

## Delmarva Atlantic Watershed Network

Tackling natural resource issues in four counties across three states

**Location:** Sussex County, Delaware; Worcester County, Maryland; Accomack and Northampton Counties, Virginia

**Partners:** Delaware, Maryland and Virginia Coastal Zone Management Programs; the Maryland Coastal Bays Program; Center for the Inland Bays; Sussex, Worcester, Accomack and Northampton Counties; CommunityViz support by Donley & Associates, Inc.

**Context:** The Delmarva Peninsula separates the Chesapeake Bay from the Atlantic. The Peninsula hosts a robust agricultural economy based on field crops and intensive animal operations. The eastern shores offer historic coastal communities, environmentally sensitive bays and estuaries, and rare species of plants and animals. The Peninsula—especially its coastal areas—is increasingly being developed for new homes and tourism. In 2005, concerns about coastal development, tourism, water quality, public education, agriculture, and wildlife habitat led area leaders to form the Delmarva Atlantic Watershed Network (DAWN) to collaboratively tackle issues of mutual concern. DAWN's mission was to look at the four-county area from a regional perspective and to identify cooperative efforts that could help protect area resources in the midst of a growing population.



**Project Description:** DAWN retained Donley & Associates, Inc. to undertake several resource-related analyses using CommunityViz, and to train people in the four counties to use the software. The crux of the project was a series of build-out scenarios for each county, using zoning attributes, prime agricultural soils, green infrastructure, rare, threatened and endangered species areas, flood plains, sewer service areas, groundwater recharge areas and nutrient load by subwatershed.

*“The work is proof that in planning, the difference between what people want and what they get has historically been colossal.*

*Through this effort, these four counties are finally bridging that gap and creating a greener region by acting locally.”*

—Dave Wilson,  
Executive Director,  
Maryland Coastal Bays Program

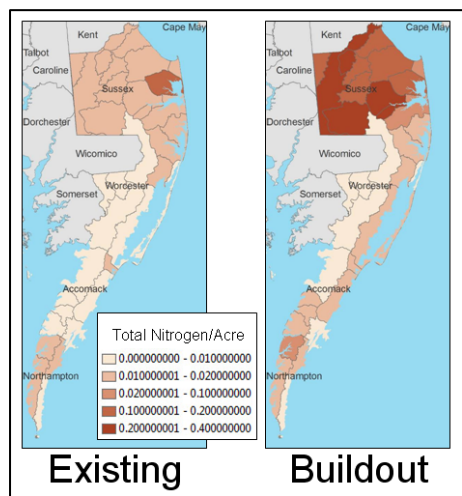
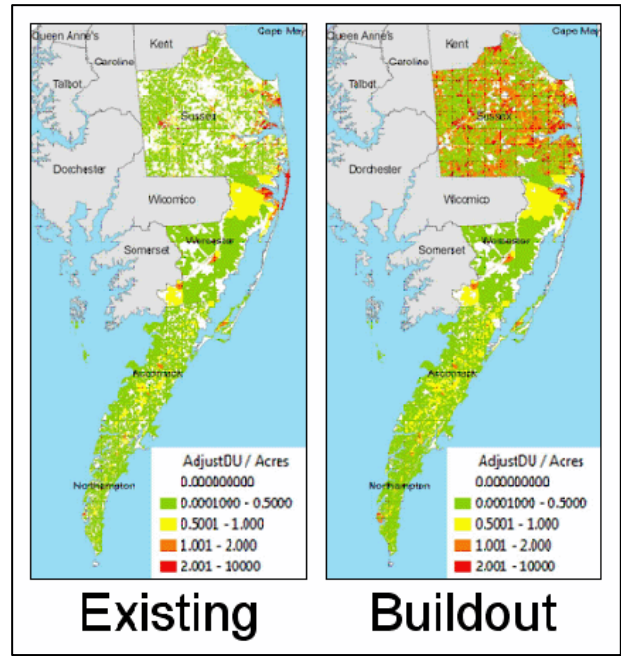
The analyses allowed people to see the amount of lands in agriculture or forestry, as well as the development permitted under current zoning in each county and the anticipated impacts of that development on nutrient loads. The results varied widely among the counties, with Worcester County in Maryland indicating a build-out population of 80,000, roughly double the current population; Accomack and Northampton Counties in Virginia with a combined build-out population of about 100,000, up from 44,000; and Sussex County facing a current zoning build-out of about 2 million residents, more than 10 times the current population of 184,000. Impacts on agricultural lands and other indicators followed suit, with, for example, Sussex County losing over 80% of its agricultural lands and 80% of its forest lands if it stays the current course.

Public education was an important part of the DAWN project. Project information was disseminated through regional newspapers, drop boxes and mailings, and through presentations to leadership groups, local civic organizations, state and federal political representatives, and on radio and television. Informational workshops were held for the public, for planning staffs, and for commissioners in all four counties. Online CommunityViz training workshops were held for county planners so that they can continue to use the software.

**Technology and Tools:** A key tool was CommunityViz 3.3 and its Build-Out Wizard and online training workshops. A wide variety of outreach and educational tools and processes were also used, including written information delivered through news media, drop boxes and mailings, PowerPoint presentations, radio and television presentations, public workshops, a project website, and an interactive “heart and soul” web site for Sussex County.

**Outcomes:** The original DAWN project has given rise to a number of discrete follow-up projects. In Sussex County, local government and the University of Delaware are collaborating on more detailed county level and sub-area planning, using CommunityViz to “paint” alternative land use scenarios and analyze the results. In addition, a “Sussex County Heart and Soul” project is engaging citizens in a public discussion about residents’ desires, enabling future land use decisions to be informed by citizen-defined heart and soul values.

Accomack and Northampton Counties in Virginia also engaged in more detailed analyses of future planning scenarios, and county staffs developed a “road show” to demonstrate how their counties might change for the better. The DAWN project helped to inform a new Comprehensive Plan in Accomack County, and zoning amendments in Northampton, both of which are notable for moving their counties in positive directions. The project helped to confirm Worcester County’s earlier development capacity project and the county’s ongoing planning directions.



**KEY LINKS**

- CommunityViz  
<http://www.communityviz.com>
- Maryland Coastal Bays Program  
<http://www.mdcoastalbays.org>
- Maryland Coastal Zone Management Program  
<http://www.dnr.state.md.us/bay/czm>
- Delaware Coastal Zone Management Program  
<http://www.dnrec.state.de.us/dnrec2000/Divisions/Soil/dcmp>
- Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program  
<http://www.deq.state.va.us/coastal>
- Center for the Inland Bays  
<http://www.inlandbays.org>
- Sussex County Heart and Soul Project  
<http://www.heartandsoulofsussex.org>

Sources: University of Delaware, Maryland Coastal Bays Program, Center for the Inland Bays, County of Worcester, County of Accomack, County of Northampton, Donley & Associates, Inc. CommunityViz is a registered trademark of Placeways LLC.