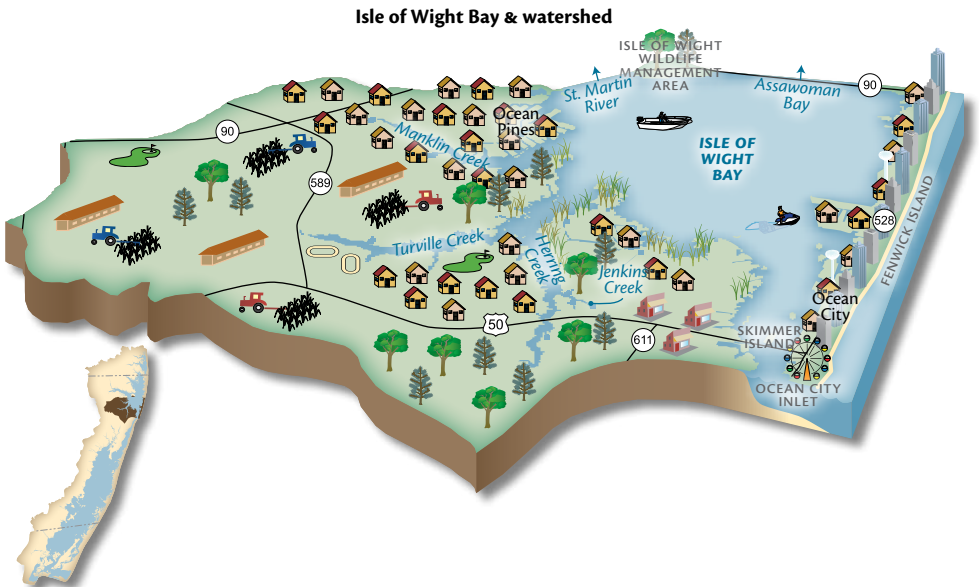


material being side-cast to build elevation. The canals were often dug deeper than their receiving waters, creating lower bottom elevation and poor flushing. This

causes canal water to stagnate and become depleted of dissolved oxygen, which is essential for organisms to survive. The canals receive pollutants from stormwater runoff. The Ocean Pines community alone, located in both Isle of Wight Bay and St. Martin River watersheds, has 322 km (200 mi) of ditches, mostly draining into 19 km (12 mi) of canals that serve to remove stormwater from 8,300 properties.

While the amount of waterfront has increased dramatically by this development, the result is that non-point source pollution from all residences has increased as well. Additionally, the loss of wetlands associated with this development has meant a decreased ability to filter out nutrients and pollution before reaching the bays. Animal waste, lawn trimmings, fertilizers, fishing waste (scraps and bait), and trash are all major sources of pollution.

Common problems with dead-end canals include poor flushing, excessive nutrients and algae, fish kills, trash accumulation, low dissolved oxygen and poor habitat for fish and crabs, heavy metals and sediment from stormwater runoff, leaching of bulkheads, watercraft



Conceptual diagram depicting general land use and features of Isle of Wight Bay and its watershed.

pollution, and silting of canal mouths and ends. The question of who is responsible for maintaining the canals is ambiguous.

Most canals are stabilized with bulkheading (vertical walls that deflect all wave action and cause scouring of the canal bottom). Scouring can undermine the bulkhead and exacerbate erosion. Furthermore, bulkheading was historically made with treated lumber containing toxic chemicals, including copper, chromium, and arsenic. A study of Maryland and Delaware bays found that some bay sediments were contaminated with metals (arsenic, copper, nickel, zinc), pesticides (chlordane, dieldrin, DDT [dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane]), and other chemicals (PCBs [polychlorinated biphenyls], PAHs [polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons]).³ The most severe contamination was found in areas with boating activity (such as marinas, where boat paints and sacrificial anodes on boats and crab pots are sources of pollution) and intense urbanization (bulkheads, auto-part

wear, stormwater runoff, and atmospheric inputs). This same study found that more than 55% of the area in dead-end canals had bottom dissolved oxygen less than the state standard of 5 mg L^{-1} . Thirty percent of the dead-end canal area had concentrations of less than 2 mg L^{-1} . Low oxygen stresses organisms. When researchers examined the canals for marine life they found that 78% had only two organisms—pollution-tolerant worms and algae.

