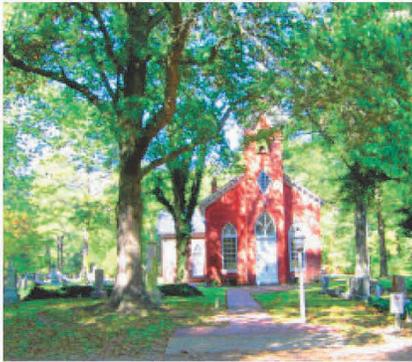


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# Mathews County Comprehensive Plan 2030

*Preserving and Sustaining the Pearl of the Chesapeake*



*Adopted  
January 18, 2011*

Revised 2018-Adopted April 24, 2018

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2011 Adoption

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- Edwina J. Casey
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## Executive Summary

### *Purpose and Use of the Comprehensive Plan*

This Comprehensive Plan provides a written guide for investing in the future of Mathews County over the next twenty years. In Virginia, every governing body must adopt a comprehensive plan to identify community resources, needs and trends of growth to encourage orderly development. The adopted plan must be reviewed every five years.

*Code of Virginia, Title 15.2, Chapter 22:*

*Section 15.2-2223 – “The local planning commission shall prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction and every governing body shall adopt a comprehensive plan for the territory under its jurisdiction. In the preparation of a comprehensive plan, the commission shall make careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of the existing conditions and trends of growth, and of the probable future requirements of its territory and inhabitants. The comprehensive plan shall be made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants, including the elderly and persons with disabilities. The comprehensive plan shall be general in nature, in that it shall designate the general or approximate location, character, and extent of each feature, including any road improvement and any transportation improvement, shown on the plan and shall indicate where existing lands or facilities are proposed to be extended, widened, removed, relocated, vacated, narrowed, abandoned, or changed in use as the case may be...”*

*Section 15.2-2230 - “At least once every five years the comprehensive plan shall be reviewed by the local planning commission to determine whether it is advisable to amend the plan.”*

*Section 15.2-2232 - “Whenever a local planning commission recommends a comprehensive plan or part thereof for the locality and such plan has been approved and adopted by the governing body, it shall control the general or approximate location, character and extent of each feature shown on the plan...”*

This plan updates the 2011 Comprehensive Plan and provides a framework for making important public and private decisions. The plan provides the legal basis for locating public facilities, utility extensions, transportation improvements, and guiding land development (e.g. housing, industry or commercial). In addition, the plan establishes the foundation for important regulatory land use management tools such as zoning and subdivision regulations.



## A Strategic, Comprehensive Plan for Mathews County 2030

*How do we achieve our vision for the future? What are the goals and priorities for Mathews County over the next 10-15 years? Where and how should growth occur? Where are public services, infrastructure and facility improvements needed? What are important public and private actions that can help us achieve our future goals and community vision?*

### **2030 Comprehensive Plan Overview**

Mathews County is located at the eastern edge of the Middle Peninsula of Virginia with shores on the Chesapeake Bay and the North, East and Piankatank Rivers. The County contains approximately 350 miles of waterfront shoreline, and an abundance of forests, wetlands and special environmental areas. Identified as the “Pearl of the Chesapeake,” the County is home to approximately 8,978 residents (2010 census) and is a popular destination for seasonal visitors and retirees seeking a rural coastal lifestyle among natural vistas and quaint business areas.

By 2030 Mathews County is envisioned to be a model community that celebrates its outstanding quality of life and showcases its unique natural resources, while sensitively balancing development and promoting eco-friendly practices and businesses. More detailed vision and goals are discussed in the sections that follow.

To achieve the long-range vision, this Plan establishes several guiding policies for encouraging the types of development and patterns desired for the future. Also, the Plan recommends a variety of action strategies and potential action projects for achieving the future goals and vision for Mathews County. An appendix to the plan includes an implementation matrix which summarizes the strategies and identifies suggested priorities for undertaking recommendations, as well as both public and private partners who should be involved in carrying the strategies forward.

### **Key Planning Themes**

- Renewed emphasis on preserving environmental quality to enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors, protecting the unique environmental features of the County, and expanding the local and regional economy;
- Committed leadership to managing future growth and development in a way that balances development, jobs, revenues, and public services while retaining the rural character and special natural features of Mathews County;
- Increased cooperative approaches and initiatives to enhance the economy through heritage tourism, eco-tourism, aquaculture, and working waterfront business development that complements the environment; and
- Continued public involvement and engagement of multiple partners to address community challenges and pursue potential revitalization or rehabilitation opportunities in each of the County planning areas.



## **Key Planning Recommendations**

### ***People and Housing***

- Increased public education regarding environmental influences and development constraints;
- Increased diversity of housing types and options, including age-restricted housing and workforce housing; upper- floor housing above ground-floor retail uses; cluster development housing; and
- Monitoring and enforcement of zoning and building codes and violations.

### ***Economy***

- Increased efforts, tools, and incentives to support and promote water-based businesses and aquaculture;
- Enhanced tourism initiatives, especially heritage tourism and eco-tourism; and
- Increased business and mixed-use development (residential and commercial) in the Mathews Court House area and designated hamlets, preferably where there is access to public utilities;

### ***History & Culture***

- Increased survey and documentation of County historic properties; and
- Designated local historic district for the Mathews Court House area and other areas of the County, as appropriate.

### ***Public Facilities & Services***

- Develop a policy regarding water supply and management options in the Mathews Court House area as well as in other designated areas;
- Improved telecommunications network;
- Updated 2035 Transportation Plan (with multi-modal options) and study of additional transportation evacuation routes in Mathews;
- Increased public education regarding shoreline erosion, flooding, septic system capacity limitations, development constraints, etc.



### ***Environment***

- Protection and improvement of water quality through increased public education and revised zoning regulations;
- Preservation of natural resources and increased environmental stewardship through promotion of best management practices, vegetative methodologies for shoreline stabilization (living shorelines), and utilization of available technology and tools (e.g., VIMS Shoreline Inventory);
- Increased training for County Wetlands Board members, contractors, and citizens in “living shoreline” stabilization methods and development of a model certification program that can be used by other communities; and
- Improved recreational access to the County’s waterfronts and beaches;
- Identify the potential for recurrent flooding in Mathews County communities and establish planning and regulatory solutions to address flooding and mitigate impacts on people, property and infrastructure in the County.

### ***Land Use and Development***

- Increased conservation and management of large tract agriculture and forests;
- Targeted development in Mathews Court House area, hamlets and crossroad areas;
- Updated zoning and subdivision regulations to guide and manage future growth, particularly with respect to entrance corridors, historic areas, business centers and the waterfront; and
- Planning in anticipation of shoreline erosion, coastal subsidence and sea level rise to protect public and private investments and minimize impacts from flooding.



