

Land Use & Population



The City of Seaford, nestled along the banks of the Nanticoke River, is ever mindful of the need to protect this waterway as pressures from development and recreation continue to increase.

The Chesapeake Basin spans all of Delaware's three counties, with the majority of its land area (65%) in Sussex County (6% and 29% in New Castle and Kent Counties respectively). The landscape of the Chesapeake Basin is largely rural in character. As of 1997, urban land uses made up only 8 percent of the Basin, while agriculture made up 49 percent. Brushland and forest made up about 19 percent of the land area, and water and wetlands made up about 22 percent. Like other areas of the state, agricultural lands were lost between 1992 and 1997, as were brushland and forests and water and wetlands.

While much of the land area within the Chesapeake Basin remains rural, development pressure is increasing in and around the urbanized areas of the Basin in Sussex County. Sussex is Delaware's fastest growing county, with a 38 percent increase in population from 1990 to 2000 (from 113,229 people to 156,638 people). The Delaware Population Consortium projects that the population will continue to grow and will reach 248,638 people

by 2030 (a 58 percent increase from 2000). While most of the population growth and development pressure in Sussex County has occurred (and will likely continue) in eastern Sussex County, the increase in land values along the coast is beginning to spread development pressure westward to areas within the Chesapeake Basin. In fact, the Nanticoke watershed may have more septic systems than the Inland Bays Basin due to Sussex County's septic elimination program in the Inland Bays.

Land use decisions are made at the County and municipal levels and governed by local zoning and subdivision ordinances. State laws require the counties and municipalities develop and update comprehensive plans to lay out a vision for growth. New Castle and Kent Counties adopted updated comprehensive plans in March 2002; Sussex County adopted its comprehensive plan update in December 2002. Bridgeville, Seaford, Blades, and Georgetown have recently adopted updated comprehensive plans, and other towns in the basin are in the process of developing plans. In addition,

Livable Delaware

Livable Delaware is a positive, proactive strategy that seeks to curb sprawl and direct growth to areas where the state, counties and local governments are most prepared for it in terms of infrastructure investment and thoughtful planning. It builds on the foundation laid by the Strategies for State Policies and Spending, which were adopted in 1999.

Delaware's population is projected to grow by more than 200,000 people between now and 2030. The state of Delaware has a stake in how and where growth occurs. Unlike most other states, Delaware provides most services and infrastructure throughout the state - social services, prisons, roads and transit, the largest police force in the state, about 70 percent of school funding, 50 percent of library construction funding, and 60 percent of paramedic funding.

Governor Minner believes that state government's responsibility is to provide these services and infrastructure efficiently, not haphazardly. Sprawl wastes taxpayers' money.

A 2001 Centers for Disease Control Study defines sprawl as "uncontrolled, poorly planned, low-density and single-use community growth." Besides wasting taxpayers' money, sprawl damages our quality of life in Delaware.

How?

- ◆ *Contributes to the loss of about 3,500 acres of farmland a year (Delaware Department of Agriculture)*
- ◆ *Aggravates traffic congestion and air pollution*
- ◆ *Lengthens response times for emergency responders*
- ◆ *Destroys natural habitat and contributes to ground-water depletion and pollution*
- ◆ *Contributes to flooding and drought problems because of the growth in impervious surfaces (buildings, roads, parking lots)*
- ◆ *Contributes to a sedentary and unhealthy lifestyle (2001 Centers for Disease Control study)*

the State adopted the **State Strategies for Policies and Spending** in December 1999 to set out its vision for growth. Livable Delaware builds on the **State Strategies** and encourages growth in and around existing urban areas where infrastructure is readily available.

Under the county comprehensive plans and the **State Strategies**, there are several areas within the Chesapeake Basin which have been identified as growth areas. These include the municipal and surrounding areas of Greenwood, Bridgeville, Seaford, Blades, Laurel and Delmar. In addition, a portion of the Georgetown, Ellendale, and Harrington growth areas lie within the basin.

Within these growth areas, development is encouraged, so as to spare the rural areas of the state from sprawling, unplanned development. While urbanized growth areas present environmental challenges, the long-term environmental benefits of focused growth are positive. Development in and around the municipal areas provides opportunities for hook-up to central sewer and water, reducing the water quality impacts associated with the

proliferation of septic systems. Bicycle and pedestrian accessibility of employment and community services reduces automobile emissions. With the availability of new technology and environmental data, provisions can be made in the growth areas for the protection of wetlands, buffers, open space, and other natural features that protect the quality of the environment and support quality of life for residents. Guidance should be given to the county and municipal governments within the basin to help them develop ordinances that encourage or require natural resource protections that are compatible with urban growth.

Projected Wastewater Flow Average Daily Flow (GPD)

Sewer District	2005	2020
Greenwood	161,000	236,000
Bridgeville	259,000	320,000
Seaford	1,274,000	1,790,000
Blades	385,000	991,000
Laurel	776,000	1,103,000
Delmar	686,000	1,051,000