Although ecological conditions within the canals are degraded, they effectively function as an unintentional best management practice by preventing release of pollutants into the Coastal Bays themselves. Accordingly, correcting problems within the canals would require the tradeoff that these materials would be exported into the bays. The recommendations below only address improvement of conditions within the canals, not how to limit impact of pollutants within the canals on the Coastal Bays.



Fenwick Island contains many dead-end canal developments.

Policy recommendations

- Determine who has jurisdiction and maintenance responsibilities for canals and non-federal channels. How often should maintenance be conducted?
- Investigate the feasibility of a Navigation and Dredging tax district.
- Investigate the feasibility of replacing old bulkheading using soft shoreline stabilization techniques.
- Provide best management practices for dredging and maintaining canals. Discourage the practice of spot-dredging holes for boat docks and boat lifts. These holes in shallower canals cause water quality problems.
- Fill canal depressions with dredge material to mean canal depth. Maintain a depth and slope to meet natural bay conditions. Remove sediment sills from the mouths of the canals to improve flushing and water quality.
- Direct roof and road stormwater runoff away from canals. Many canal-front homes have buried downspout pipes that discharge roof-top rainwater directly into the adjacent canal. These pipes should be disconnected to allow water to soak into the ground or be diverted to small rain gardens where the water can be absorbed by plants and shrubs.
- Determine if dredge material is suitable for wetland/ island creation projects.
- Increase public education and involvement by making homeowners and associations aware of the impact of their practices on water quality. Engage them in seeking solutions and remediation practices.
- Explore pollution prevention methods, particularly in dead-end canals in residential areas.

Navigation & dredging activities should be coordinated

Responsibility for navigation and dredging in the Coastal Bays is shared by several federal, state, and local agencies as well as private communities, businesses, and individuals. The lack of overall planning and coordination in the past contributed to a variety of problems, including public confusion about these issues, inadequate environmental safeguards, failure to make full beneficial use of dredged material, and non-standard channel maintenance and marking. Locally based planning, coordination, and vision was needed to enhance the

Condominiums and amusement parks are a typical Isle of Wight Bay vista.



management of navigation and dredging and minimize adverse effects on the Coastal Bays.

Dredging of Isle of Wight Bay and Ocean City Inlet aids boaters in navigating the sandy shoals that form behind the island, and transforms the shoals from a navigation hassle into a key component of island restoration. The sand bodies—tidal deltas—form seaward and landward of tidal inlets as a result of the sudden drop in water velocity that occurs where the flooding tide meets the bay and where the ebbing tide joins the ocean.

In order to restore sand transport processes, which were disrupted by the stabilization of the Ocean City Inlet with jetties, the Long-Term Sand Management Program dredges sand from portions of the tidal deltas within the bay, the inlet, and the nearshore areas of both Ocean City and Assateague Island. It is then deposited offshore of a sand-starved section of Assateague Island and several erosional hotspots in Ocean City.

This sand bypassing method attempts to restore sand movement using natural processes such as wave movement and longshore currents. The restoration project also provides bathymetric surveys of the inlet and the tidal deltas every two years. This data quantifies changes in the location and volume of sand bodies in the bays and around the inlet. For more information on the Long-Term Sand Management Project and the changes resulting from the construction of the Ocean City Inlet jetties, see Chapter 12—*Dynamic Systems at the Land-Sea Interface*.

Due to the relatively shallow nature of the Maryland Coastal Bays, the maintenance of navigable waterways to support recreational and commercial boating is a critical regional need. Improved planning and coordination between federal, state, local, and private interests is needed to enhance the economic and recreational benefits of navigation improvements and dredging while minimizing their adverse effects on natural resources.



ANDY SERRELL

Recreational boating is a popular pastime in the Coastal Bays, requiring navigation and dredging maintenance.

A Navigation and Dredging Advisory Group was created to develop a Master Plan to guide the management of navigation and dredging in the Coastal Bays, provide a forum for public input into related decision-making, and enhance and protect natural resources either at risk or that may benefit from navigation-related activities. This committee developed a master plan that now needs to be implemented.⁶ The committee needs to continue to organize as the forum of diverse Coastal Bays users and agencies responsible for navigation and dredging in a way that allows concerns, needs, obstacles, and benefits to be highlighted, discussed, and coordinated. By doing so, navigation and dredging actions can be expedited and provide the greatest benefits at least cost to bay users and the bay ecology. For more information, see Chapter 3—*Management of the Coastal Bays & Watershed*.