## 2030 Vision for Mathews County

By 2030, Mathews County with its approximately 350 miles<sup>1</sup> of waterfront will be widely acknowledged as the “Pearl of the Chesapeake” and celebrated as a beautiful, vibrant County with a rich cultural, political and economic heritage. The County has become a model community that showcases its outstanding quality of life, unique natural resources, and successful, environmentally-friendly development practices. In 2030, Mathews County will be a community where:

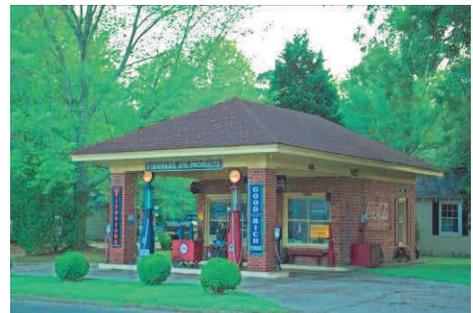
- The County carefully plans for and achieves a viable economy by tailoring land management policies, initiatives, and regulations to County special needs and unique environmental characteristics.
- Informed citizens work closely with government to protect the County and its way of life. Through their efforts, the sky and water are clear and the air sweet.
- Citizens appreciate each other and look to the future with pride. They value their heritage, close-knit-family traditions, open government, community service and independence.
- Researchers are attracted to Mathews to study the fragile coastal eco-systems, development practices, and alternative solutions for energy use and environmental protection.
- Government and citizens strive to improve and protect water quality by wisely managing land uses and eliminating potential conflicts.
- Shoreline management and public access to the water are community priorities.
- Development is carefully planned to protect County natural and environmental features; minimize pollution; and to preserve County resources and quality of life.



<sup>1</sup> Based on VIMS Shoreline Report 2010.



- Safe water, streets, sidewalks, and properly functioning wastewater and stormwater management systems support the Central Mathews District and Historic Court House village. Other County districts have safe and sanitary conditions through expanded utility systems, use of best management practices, and careful monitoring.
- Life-long learning is an integral part of community life. Schools are outstanding, academically and athletically, with nationally competitive crew and sailing teams.
- County farms delight consumers and restaurant owners with local produce, while area merchants and artisans welcome patrons with quality, creative offerings in services, products, and arts and crafts.
- Forestry, fishery and ecotourism opportunities offer residents quality employment and wages while integrating business practices that protect and renew natural resources. Seasonal visitors who appreciate Mathews' traditional heritage and natural environment are attracted to the County.
- Eco-friendly enterprises – aquaculture, maritime museums, sailing schools, kayak farms, boat tours – concentrate economic activities on the water.
- Home-based businesses thrive on expanded internet services and distribute Mathews' products worldwide.
- Business enterprises offer quality services and living-wage employment, have limited environmental impact, and provide revenue contributions to the community.
- Mathews County promotes workforce housing, recreational options, health/wellness services, and a viable environment for its diverse population, all of which have been achieved through open communication, citizen involvement and creative use of multiple-sourced funding.
- Biking and hiking trails weave through forests and meadows, while multi-modal transportation options minimize the need for cars.





### Mathews County Goals for 2030

To achieve the 2030 Vision for Mathews County, the following broad goals will guide the community in managing future services and growth and providing for the public health, safety and welfare:

#### Environment

- Preserve and protect the natural environment and resources of Mathews County, which are fundamental to the community’s quality of life and prosperity.
- Encourage low-impact development that protects water quality and is environmentally sensitive.
- Provide public access to outstanding County waterways and shorelines.
- Provide planning leadership within the region to protect the natural environment and resources that are the life supporting elements of Mathews County and surrounding counties bordering the Chesapeake Bay.
- Lead planning efforts to mitigate the effects of coastal erosion, flooding and potential sea level rise.



#### People

- Encourage a diverse population of residents of varying ages, cultures, and incomes.
- Recognize and support the important contribution of County youth to the quality of life and the economy of Mathews and the region.
- Encourage the development and maintenance of safe, sanitary, and affordable housing of varying types and styles to meet the needs of County residents.
- Encourage meaningful public participation in government through diverse forms of communication and a commitment to citizen involvement in public decisions.





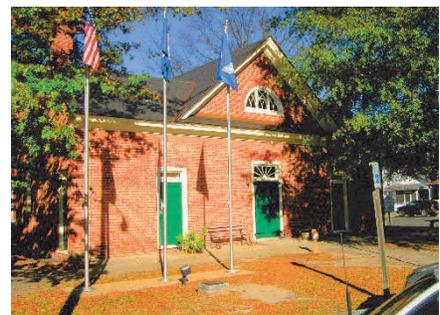
**Economy**

- Encourage the development of eco-friendly enterprises and water-based businesses that complement the environmental features of the County and promotes aquaculture.
- Encourage clustered, village-oriented business centers in designated locations of the County to provide needed services and products for residents and visitors.
- Promote increased availability of and access to state-of-the-art technology, such as broadband, fiber optic, wireless networks and other technologies that support high speed communication.



**Public Services and Facilities**

- Support, encourage, and facilitate public water and sewer facilities to meet the community's needs for safe and sanitary conditions and promote orderly growth and development.
- Encourage and provide quality education facilities, programs and life-long learning opportunities for residents.
- Provide a safe community that effectively utilizes both paid and volunteer public safety options.
- Provide safe, connected streets and alternative transportation opportunities, including sidewalks, trails, bicycle routes and public transit.
- Provide convenient, accessible governmental services.





