

Introduction

This report is the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control's environmental profile of the Inland Bays/Atlantic Ocean Basin in Delaware. It provides a summary assessment of environmental information and highlights some of the numerous treasures and challenges of the Inland Bays. This information is being used by the Department to establish environmental priorities and to educate other governmental agencies and the citizens of Delaware about significant issues of concern in the basin.



Delaware's Inland Bays — Rehoboth, Indian River, and Little Assawoman bays — represent the most popular boating destination in the state.

The basis for developing this report comes from the Department's realization that virtually every activity that takes place in the environment impacts multiple 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 like these may also enter streams and other surface waters during storms. The consequences can be widespread, causing potential impacts to public drinking-water supplies, habitat, aquatic life, and recreational fishing.

Managing the complex and dynamic natural world we call "the environment"

requires examination of the many resources that compose it. Understanding and respecting the relationships that exist in nature among the air, land, water, and living resources has prompted the Department to focus on looking at the environment from multiple perspectives in an integrated fashion. This effort, which we refer to as "Whole Basin Management," involves monitoring, assessing, and managing all of Delaware's biological, chemical, and physical environments on the basis of drainage patterns.

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, or watersheds, which represent the area drained by a river, stream, or creek. Delaware has 45 sub-basins, or watersheds.

The Inland Bays/Atlantic Ocean Basin is located in southeastern Sussex County. The basin is named for the water bodies into which it drains — the Inland Bays and Atlantic Ocean. The Delaware portion of the basin encompasses approximately 200,702 acres, or 314 square miles.





The Inland Bays/Atlantic Ocean Basin is the third basin being assessed by the Department's Whole Basin Management Program, which involves a phased process to effectively assess the health of a targeted basin and develop an implementation plan to address environmental problems. The paramount objectives of the process are to protect the environment, improve community outreach, maximize wise resource use, 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 region in which you reside.

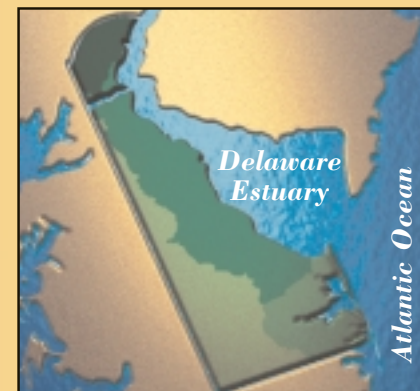
As a conservation reminder, the Department and the Center for the Inland Bays recently erected signs along the perimeter of the Inland Bays watershed alerting visitors of the need to protect the bays.



DELAWARE'S MAJOR DRAINAGE BASINS

Delaware's four major drainage basins are highlighted below. Each basin consists of smaller management units or sub-basins.

-  Piedmont
-  Delaware Bay/Estuary
-  Chesapeake Bay Drainage
-  Inland Bays/Atlantic Ocean



Inland Bays/Atlantic Ocean Basin

Shown at right are the eight sub-basins that make up the Inland Bays/Atlantic Ocean Basin.

- 1 — Lewes Rehoboth Canal
- 2 — Rehoboth Bay
- 3 — Indian River
- 4 — Iron Branch
- 5 — Indian River Bay
- 6 — Buntings Branch
- 7 — Assawoman
- 8 — Little Assawoman



This publication is a summary of the Preliminary Assessment report for the eight watersheds that make up the Inland Bays/Atlantic Ocean Basin. The pages that follow contain information on these topics:

- ◆ Watershed Hydrology
- ◆ Land Use & Population
- ◆ Contaminants
- ◆ Water Quality
- ◆ Living Resources
- ◆ Recreation
- ◆ Efforts Under Way
- ◆ What We Can Do

As you read this environmental profile, you are encouraged to think about the problems or issues that concern you in your region and the actions we can take together to protect and improve our environment. You'll find some suggestions for what we can all do to help toward the back of this document.

Let's continue to be responsible stewards of the environment and create an environmental legacy that we can be proud to pass on to future generations. We must remember that we are simply borrowing the natural treasures of the Inland Bays from our children. Our goal is to leave them with the same treasures our ancestors left us to experience and enjoy in the Inland Bays!

For more information about the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control's Whole Basin Management approach, please contact:

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Delaware's Good Nature Depends on You!



"When the world was created, it was woven like a blanket, its threads interlaced and tied together. Everything in the blanket of life is connected. When harm comes to a single strand, the entire fabric becomes frayed and damaged. We must learn to walk gently upon the blanket of life before it unravels at our feet in ruins."

— Charles Clark IV
Assistant Chief, Nanticoke Indian Tribe