Recommendations

- Promote and implement the recommendations of the Master Plan to guide the management of

- navigation and related activities in the Coastal Bays.
- Provide an ongoing forum for communication between agencies and organizations with responsibilities for, or interest in, navigation and dredging to enhance coordination and consistency.
- Design and distribute a Navigation and Dredging Planning Guide to address the following issues:
 - Dredged materials management.
 - Use recent studies to identify and secure dredge placement sites.
 - Prioritize areas that require dredging.
 - Link areas that require dredging to areas in need of fill material.
 - Track total dredge material disposal needs by volume, location, and sediment type.
 - Encourage citizen participation in project monitoring.
- Develop educational materials that describe best management practices for dredging, including time-of-year restrictions, preferred methods, safeguards for sensitive areas, and contaminated sites management. Ensure that these materials are available to the public and updated periodically.
- Develop and distribute a map identifying federal and marked private navigation channels. Include information regarding sensitive species areas and personal watercraft restricted areas.

- Prioritize areas to improve channel markers, especially small channels leading to and from boat access points and the federal channel in Chincoteague Bay. Using a coordinated effort, identify and secure needed funding for marker upgrades and new installations. Provide the opportunity for public reporting of marker and channel conditions via agency phone numbers and websites.
- Make timely updates to nautical charts. Determine the frequency needed to collect meaningful bathymetry data. Identify long-term funding sources and responsible agencies.
- Develop educational materials outlining permit details, including information needed, permit review time, contacts, appeals process, and public participation opportunities.

Wetlands should be managed, preserved, & restored

Isle of Wight Bay has incurred substantial loss of wetlands from development and agriculture. Although wetlands regulations now serve to protect direct loss of wetlands, permitted losses do occur. The vast majority of permitted impacts have been in the Isle of Wight Bay watershed, which has the smallest wetland extent. For more information on wetlands, see Chapter 3—*Management of the Coastal*

Subwatershed	Drainage area (acres)	Total wetland area (acres)	Wetland extent (%)
Assawoman Bay	6,104	2,746	45
Isle of Wight Bay & St. Martin River	36,077	5,648	16
Sinepuxent Bay	6,598	4,023	61
Newport Bay	27,923	6,546	23
Chincoteague Bay	34,842	15,530	45
Coastal Bays total	111,544	34,493	31

Extend of wetlands in the Coastal Bays watershed.^{10,12}

Bays & Watershed and Chapter 15—
Habitats of the Coastal Bays & Watershed.

Permitted non-tidal wetland losses and conversion impacts from 1991–2006 totalled 89.34 acres in the Coastal Bays:

Losses	-89.34
State mitigation (gain)	+25.20
Landowner mitigation (gain)	+57.56
Additional voluntary gains	+6.07
Total backlog of non-tidal wetlands	-0.51

Mitigation

The Coastal Bays watershed has the largest compensatory mitigation backlog in Maryland. Permittees can pay into the state compensation fund where wetland impacts are minor or when the landowner has no other option (e.g., residential developments). However, when the opportunity is available, permittees are required to replace lost wetlands. Completion of mitigation projects and their success was not well documented until 2007, when Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) completed a review of the effectiveness of its mitigation program. Mitigation has generally been found to be successful

and MDE is increasing its monitoring and follow-up efforts. There has been no penalty applied to date for failing to carry out mitigation monitoring or file reports. In general, wetland scientists agree that mitigation often fails to replace the function of the lost wetland, particularly if the original wetland was not degraded. However, MDE's program, when adequately staffed, can document that and oversee establishment of wetlands that are on the right path to replacing lost wetland functions.

Preservation & restoration

In the cases of some new developments, when a permit is issued for wetland impacts, a deed restriction on the remaining wetland area on the property is applied. Estimates run to a few thousand acres. There are difficulties in enforcing these restrictions—this is the job of the compliance/enforcement divisions of the regulatory agencies. Deed restrictions are also subject to reversal in the courts, and thus represent a somewhat tentative layer of protection.

