

Introduction

This report is the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control's environmental profile of the Chesapeake Bay Basin in Delaware. It is the summary of an extensive environmental assessment and highlights some of the numerous treasures and challenges within the Chesapeake Basin. This information is being used by the Department to establish environmental priorities and to educate the citizens of Delaware and other governmental agencies about significant issues of concern in the **Basin**.

The basis for developing this report comes from the Department's realization that virtually every activity that takes place in the environment impacts numerous resources. For example, improper disposal of hazardous substances or excessive application of fertilizers on land can result in the leaching of these pollutants into the **ground water**. Pollutants of this kind can also enter streams and other surface waters during storms. The consequences can be widespread, causing negative impacts to drinking water supplies, fish or wildlife habitat, and recreational or even commercial fishing.

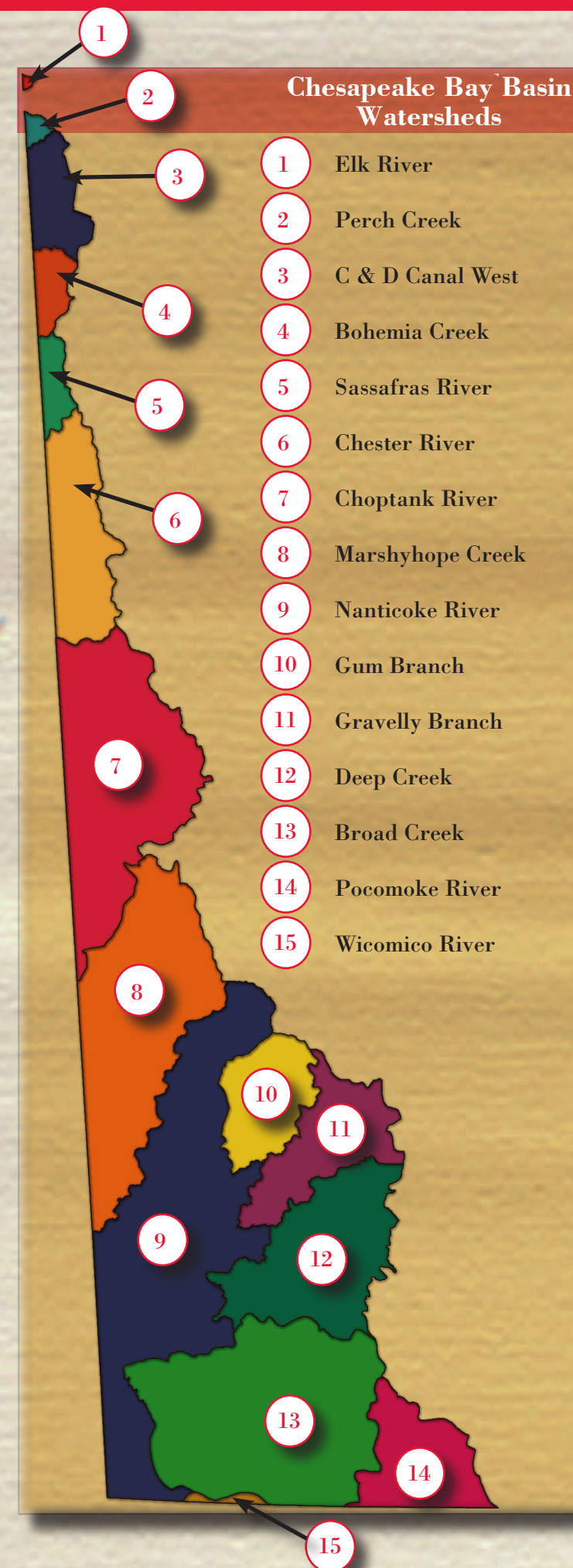
Managing the complex and dynamic natural world we call "the environment" requires close examination of the many resources within it. Understanding and respecting the relationships that exist between the air, land, water, and living resources has prompted the Department to focus on looking at the environment from multiple perspectives. This effort, which we refer to as "Whole Basin Management," involves monitoring, assessing, and managing all of Delaware's biological, chemical, and physical environments within their drainage basins.

Four major drainage basins encompass Delaware: the Piedmont, Chesapeake Bay, Inland Bays/Atlantic Ocean, and Delaware Bay and Estuary. Each basin consists of smaller management units, called **watersheds**, which represent the area drained by a river, stream, or creek. Delaware has 45 watersheds, 15 of which make up the Chesapeake Basin.

The Chesapeake Basin in Delaware encompasses a 769-square-mile area of land in western New Castle, Kent, and Sussex counties. The basin is named for the water body that rivers and creeks in the western part of the state drain to - the Chesapeake Bay. Delaware's portion of the Chesapeake Basin consists of headwater areas - the uppermost reach of a river or stream and the area where a waterway originates.

The Chesapeake Bay is the nation's largest estuary, a body of water where fresh and saltwater mix. These nutrient-rich waters provide a fertile and ever-changing environment that supports a large and extremely diverse array of plants and animals. This great diversity is the basis for the Chesapeake's worldwide reputation as a nursery for life, and it is therefore central to our mission to maintain that healthy diversity.

The Chesapeake Bay is one of four basins being assessed by the Department's Whole Basin Management Program. The primary objectives of the process are to protect the environment, improve



community outreach and education, maximize wise use of the resource, and promote environmental education and stewardship. As part of this process, we will be asking you and your neighbors to express your ideas, concerns, and opinions about the basin in which you reside.

This publication is a summary of the assessment report for the 15 watersheds that make up the Chesapeake Basin. The pages that follow contain information on the following topics:

- ◆ Watershed Hydrology
- ◆ Land Use and Population
- ◆ Contaminants
- ◆ Water Quality
- ◆ Living Resources
- ◆ Efforts Under Way
- ◆ What You Can Do
- ◆ Additional Actions
- ◆ Impaired Waters

As you read this document, we encourage you to think about the problems or issues in the Chesapeake Basin that concern you and actions we can take to protect and improve our environment. You'll find some suggestions in the back of this document about things we can all do to help.

If we continue to be responsible stewards of the environment, we will create an environmental legacy that we can be proud to pass on to future generations. We must remember that we are simply borrowing the land and water from our children. Our goal is to leave them with the same treasures our ancestors left us to enjoy.

For more information about the Assessment Report of Delaware's Chesapeake Basin, please contact:

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