# Comprehensive Planning Process

## Continuing Planning Efforts

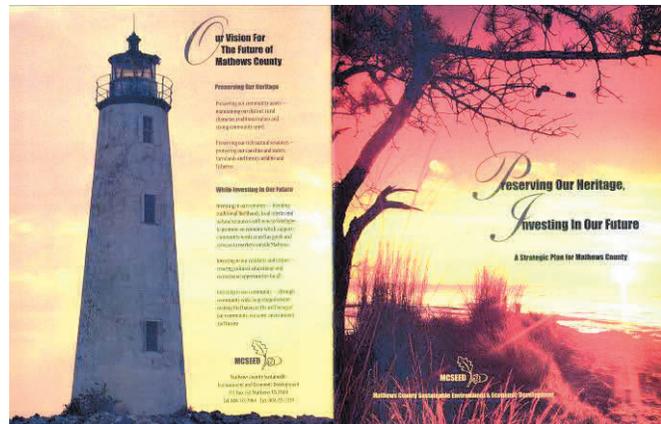
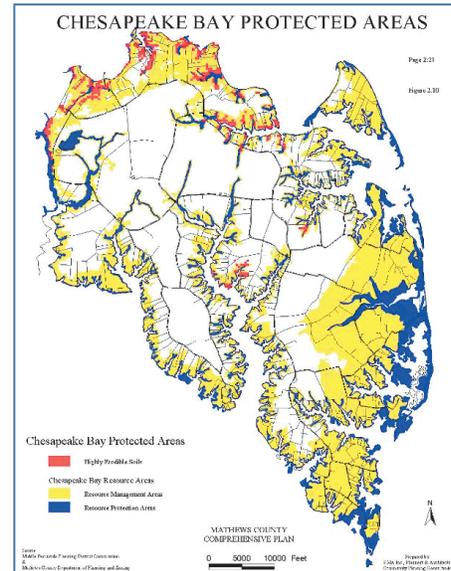
Mathews County adopted its first Comprehensive Plan in 1975; the plan was followed by a zoning ordinance in 1987. Miscellaneous amendments to the Comprehensive Plan were undertaken in the 1980s and the 1990s, including revisions in support of the Virginia Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act of 1988.

Over the past decade, officials and citizens of Mathews County have spent considerable time and effort planning for their future. In 1997, the Mathews County Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, and the Mathews Chamber of Commerce worked extensively with the Nature Conservancy's Center for Compatible Economic Development (CCED) and citizen leaders through volunteer workgroups and community forums to preserve the coastal environment and cultural heritage, while strengthening the local economy. Over a two-year period, the visionary group, Mathews County Sustainable Environment and Economic Development (MCSEED), developed an impressive strategic plan: *Preserving our Heritage, Investing in Our Future: A Strategic Plan for Mathews County* (October 1998).

This plan established a vision for the County that focused on preserving community assets and natural resources while investing in an economy that blended local traditions and resources; invested in residents and visitors; and balanced community well-being, the economy and the environment. The plan identified special strengths and critical threats to Mathews County and set forth five initial strategies with specific steps and partners to achieve the vision. MCSEED then challenged stakeholders, citizens and other community leaders to get involved in implementation. Since 1998, there have been accomplishments, including the following:

- Heritage and eco-tourism are new economic initiatives visible in the Mathews Blueways Program and investment in the Historic Mathews Court House area and downtown.
- Increased marketing initiatives, a new website, and additional business support services have assisted entrepreneurs and encouraged new business development.

In 2000, the Comprehensive Plan provided a more in-depth look at demographic and economic trends, constraints for development, public facility needs, community issues, land use and water





quality and shorelines. Since the adoption of the 2001 plan update, some of the accomplishments include:

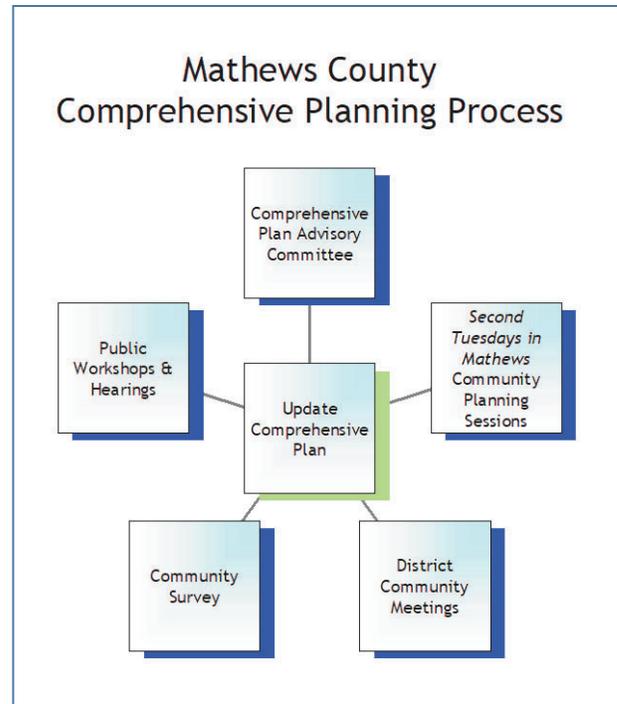
- Adoption of a Statewaters Access Plan for Mathews County in 2003.
- Implementation of a Central Mathews and Courthouse Village Sanitary District Plan. The Hampton Roads Sanitation District has designed and allocated funding for the first phase of a Mathews Transmission Force Main and Pump Stations; construction was completed in 2011.
- Establishment of a Septic System Pump-Out Program (2008) in cooperation with the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission.
- New or upgraded public facilities such as the County Courthouse Complex, the Historic Mathews Court House and Green, the Mathews Memorial Library and the Active Lifestyle Center.
- Additional economic initiatives related to tourism and aquaculture, including a visitor welcome center, improvements to downtown Mathews and the Historic Court House Square, and continued broadband investigations.
- Public recreational improvements at Mathews High School and Park, Williams Wharf Landing, Haven/Festival Beach, and Piankatank River Landing; the historical park at Fort Nonsense, the Court House Area, the acquisition of the East River Boatyard property and the Hall property (Billups Creek) owned by the Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority.
- Compliance with the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act requirements with respect to the Comprehensive Plan (2001), ordinances and protection areas (2006), and program implementation (2008).



### Updating the Comprehensive Plan: New Directions

In reviewing the Comprehensive Plan in 2007, as required by the Commonwealth of Virginia, County officials and planners desired a more strategic and user-friendly plan with greater citizen involvement to guide the future of Mathews.

In an effort to reach out to citizens in an educational and innovative manner, the County partnered with Chesapeake Network for Education of Municipal Officials (NEMO)<sup>2</sup> to host five community planning sessions. This organization consists of diversified professionals, community organizations, and governmental agencies that provide communities in the Chesapeake watershed with educational programs and planning assistance. The goals of the sessions were to: stimulate and engage citizens in community planning, introduce broad topics for consideration, and promote a greater understanding of the value of planning. These evening workshop sessions, billed as “*Second Tuesdays in Mathews*,” were held from October 2007 to February 2008 and featured the following topics:



- Linking land, water and growth;
- Growth in and around Mathews;
- Mathews economy: fostering economic development;
- Mathews valuable resources (shorelines, forests, agriculture, natural heritage, and history); and
- Planning the direction of your community.

The *Second Tuesdays in Mathews* sessions were very successful in engaging citizens in the future of Mathews County; each session included from 60 to 80 people in lively and thoughtful discussions. Summaries of the sessions are included as an appendix to this plan.