A goal to replace 4,050 ha (10,000 acres) has been adopted by the Maryland Coastal



JANE THOMAS

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and Worcester County worked together to restore approximately 4 ha (10 acres) of saltmarsh on the southern tip of the Isle of Wight Wildlife Management Area, seen in the foreground. For more information, see Chapter 3—*Management of the Coastal Bays & Watershed.*

Bays Program. Since 1999, nearly 809 ha (2,000 acres) of wetlands have been created or restored largely through the USDA's NRCS Wetland Reserve Program.⁶

The Isle of Wight Bay subwatershed contains a Non-tidal Wetland of Special State Concern—West Ocean City Pond. The primary management goal for this wetland is to preserve the water quality of the pond by maintaining a 30-m (100-ft) forested buffer around the pond.⁹

MDE has worked to prioritize wetlands for preservation, restoration, and mitigation in the subwatersheds of the Coastal Bays, including assessing species and resources and identifying areas where the most benefit could be gained.^{7,8}

With their location at the land–water interface, wetlands are particularly vulnerable to sea level rise, especially if they are prevented from migrating landward by existing development. For more information, see Chapter 15—*Habitats of the Coastal Bays & Watershed*.

Management

Problems with wetland management are present within permitting, enforcement, and preservation. Confusion about requirements and costs could be reduced by requiring an environmental assessment or certified wetland delineation report submittal at the outset for large projects. Mapping of both tidal and non-tidal wetlands is deficient and outdated, and accurate updates are needed. Compliance suffers from a lack of immediate penalty for wetland violations and lack of any imposed penalties for failures in wetland mitigation. Preservation through deed restrictions suffers from lack of oversight.

Recommendations

- Implement Worcester County's Comprehensive Plan.¹⁴
- Regulation and enforcement:
 - Begin a large-scale public education initiative with property owners.
 - Increase staffing resources to follow up on projects, violations, mitigation, etc.
 - Return to the system of ticketing violators on the spot.
 - Establish monitoring/reporting of violations from the air by Maryland Department of Natural Resources during other flight missions.
- Permitting:
 - Institute a formalized process of environmental assessment or certified wetland delineation report submittal at the outset of each large or complex project.
- Mapping:
 - Update the current tidal wetlands maps to reflect changes in sea level, shorelines, etc.
 - Revise the non-tidal wetland maps.
- Mitigation:
 - Institute a bonding requirement and/or penalty to reduce non-compliance with mitigation monitoring requirement. MDE now requires that bonds be submitted before permits are issued.
 - Consider instituting a watershed-wide mitigation banking system.
 - Establish a program of acquisition or easement on lands for future programmatic mitigation sites to avoid the current difficulties in finding sites in a reasonable time frame.
 - Perform more detailed functional loss assessments in determining the mitigation required, especially on larger projects—improvements to the assessment procedure for wetlands proposed for impact are under development by MDE.
 - Raise the wetland compensation fund payment schedule to a more reasonable payment to reflect current land values.
 - Wetland mitigation should be conducted according to

- recommendations already published.^{7,8}
- Buffer mitigation:
 - Reconsider current buffer mitigation exemption, especially where a wetland remains after its buffer is destroyed.
 - Database/records management:
 - Tidal permits:
 - Improve form of records and clarify organization.
 - Non-tidal permits:
 - Make available subsets of databases, and more extensive data analysis.
 - Document the time at which wetland impacts begin in order to ensure maximum overlap of functioning mitigation wetland area and to record projects that did not occur.
 - Add the following information not now collected: area protected via deed restriction; functional losses for Letter of Authorization permits; and

completion/success of creation, restoration, and enhancement projects for cases where mitigation is not required.

- Staffing:
 - Address staffing and funding needs to implement some of the above recommendations.

There are large amounts of impervious surfaces

Impervious surfaces increase runoff, erosion, sedimentation, thermal pollution, excess nutrients, toxic metals, and detrimental organic compounds in aquatic systems.^{1,11} Impervious surfaces are any surfaces (pavement, rooftops, and compacted soils) that prevent water from penetrating into the ground. In Chesapeake Bay tributaries, bottom-layer dissolved oxygen and fish communities decreased significantly as impervious surfaces increased.¹³ In addition, PCB contamination in white perch increased with impervious surfaces.⁵



JANE THOMAS

Increasing development threatens wetlands along the shores of Turville (foreground) and Herring Creeks.



JANE THOMAS

Isle of Wight Bay has a high proportion of impervious surfaces, as shown here on Fenwick Island.

