

YORK RIVER WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP PLAN

Recommendations to help prepare for climate change

Improve ability to respond to impacts of sea level rise and other natural disasters on historic resources, including documentation, management and protection actions.

- Create pre- and post-disaster resiliency and recovery plans.

Increase understanding of current and potential future sea level rise and climate impacts on natural resources in the York River watershed.

Protect, enhance and restore high quality salt marsh habitats to preserve ecological functions.

- Identify salt marsh habitat and adjacent buffers and uplands as priorities for land conservation.
- Maintain limits to development, building expansion, clearing activities, and habitat alterations in salt marsh buffer areas through town zoning and shoreland ordinances.
- Evaluate impacts to salt marsh habitats from sea level rise and increasingly intense storm events.

Protect marsh migration corridors and adjacent wetlands to support future salt marsh areas.

- Integrate likely future salt marsh areas as priority habitats in watershed resource protection measures and conservation planning. Consider updating shoreland zone boundaries to include marsh migration areas and amending ordinance language for protection of future marsh areas and buffers.
- Consider creating a Sea Level Rise / Marsh Migration Overlay and associated standards to accommodate future conditions, direct development away from areas at risk from future inundation, reduce density in those areas, promote open space, and enhance resource protection.

Promote and sustain activities that support commercial fishing and an active working waterfront.

- Evaluate and plan for sea level rise impacts on working waterfront.

Improve conditions for aquatic organism passage and tidal flow at road-stream crossings.

- Integrate data on the cumulative impact of sea level rise scenarios, storm surge, and increased freshwater flows from stronger precipitation events into infrastructure designs.

Identify and implement climate adaptation measures to help protect natural resources in the watershed.

- Host workshops to increase awareness among local boards, property owners, and developers about innovative strategies to incorporate coastal resilience strategies into site and building designs for new developments in vulnerable areas.
- Incorporate information about storm surge, sea level rise, and increasingly intense rainstorms into community-based resiliency planning efforts. Implement ordinance changes or other strategies to limit development in areas most vulnerable to future coastal flooding.

Educate the public about the cultural and financial benefits of resource protection.