Some of the community themes and issues that emerged were:

<sup>2</sup> NEMO Partners for this project included Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Cooperative Extension, National Park Service, Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission, Virginia Department of Forestry, Mathews Historical Society, and Maritime Heritage Foundation. Project Sponsors included Mathews County, MCSEED, and Mathews Memorial Library.



II. Comprehensive Planning Process

- Citizens identified the following elements as important to the future of Mathews County: the landscape, the environment, heritage and culture, recreation, economy, diverse people, youth, quality public services and facilities, and effective governance.
- Citizens identified special issues that need careful consideration: possible sea level rise, flooding, environmental protection, water/sewer challenges, community growth patterns and build-out potential, neighborhood-based planning, and revenue production and long-range financial planning.
- Citizens encouraged planners to review and incorporate applicable past planning efforts, including the MCSEED Plan and Downtown Mathews Plan. Look at successful planning efforts for similar rural communities - both regionally and beyond.
- Citizens recommended diverse, broad representation for input into the Comprehensive Plan, as well as multiple venues for participation and distribution of information.

CHESAPEAKE  
**NEMO**  
Helping Your Community Link Land, Water & Growth

Preparing for Comprehensive Planning  
Mathews County Virginia



Mathews County, located on Virginia's Middle Peninsula, is surrounded by water. The county's rural, scenic beauty and special quality of life have led longtime residents to stay and a number of newer citizens to settle in. All share a concern for maintaining what's unique about Mathews - a perfect topic for the County's comprehensive plan.

**Goals**  
Mathews officials contacted NEMO for assistance in preparing for revising the County's comprehensive plan. Specifically, the county wanted to:

- Stimulate interest and engagement in the forthcoming planning process
- Introduce community stakeholders to broad topics expected to influence Mathews County in the next 5 to 20 years
- Prepare community stakeholders and county officials with a solid understanding of the value and function of planning

**Process**  
Working with County officials, NEMO partners helped design, develop and deliver a five part civic education series and plan a citizens planning academy workshop. The series, called "Talking About the Future - Second Tuesdays in Mathews" explored a specific topic each month from October 2007 to February 2008 in an evening workshop:

- Linking Land, Water and Growth
- Growth in & Around Mathews
- Mathews Economy: Fostering Sustainable Economic Development
- Mathews Valuable Resources (Shorelines; Forests; Agriculture; Natural Heritage; History)
- Planning the Direction of Your Community

Each evening began with an introduction by the County Administrator, followed by a presentation, then about an hour of facilitated discussion.

**Outcome**  
All five "Second Tuesdays" sessions were well attended - sixty to eighty participants each evening, including citizens, planning commission members and members of the County Board of Supervisors. Discussions were lively with participants voicing their concerns and desires for the future of the county.

Here's an example: During the final Tuesday session, participants saw a NEMO presentation on steps and tools communities can use to plan for the future and incorporate key resources into decision-making. Then, the NEMO team facilitated an interactive workshop to help participants describe elements of their vision for Mathews' future. On a long wall the team had pre-posted elements participants had already identified in the



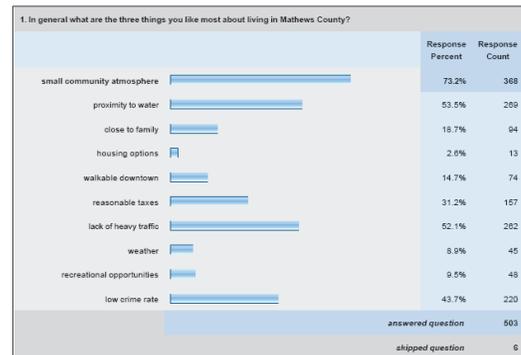
prior four forums. Using large sticky cards and markers, participants assessed issues of elements they want to see in Mathews - in categories ranging from "landscape & environment" to "economy" to "governance." The active evening ended with the group noting ways for continuing their involvement in the next stages of the county's comprehensive planning process.

**Local Project Sponsors:** Mathews County, Mathews County Sustainable Environment and Economic Development, Mathews Memorial Library.

**Participating NEMO Partners:** VA Department of Conservation & Recreation, VA Cooperative Extension, National Park Service, Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission, VA Department of Forestry, Mathews Historical Society, and Maritime Heritage Foundation.

For more information: [www.chesapeake-nemo.net](http://www.chesapeake-nemo.net)

Following the *Tuesdays in Mathews* sessions, the County developed an internet-based Citizen Survey to solicit additional community input using SurveyMonkey.com. The survey and a tabulation of results are included in the appendix to this plan. As of February 2009, approximately 500 respondents had completed the survey. In summary, the following comments were noted:



- *What people like the most about Mathews County:* the small community atmosphere (73%); the proximity of the community to water (53%); lack of heavy traffic (52%); low crime rate (44%); and slow growth (44%).
- *How people would like to see growth in the next ten years:* slow, one percent or less (44%), no growth (26%), medium growth, one to three percent (23%).
- *What types of development is preferred in Mathews County:* affordable housing options for all income levels (39%); new single-family dwellings on lot of 1-2.5 acres (37%), on smaller lots, with required open space (31%), and on lots of 5 acres or more (27%)
- *The availability of rental housing in Mathews County* is fair (53%).
- *Additional commercial businesses are needed in Mathews County* (64%). The most needed businesses are: retail (62%), restaurants (61%), and hotels, motels or bed and breakfast



establishments (49%). Approximately 50% of the persons purchase their goods and services in Mathews. Areas identified for commercial businesses most often were: downtown Mathews, Cobbs Creek, Gwynn's Island, New Point and surrounding counties.

- *Issues most important to County residents* were: protecting water quality and resources (74%); preserving the rural character (63%); availability of wireless/broadband (60%), preserving forest land (53%), access to the water (48%), and ability to pay local taxes (46%).
- *Residents used the following public services frequently*: library (75%), waste transfer station (66%), general government (65%), recreation (60%), and schools (54%).
- *Familiarity with the County Comprehensive Plan*: Approximately 50% of the respondents were somewhat familiar with the Comprehensive Plan.

To engage youth in the planning process, County Planners visited Mathews County High School and met with seniors to share information on the Comprehensive Plan and to obtain their thoughts on the future. In general, the high school seniors requested that education remain a top priority for the County and all citizens; that youth be supported in public decisions and actions; and that youth be included in reviewing the long-range vision and plan for the County.

