

Maryland's Thriving Coasts

Natural Habitats Create Natural Defenses



Communities on the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland are some of the most vulnerable communities in the country when it comes to sea level rise. Over the past century, Maryland has already witnessed over a foot of sea level rise, and science tells us that's just the beginning of what we can expect. © Severn Smith/The Nature Conservancy.

Maryland's Eastern Shore is the third most vulnerable region to sea-level rise in the United States. With more than 7,000 miles of Atlantic and Chesapeake Bay shoreline, our communities across the state are already dealing with regular flooding. Over the past century, Maryland has witnessed over a foot of sea level rise. Those impacts are seen regularly on the ground in the form of increasingly frequent flooding, marsh loss, saltwater intrusion on farms, and through dramatic ghost forests — coastal forests dying in place as salt waters move upland, poisoning the trees.

Nature can help. Coastal wetlands are known for their importance in protecting biodiversity, and they are increasingly being recognized for their importance in serving as a natural defense against sea level rise.

The Maryland/DC chapter of The Nature Conservancy works to protect coastal wetlands and other natural features that protect inland communities. We champion policies at the state and local government levels that allow both human and natural communities on our coasts to thrive. We work with partners in academia to study natural defenses and to quantify the specific benefits they provide. And we work with partners in the agricultural and seafood industries to ensure that the Chesapeake and coastal bays continue to serve as natural engines that power our region's ecology and economy.

7,700 MILES OF SHORELINE
In the state of Maryland

2-6 FEET OF SEA LEVEL RISE
Projected in MD by 2100

11,000 ACRES OF COASTAL WETLANDS
Protected by TNC's MD/DC chapter

Where We Operate



Our Solutions

The recipe for a thriving Maryland coastline is equal parts science, policy, partnerships and on-the-ground action.

Cutting-Edge Policies

The state of Maryland is a national leader in environmental policies and protections, especially when it comes to coastal resilience. Coastal states around the country look to us for solutions. In Maryland, we work with state, county and municipal governments to ensure ground-breaking adaptation policies that support our coastal communities and protect their vibrant heritage and natural resources.

Driven by Sound Science

Sound science is the core of our work at The Nature Conservancy; it drives our all of our conservation and policy work, filling local knowledge gaps and allowing our conservation programs greater success on the ground.

Taking Action

As seas rise, tidal marshes are shifting more rapidly inland onto formerly dry land. These salt marshes are some of the most productive ecosystems on the planet, and we are protecting the upland corridors where we know they need the natural conditions to migrate and persist. Land protection, the oldest tool in TNC's toolbox, still plays an important role in our conservation strategy to facilitate marsh migration so that our green suit of armor can persist in the face of a changing climate.

Your Support Makes a Difference

With your support, we will protect our state's most vulnerable human communities by conserving and restoring the natural environments that people and nature depend on. Join our team; together we thrive.

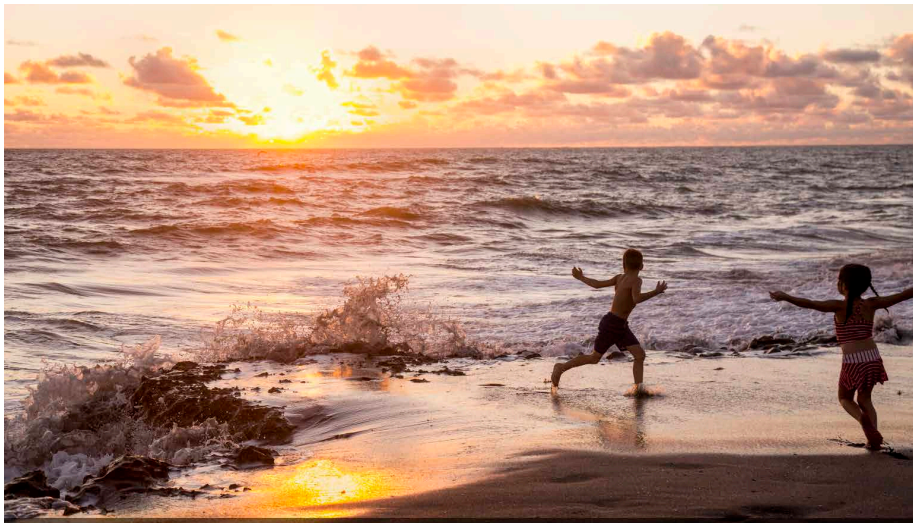


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Photo © Severn Smith/The Nature Conservancy
A George Mason University professor instructs a Ph.D. student on the proper installation of marsh monitoring equipment at a TNC coastal resilience project site.

Project Profile

Globally, a lot of work has been done to document the risk reduction value of mangroves and coral reefs but, to-date, there has been little work to quantify the benefits of wetland habitats in Maryland along the Chesapeake Bay.

To help fill in this gap, we are partnering with George Mason University and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to better understand the effectiveness of the Eastern Shore's natural tidal wetlands to reduce the impacts of wave energy.

The results of this study will indicate the capacity of coastal wetlands and marshes to absorb tidal flooding and reduce wave energy during storm surges.

The Nature Conservancy 