Impacts of agricultural practices and extensive stream channelization have degraded and will continue to impact stream ecosystems in the Coastal Bays. Future development could exacerbate these problems, particularly in areas where impervious cover is likely to be substantial. Research from streams elsewhere in the state indicates that significant biological degradation can be expected to occur where stormwater runoff is not adequately managed and impervious cover in a watershed exceeds 10%.¹¹ Impervious surface in the Isle of Wight Bay watershed is currently at this 10% threshold (see Chapter 2—*Ecosystem Health Assessment*). In the northern bays, where the greatest volume of stormwater runoff from developed areas is received, frequent exchange with ocean water occurs, which may limit the impacts of stormwater runoff. Additionally, flat slopes and large areas of sandy soils serve to somewhat limit runoff impacts. Estuarine waters that are not as well flushed may accumulate pollutants more readily.

Land use planning is largely under local control and is often conducted on a project-by-project basis that does not consider watershed-wide impervious surface and its associated impacts on aquatic resources. It is not known if stormwater or restoration technology can negate or reverse these impacts, particularly on biological communities

and their habitats. Because of these uncertainties, effects of impervious surfaces on aquatic systems should be considered in the planning process. Studies in similar habitats have recommended avoiding the 10% threshold by applying a safe margin of 2–3% less than 10% in order to reduce the risk of biological impairment.^{1,13} However, avoiding the 10% impervious threshold is unrealistic for some areas to be developed, but maximizing development density will reduce demand for rural land elsewhere. Studies have not been conducted to determine impacts of impervious cover on the Coastal Bays, but research on Chesapeake Bay tributaries and South Carolina tidal creeks have indicated threshold effects and it is only prudent to consider those examples in planning future development in the Coastal Bays.^{4,5,13}

Maryland is among the most progressive states in the nation with regard to stormwater management. MDE regulations require new development in rural areas and redevelopment in already existing developed areas to mitigate impacts of stormwater runoff. The regulations set goals for pollutant removal, maintenance of groundwater recharge, and controlling impacts to receiving streams. The latter considers reducing or preventing increased channel erosion and stream overbank flooding. Thus, redevelopment

of older areas in accordance with MDE's new policies would be anticipated to gradually reduce impacts of stormwater runoff from these older areas. New development done in accordance with current MDE stormwater management guidelines will probably not cause the severe problems that older development done prior to modern guidelines/requirements did. However, in spite of the strength of these MDE requirements, the long-term effectiveness of stormwater management measures is yet to be determined. Additionally, it is likely that cumulative effects of large-scale new urbanization will gradually impair surface and groundwaters since their pollution generation rate is greater per acre.

Recommendations

- Implement Worcester County's Comprehensive Plan recommendations regarding impervious surfaces.¹⁴
- Initiate research projects to define successful measures for preventing or restoring degraded habitat in brackish and marine waters. For more information, see Chapter 3—*Management of the Coastal Bays & Watershed*.

Stormwater best management practices should be implemented in Ocean City

Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and MDE have developed stormwater management procedures for Ocean City. MDE requires water quality volume treatment and DNR requires proof of pollutant reduction and habitat enhancement. Therefore, best management practices (BMPs) must be utilized on new development and redevelopment projects to meet the intent of both regulations. The MDE stormwater regulations start at lots 460 m² (5,000 ft²) in size and DNR's regulations affect anything over 23 m² (250 ft²)

of disturbance. Therefore, 99% of all development/redevelopment in the town must incorporate some sort of BMP that treats stormwater.

The choices of BMPs in Ocean City are very limited. Lot size and value are the main restrictions. Buildings are located setback to setback, and after parking and landscaping requirements and location of utilities, stormwater management is the last to be incorporated into the site plan. Another consideration in choosing BMPs is the location of Ocean City. Ocean City is a flat barrier island with 100% urban land use, and all of the storm drains empty into the Coastal Bays, not the ocean. The ocean side of the island is very sandy; however, the bay side is man-made land, using dredge material. Soil infiltration rates,



GAIL BLAZER

A summer thundershower floods the Coastal Highway in Ocean City. Sitting only a few feet above sea level, Ocean City floods frequently, especially when rain events occur at high tide.



DAVE WILSON

A stormdrain lies under nine inches of water in downtown Ocean City during a nor'easter storm in February, 1998.



TOWN OF OCEAN CITY

Pervious pavers used in a parking lot in Ocean City. These pavers are used to reduce impervious surface and act as an infiltration trench.



TOWN OF OCEAN CITY

Bioretention in an urban environment. Bioretention utilizes soils and plants to remove pollutants from stormwater runoff.



TOWN OF OCEAN CITY

One way to reduce impervious surface is to have driveway tracks, instead of paving the whole surface.