In addition to the survey, the County Board of Supervisors and the Planning Commission appointed a 17-member Comprehensive Plan Advisory Group representing each of the five County planning areas: Bayside, Central Mathews, Gwynn's Island, Piankatank, and West Mathews. This advisory group assisted County planners and administrators in furthering the Comprehensive Plan and hosting Community Meetings in each of the five districts. Summaries of the initial district meetings held from August to November 2008 are included in the appendix to this plan. Some of the common themes were:

- Failing septic systems and effect on water quality of creeks;
- Public access to County waters and shorelines;
- Flooding and drainage; maintenance of ditches;
- Enhance small business and employment opportunities for waterfront and water-based industries; tourism, ecotourism, and heritage tourism; retail and support services;
- Communication needs - High-speed, broadband internet access; cell tower coverage;
- Code enforcement – wetlands, junk, neglected/abandoned buildings, etc.
- Environmental conservation - wetlands, forests, water, soils, etc.; rising sea levels;
- Availability of public water and sewer; sub-standard housing;
- Need for affordable, workforce housing (e.g., apartments), and age-restricted independent and assisted-living housing;
- Recreation improvements – bike trails, Blueways, swimming pool, more public beaches, entertainment venues;



- Maintain rural, small town character; encourage managed, limited growth that is low-impact;
- Sufficient tax base to balance services, tax rate, public needs.

In drafting the Comprehensive Plan, the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Group and the Mathews County Planning Commission worked to ensure that the plan met State planning requirements, the needs of Mathews County, and reflected the specific needs of the community districts. Special efforts were made to develop a user-friendly plan that appropriately guided future development and investment in the County.

The goal of the 2018 Mathews Comprehensive Plan review is to not only meet state mandates but to also reexamine and realign the County's goals and strategies based on new events and more current data on the state of the County. The 2018 update of the Mathews County Comprehensive Plan, conducted by the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission in conjunction with the Mathews County Planning Commission continues to follow previous efforts of research and update of statistical information for the County, update and or inclusion of required elements as well as a current analysis of the County's conditions and future objectives and strategies for creating a harmonious community. Each section of the Comprehensive Plan was reviewed by Mathews County Planning staff and discussed at the Mathews Planning Commission meetings.

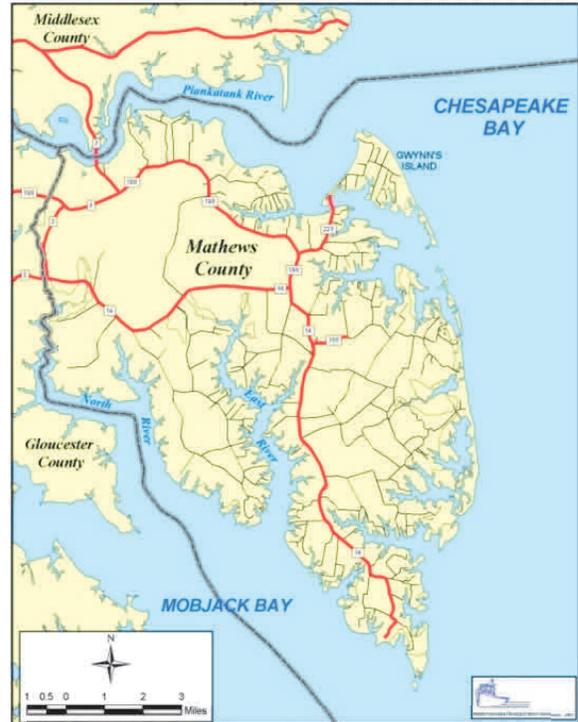


## Mathews County and the Region

### Overview of Mathews County

Located on the eastern tip of the Middle Peninsula of Virginia, Mathews County consists of 86 square miles and is one of the smallest counties in Virginia. Known as the “Pearl of the Chesapeake”, the County has 280 miles of shoreline on the Chesapeake Bay and other smaller bays, as well as shores on the Piankatank, East and North Rivers.

First explored by Captain John Smith in 1608, Mathews was formed from Gloucester County in 1791. The County was named in honor of Major Thomas Mathews, a veteran of the American Revolutionary War and member of the Virginia House of Delegates. Since that time, Mathews County has been a center for navigation and shipbuilding on the Chesapeake Bay. In 1804, President Thomas Jefferson commissioned a lighthouse at the southern-most tip of the County, New Point Comfort Lighthouse, which still stands today as a community and national landmark.



Source: Middle Peninsula Planning District

### Regional Influences

Virginia’s Middle Peninsula includes the Counties of Essex, Gloucester, King and Queen, King William, Middlesex, and Mathews, as well as three incorporated towns: West Point, Tappahannock and Urbanna. Also, Mathews is included in the Hampton Roads Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). A map of the region is shown on the following page.

The Middle Peninsula is located between the Rappahannock and York Rivers, and extends eastward to the Chesapeake Bay. The region is a boater’s paradise and is promoted as “Virginia’s River Country.” Because of the region’s convenient access to multiple waterways, a multitude of historic landmarks, and varied agricultural and natural landscapes, there are numerous opportunities for recreation, eco- and heritage-tourism, and environmentally-friendly enterprises.





**Legend**  
 Mathews County



III. Mathews County and the Region

The Middle Peninsula Region is near two major interstate highways, Interstate 64 and Interstate 95. These two interstates provide connectivity throughout the Commonwealth and beyond, providing good proximity for transporting people, goods and services. I-64 connects the region to Richmond, Williamsburg, Hampton, Newport News, Portsmouth, Norfolk, and Virginia Beach, all major development centers for Virginia’s eastern population. Interstate 95 connects the region to Washington D.C., which is approximately 175 miles to the north.

Per community profile information assembled by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership in 2015, the region’s economy is primarily based in services, government, and trade sectors, with the greatest employment in education and health care. Lumber, paper and wood products, and seafood are the major products of the region.

Community Profile *Virginia's River Country*

## Labor Market

Employment by Sector* (2nd Qtr. 2015)		
Agriculture Forestry Fishing and Hunting	756	2.9%
Mining Quarrying and Oil and Gas Extraction	67	0.3%
Utilities	95	0.4%
Construction	1,462	5.5%
Manufacturing	3,004	11.3%
Wholesale Trade	724	2.7%
Retail Trade	3,853	14.5%
Transportation and Warehousing	366	1.4%
Information	241	0.9%
Finance and Insurance	766	2.9%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	228	0.9%
Professional Scientific and Technical Services	819	3.1%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	358	1.4%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management	766	2.9%
Educational Services	242	0.9%
Health Care and Social Assistance	3,050	11.5%
Arts Entertainment and Recreation	430	1.6%
Accommodation and Food Services	2,171	8.2%
Other Services	1,048	4.0%
Total Government	6,058	22.9%
Federal Government	214	0.8%
State Government	1,081	4.1%
Local Government	4,763	18.0%
Unclassified	N.D.	N.D.
Total	26,504	100.0%

N.D. - Not Disclosed

\*By Business Establishment

Source: Virginia Economic Development Partnership. [www.yesvirginia.com](http://www.yesvirginia.com)



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## Demographics and Economic Trends

### Middle Peninsula Region and Mathews County

The table on the following page provides a summary of basic statistics for Mathews County and surrounding counties in the Middle Peninsula Region. The following sections discuss some of the demographic and economic trends of the region and Mathews County.

