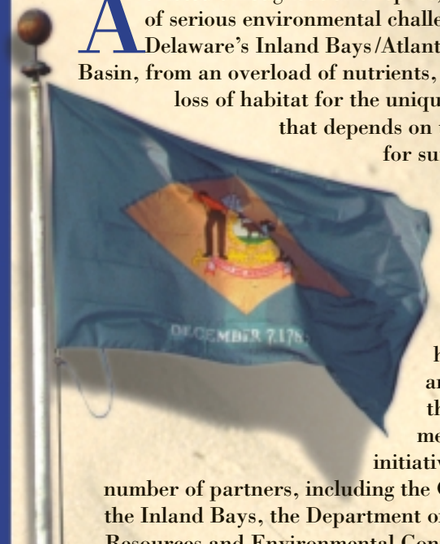
Efforts Under Way



As noted throughout this report, a number of serious environmental challenges face Delaware's Inland Bays/Atlantic Ocean Basin, from an overload of nutrients, to a steady loss of habitat for the unique wildlife that depends on the bays for survival.

Currently, a number of efforts are under way in the basin to help improve and protect the environment. These initiatives involve a number of partners, including the Center for the Inland Bays, the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, and several other state and non-profit agencies.

Center for the Inland Bays

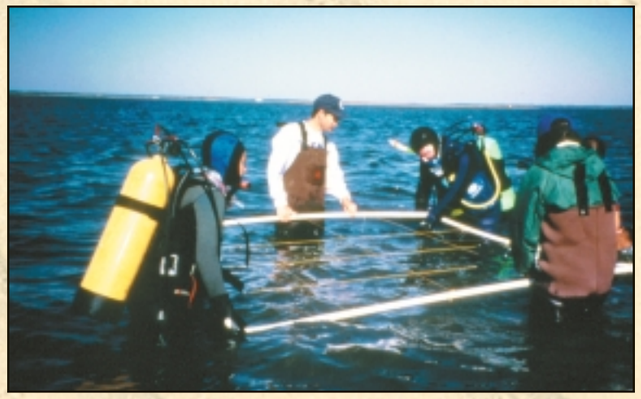
The Center for the Inland Bays, the smallest of the 28 National Estuary Programs, was established in 1994 by the Delaware legislature. The Center's mission is "to oversee the implementation of the Inland Bays Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan and to facilitate a long-term approach for the wise use and enhancement of the Inland Bays watersheds by conducting public outreach and education, developing and implementing conservation projects, and establishing a long-term process for the preservation of the Inland Bays watersheds."

Tributary Teams

A Tributary Strategy Program was initiated during autumn 1998 by the Center for the Inland Bays. Local stakeholders from each of the Inland Bays watersheds were organized into three Tributary Actions Teams, which provide guidance and direction to the Center in its mission to reduce nutrient contributions and restore habitat in the bays.

Since January 1999, the teams have been involved in a coordinated effort with the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control to develop pollution control strategies (PCS) to meet the required total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) for nitrogen and phosphorus in the Inland Bays.

The teams developed an issue brief and began public deliberations on pollution strategies in February 2000. Deliberations will continue throughout spring 2000.



State natural resource staff plant eelgrass in Rehoboth Bay. Restoring the Inland Bays' once-abundant sea-grass beds is important to the health of the bays. The aquatic grass provides food and habitat for fish and other marine life.

Several initiatives are under way to address the nutrient overloading that has caused declines in water quality in the Inland Bays.

House Resolution 32

In June 1999, the Delaware House of Representatives passed House Resolution 32, establishing a working committee comprised of Sussex County Council, the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, the Office of State Planning Coordination, the Department of Agriculture, the Sussex County Association of Towns, and the Center for the Inland Bays.

The committee is assessing progress toward implementation of the Land-Use Action Plan of the Inland Bays Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) and identifying areas where successful implementation has not been achieved. The committee's role also is to recommend changes to Sussex County's Comprehensive Plan and implement ordinances such as zoning and subdivision, which will lead to water-quality improvements by achieving TMDLs for the Inland Bays and their tributaries.

Issues under consideration, which may ultimately result in recommendations from the committee, include changes to the requirements for septic systems and holding tanks within the Inland Bays watersheds, and requiring environmental impact assessments for land-use projects above certain threshholds; for example, acreage, number of units, square footage, intensity of use, and buffers on developable lands.

Nutrient Management Commission

The Delaware Nutrient Management Commission was established in June 1999 after passage of the Delaware Nutrient Management Law.

The Commission is tackling the problem of nutrients entering the Inland Bays with a comprehensive program addressing not just agricultural sources, but the whole spectrum of nutrient contributions, including golf-course landscape operations, residential inputs, and residential and commercial fertilizers.