	Vehicle exhaust	Power plants	Tire and vehicle parts wear	Vehicle oil, grease & fuel	Road surfaces & de-icing salts	Household, lawn, & garden chemicals
Lead	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Zinc			✓	✓	✓	✓
Arsenic		✓				
Copper			✓	✓		
Cadmium		✓	✓			✓
Chromium		✓	✓			
Nickel		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Manganese		✓	✓			
Mercury	✓	✓				✓
Iron			✓			
Cyanide						✓
Nitrogen & phosphorus	✓	✓				✓

Common pollutants and their sources. Many of these pollutants can be found in stormwater runoff.

property slope, groundwater elevation, and other site requirements have to be considered in stormwater management design. Designers are encouraged to utilize pervious paving techniques to jointly meet parking and stormwater requirements, and include bioretention techniques in landscaping plans to meet landscaping requirements.

With this in mind, the following are the BMPs from the 2000 Maryland Stormwater Design Manual that are viable in Ocean City:²

- Infiltration:
 - Exfiltration trench (minimum two feet clearance to water table).
 - Pervious pavers can be designed as an infiltration trench.
 - Bioretention (as infiltration).
- Filters:
 - Bioretention.
 - Sand filters.
- Non-structural techniques:
 - Disconnection of rooftop runoff:
 - Swales, raingardens, and other landscaped areas.

- Disconnection of non-rooftop runoff:
 - Direct flow from impervious surfaces to swales/bioretention areas, etc.
- Maximum impervious surface requirements.
- Pervious paver, pervious deck design, pervious sidewalks, pervious concrete, and asphalt.
- Ponds/wetlands:
 - Pocket ponds and wetlands.

FEATURES OF ISLE OF WIGHT BAY & ITS WATERSHED

Isle of Wight Bay and its watershed are the most heavily used of the Coastal Bays. Bounded on the east by densely developed Ocean City, it is also bounded on the west by very dense residential development.

The north boundary is Route 90 with two in-line bridge spans leading from the mainland to Cape Isle of Wight and then to north Ocean City. The south boundary



JANE THOMAS

Unlike the southern bays, seagrass distribution is relatively stable in Isle of Wight Bay.

is the Route 50 bridge, bringing traffic into south Ocean City.

Flowing into Isle of Wight Bay are waters from Herring Creek, Turville Creek, and St. Martin River, all with increasing residential development.

Skimmer Island is a haven for birds

Just north of the Route 50 bridge is Skimmer Island, a protected sanctuary for skimmers, ibis, egrets, herons, and terns. The shallows north and west of the island are reserved for recreational clamming. Commercial and recreational crabbing and clamming are also active in the bay. For more information, see Chapter 14—*Diversity of Life in the Coastal Bays*.

Isle of Wight Wildlife Management Area has been restored

Between the spans of the Route 90 bridge is the Isle of Wight Wildlife Management Area, a restored, county-owned park area where 4 ha (10 acres) of salt marsh were created and where the public can enjoy a beautiful view in a natural setting. For more information, see Chapter 3—*Management of the Coastal Bays & Watershed*.

Isle of Wight Bay is a tourist destination

Tourism in Isle of Wight Bay is big business. With some 300,000 weekend visitors to its eastern flank, the bay hosts recreational interests of all varieties from Ocean City. Personal watercraft, power and sail boats, kayaks, and canoes frequent the bay with users being both visiting tourists and residents. Near the Route 50 bridge and along the thoroughfare, hundreds of boaters ply the bay for flounder, sea trout, and rockfish during the busy June–September tourist season. Isle of Wight Bay is where most of the fishing in the Coastal Bays occurs.

From the bridge, anglers drop lines all day and even most of the night when rockfish prowl the water for baitfish. Jet skis buzz between anglers and add to the fray with stops at Ocean City's numerous bayside bars and restaurants. Waterskiing is also popular in Herring and Turville Creeks where 'weekend warriors' compete for water space with residents from Cape Isle of Wight, the Riddle Farm, and Ocean Pines—all on the bay's western side. Party fishing boats and scenic tours help add to the bay's multi-million-dollar contribution to the local economy.

Seagrass is expanding in Isle of Wight Bay

Seagrasses have been increasing their distribution in Isle of Wight Bay. In spite of the many activities and growth, seagrasses have remained stable or increased in the bay; however, they still remain well below their potential in Isle of Wight Bay. For more information, see Chapter 15—*Habitats of the Coastal Bays & Watershed*.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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