#### Population

- Mathews County has the second lowest population in the region, representing approximately ten percent of the total population. Neighboring Gloucester County has the highest population in the region.
- Between 2000 and 2010, the region averaged an 8.5 percent increase in population; however, Mathews County lost population over this period declining from 9,207 to 8,978,
- Population projections by the Weldon Cooper Center indicate that Mathews may decrease in population by approximately nine percent by 2030. King William County is expected to increase by approximately 16%, while Mathews County is projected to slightly decrease. The Weldon Cooper Center projects that other counties will grow slightly or even decline.
- The region totals 1,353 square miles and has an average population density of 80.2 persons per square mile. Mathews County is smaller than the rest of the counties within the region (85.7 square miles) and has a population density of 104.5 persons per square mile; this is higher than the regional average.
- The median age of residents in Mathews County, according to the 2010 Census, was 50.1 years which was higher than most surrounding counties; Middlesex County exhibited a similar median age of 53. In 2010, approximately 20% of the population of Mathews County was under 18 years of age, holding steady from the 2000 census.

#### Education

- According to Virginia Employment Commission, Mathews County has the highest percentage of people in the region (26%) who have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher.



**Regional Summary of Demographic and Economic Statistics (2000-2015)**

	Mathews	Middle Peninsula	Gloucester	Middlesex	King Wm	King & Queen	Essex
<b>Population:</b>							
Population 2010	8,978	90,826	36,858	10,959	15,935	6,945	11,151
Population 2000	9,207	83,684	34,780	9,932	13,146	6,630	9,989
Population % Chg. 2000-10	-2.49	9	6	10	21	5	12
Population 2020*	8,509	91,486	37,198	11,174	16,516	7,405	10,684
Population 2030*	8,138	95,855	38,456	11,857	18,457	7,725	11,222
Population Density: Persons/Sq. Mile 2010	104.5	80.2	169.2	84.1	58.2	22	43.4
Population Density: Persons/Sq. Mile 2000	105.5	67.2	131.2	81.6	57	21.8	42.1
Population, Median Age, 2016	53.1	47.5	44.3	53.8	40.4	47.7	46.2
Population, Age <18, %, 2010	20.2		24.6	18.3	23.6	22.4	25.6
<b>Education: 2012-2016 Estimates for 18 and over</b>							
% Less than High School	8.5	12.36	10.2	11.4	11.7	14.5	17.9
% High School Graduates	91.5	87.63	89.8	88.6	88.3	85.5	82.1
% Bachelor Degree or Higher	26.6	21.18	22.6	23.4	18.6	19.2	16.7
<b>Income:</b>							
Median Household Income 2007	\$54,431	\$50,836	\$56,123	\$45,583	\$62,052	\$43,191	\$43,637
Median Household Income 2012-2016	\$64,049	\$56,782	\$62,878	\$53,093	\$64,297	\$48,852	\$47,527
Income % Change 2007-16	17%	11%	12%	16%	3%	13%	9%
% Families Below Poverty (2010)	9.1	9.8	9.2	9.4	9.5	9.2	11.1
<b>Labor Force &amp; Employment:</b>							
Civilian Labor Force 2014	4,177	46,889	19,392	5,066	8,828	3,653	5,773
Civilian Labor Force 2007	4,537	47,783	20,700	5,103	8,460	3,406	5,577
Employed Labor Force 2014	4,022	45,013	18,655	4,809	8,371	3,442	5,406
Unemployment Rates 12/2015	3.7	4.0	3.8	3.9	3.9	4.4	5.0
<b>Other:</b>							
Taxable Sales 2007, Millions\$	\$ 40.0	\$ 772.5	\$372.0	\$ 83.8	\$ 70.9	\$ 14.7	\$ 191.0
Taxable Sales 2011, Millions\$	\$37	\$706.5	\$337.7	\$78	\$81.5	\$11.4	\$160.9
Taxable Sales 2014, Millions\$	\$39	\$762.3	\$356	\$86.2	\$94	\$11.6	\$175.6
Taxable Sales 2017, Millions\$	\$40	\$849	\$405	\$97	\$104	\$12	\$191
<i>Sources: 2010 US Census Bureau, Virginia Employment Commission, Virginia Dept. of Taxation, Virginia Tourism Commission</i>							



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### Income

- The median household income for Mathews in 2017 was \$64,049. This is an increase from 2007 and higher than most other counties in the region; however, it is below the state average of \$66,149.
- In 2007, approximately 6.7 percent of the families in the Middle Peninsula Region were below the poverty level. Per the U.S Census, Mathews County's percentage of families living in poverty, while still the lowest in the region, more than doubled from 4.3 in 2007 to 9.6% in 2016. City data ([www.city-data.com](http://www.city-data.com)) shows the poverty rate for Mathews County at 9.2% in 2016, down from 10.5% in 2013. This spike could be explained by the economic recession from 2007 to 2009. The subsequent decline in the poverty rate observed in the city-data.com dataset could be explained by the ongoing economic expansion that started in 2009.

### Labor Force and Employment

- In 2010, the labor force of Mathews County represented approximately 10 percent of the regional labor force and exhibited a low unemployment rate. Gloucester County had the largest labor force within the region and the lowest unemployment rate.
- Unemployment figures from the Virginia Employment Commission showed a 3.7 percent unemployment rate in Mathews County (lowest in the region) as of November 2015, compared to 4.0% for the State and 4.8% for the nation.
- Employment in the region by industry (2010) is summarized in a table on the following page. In the Middle Peninsula Region, public administration is the largest employment sector. Educational, health and social services and retail trade were the second and third largest employment sectors for the region, followed by manufacturing. The smallest employment sectors for the region were the information and arts, entertainment and recreation.
- Mathews County industry employment trends are consistent with regional trends. According to the Virginia Employment Commission, in 2015 government, retail and, health and social services sector employed the highest percentage of laborers. Like the region, the information, wholesale and arts, entertainment and recreation employment sectors employ the smallest percentage of laborers in Mathews.
- According to 2015 statistics by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, the region exhibited the largest employment growth in the government sector (23%) followed by retail (14.5%) and then health care and social assistance (11.5%).
- Employment projections for 2016 for the Bay Consortium Workforce Investment Board Area by the VEC show that the industries with the most potential for growth in the region are professional and technical services (45%), health care and social assistance (32%), finance and insurance (26%), and educational services (20%),



III. Mathews County and the Region

2015 Employment Percentages by Industry								
Industry	Essex County	Gloucester County	King & Queen County	King William County	Mathews County	Middlesex County	Middle Peninsula	Virginia
Ag, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, Mining	1.6%	.7%	10%	4.1%	4%	1.4%	3.6%	<1%
Construction	2.1%	5.6%	9.1%	7.2%	5.4%	6.7%	6 %	5%
Manufacturing	11.2%	1.7%	12.3%	19.5%	6.4%	6.5%	9.6%	6.2%
Wholesale Trade	4.3%	2.3%	5.1%	2.3%	.9%	3.1%	3%	2.9%
Retail Trade	21.6%	19.7%	3.7%	17.6%	13.8%	11.9%	14.7%	11%
Transportation and Warehousing, Utilities	.6%	1.5%	6.4%	.7%	1.9%	1.1%	2%	2.8%
Information	1%	.8%	N.D	N.D.	N. D	1.5%	1.1%	1.9%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing	4.6%	3.4%	N.D	3.5%	2.3%	2.6%	3.3%	5%
Professional, Scientific, Administration	2.4%	3.1%	2.2%	3.9%	3%	3.2%	5.4%	10.6%
Educational, Health and Social Services	15.5%	17.2%	8.4%	6.5%	16.8%	8.7%	12.2%	12.7%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, etc.	1.1%	1.4%	N.D	1%	2%	3.3%	1.5%	1.5%
Accommodation and Food Service	11.3%	11.4%	N.D	7.1%	8%	6.2%	8.8%	9%
Other Services (except Public Admin.)	3.9%	4.3%	2.3%	3.1%	6.4%	2.7%	3.8%	3.6%
Public Administration	14%	22.8%	30%	21.1%	25.9%	31.6%	24.2%	18.8%
<i>N. D. Not disclosed.</i>								
<i>Source: Virginia Economic Development Partnership. Yesvirginia.org. 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2015, Virginia Employment Commission, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2015</i>								



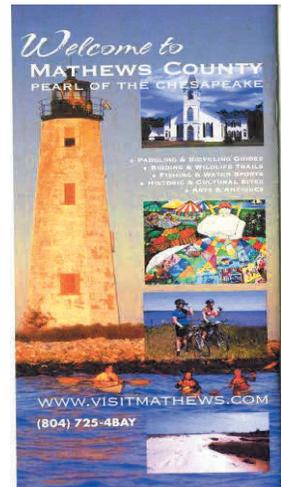
III. Mathews County and the Region

Like the region, the employment trends of Mathews County have made varying changes over the past decade. Virginia employment and economic statistics continue to depict government as the largest employer, followed by retail trade, and then accommodation and food services (see Employment by Industry for Mathews County on the following page).

- Employment projections for 2016 for the Bay Consortium Workforce Investment Board Area by the VEC show that the industries with the most potential for growth in the region are professional and technical services (45%), health care and social assistance (32%), finance and insurance (26%), and educational services (20%).

**Taxable Sales and Tourism**

- In 2016, Mathews County had the second lowest amount of taxable sales within the region coming in second to last only to King & Queen.
- In 2007, Virginia’s visitor expenditures totaled approximately \$18.5 billion, of which the Middle Peninsula Region accounted for less than one percent.
- Mathews County direct travel impact **estimates** have increased since 2011 (see table below). A 7.5% increase in local tax receipts from 2015-2016, although small, is an encouraging trend.



Mathews County Travel-Related Data (2011-2016)

Travel Economic Impacts	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	% Change (2015-16)
Employment	400	412	417	419	426	450	5.6%
Expenditures	\$29,190,950	\$30,782,165	\$31,166,163	\$31,910,466	\$32,313,608	\$34,170,000	5.7%
Local Tax Receipts	\$842, 921	\$878,264	\$902,173	\$907,029	\$948,728	\$1,020,000	7.5%
Payroll	\$6,772,968	\$7,099,984	\$7,360,573	\$7,504,738	\$7,784,666	\$8,400,000	7.9%
State Tax Receipts	\$1,322,517	\$1,386,209	\$1,400,349	\$1,454,473	\$1,525,671	\$1,640,000	7.5%

Source: Virginia Tourism Corporation

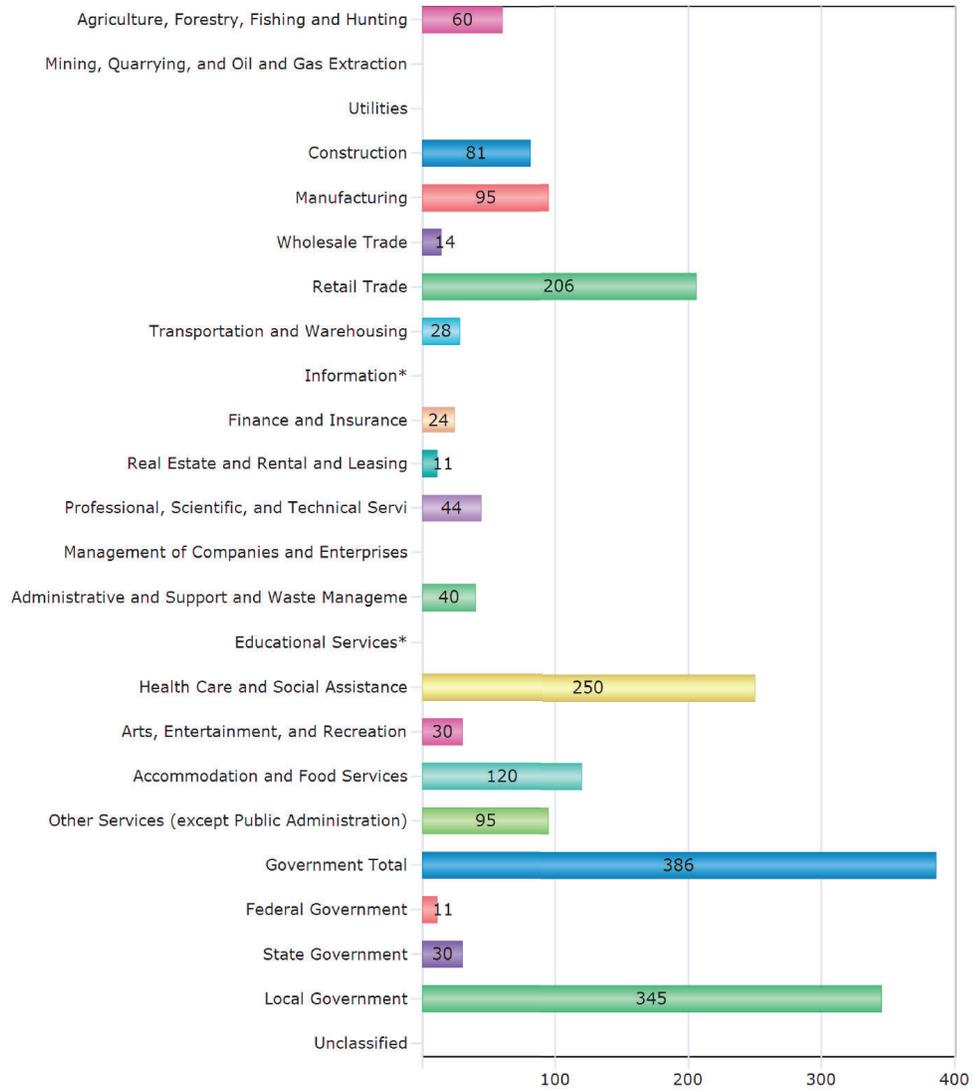


### **Conclusions**

- Despite slight decreases, the population of Mathews County is relatively stable and not expected to grow as rapidly as surrounding counties in the future. The median age of residents (50.1 years) is higher than most of the surrounding counties, which depicts an aging population in the County.
- The average income of residents in Mathews County is higher than most residents in the region. This may be attributable to several factors, including the level of education and the higher median age of residents.
- Employment in Mathews County generally follows the regional trends; government and retail trade are the largest employers (2015).
- Increased tourism efforts could be economically beneficial to Mathews County and the region in the future. Benefits could include increased employment opportunities for County residents and a stronger revenue stream generated by tourist activities.



Employment by Industry



**Total: 1,491**

Note: Asterisk (\*) indicates non-disclosable data.

Source: Virginia Employment Commission, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), 2nd Quarter (April, May, June) 2015.



## Mathews County Comprehensive Plan 2030

### *IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow: Conditions, Opportunities, Policies, and Strategies*

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IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow: Conditions, Opportunities, Policies, and Strategies

## Mathews County Today and Tomorrow: Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies

Mathews County is divided into five community planning areas: Piankatank, Gwynn’s Island, Central Mathews, West Mathews, and Bayside. A map of the districts is found on the following page. This section of the Comprehensive Plan describes general planning elements for the County as a whole -- People and Housing, Economy, Historic and Cultural Resources, Environment, Public Facilities and Services, and Land Use. The next Section, Community Area Plans, provides more specific planning information on a community-level basis.

### People and Housing

#### Demographics

Mathews County has experienced relatively little growth in population over the past two hundred years with data showing an up and down trend over the past 100 years. The County has grown slowly in population since its formation. For example, the population in 1900 was approximately 800 persons less than what it is today.

In 2010, the population of Mathews County was 8,978. In 2017, the population was estimated to decline further to 8,651. The median age of the population was 50 years and the median household income was

\$55,192. Approximately 20% of the population was 19 years old or younger, a decrease from 22% in 2000.

In 2010, the average household size was 2.32 persons. Approximately 69% of the households consisted of families and approximately 21% had children under 18. These statistics are almost identical to those of 2000. Of the reported non-family households, 41% contained persons 65

	1800	1850	1900	1950	2000	2010
Population	5,806	6,714	8,239	7,148	9,207	8,978
Housing Units		711	1,642	2,510	5,333	5,669

Sources: 2010 U.S. Census. Historical Census Browser. University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu>; U.S. Census Bureau.

	2000	2010	2017
Population	9,207	8,978	* 8,651
Female	52%	51.4%	
Male	48%	48.6%	
Race			
White	87%	88%	87.7%
African-American	11%	9.2%	9.2%
Other	2%	2.8%	3.1%
Age			
Age, Median	46	50	
Age, 19 or younger	22%	20.1%	
Age, 20-64	56%	54.3 %	
Age, 65 and over	22%	25.6 %	
Income, Median Household	\$43,222	\$55,192	
Income, Median Family	\$50,653		
Household Size, Avg	2.32	2.32	
Family Size, Avg	2.75	2.7	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2010. Weldon Cooper Center, 2010, \*2017



Middlesex County

Mathews County  
Comprehensive Plan  
2030



Community Planning  
Areas



**Legend**

**Planning District Areas**

- Bayside
- Central
- Gwynn's Island
- Piankatank
- West Mathews



0 5,000 10,000 20,000  
Feet

0 0.5 1 2 3 4  
Miles



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years old and over, up from 36% in 2000. Of interest is that the median household income increased dramatically from \$27,428 in 1990 to \$43,222 in 2000 and continued to increase to \$55,192 in 2010.

Mathews County Educational Attainment	
	2010
<i>Education, 18 yrs. &amp; over</i>	
Less than High School	19%
High School Diploma	34%
Some College	22%
Associate's Degree	5%
Bachelor's Degree	11%
Professional Degree	2%
Masters or Doctorate	6%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Fact finder	

Mathews County Household Characteristics, 2010	
<i>Family households:</i>	68.8
With own children under 18 years	20.7
Married-couple family	56.9
With own children under 18 years	15.6
Female householder, no husband present	8.7
With own children under 18 years	3.9
<i>Non-family households:</i>	31.2
Householder living alone	26.5
Householder 65 years and over	14.5
Households with persons under 18 years	24.2
Households with persons 65 years & over	41.4
<i>Average household size</i>	2.3
<i>Average family size</i>	2.76
<i>Families below poverty level</i>	*9.1
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Fact finder *U.S. Census community survey estimate for 2014	

Mathews County - Median Income 2000-2010				
	2000	2010	2016	% Change 2000-2010
Mathews County -households	\$43,222	\$55,192	\$64,049	22%
Mathews County- family	\$50,653	\$68,333	\$76,833	35%
Virginia-household	\$46,677	\$64,792	\$64,792	28%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Fact finder, 2016 American Community Survey

Provisional population estimates for Mathews County released both by Weldon Cooper and the Virginia Employment Commission show a projected increase in population to 8,509 by 2020. This 3.6% decrease may be explained by a death rate that exceeds the birth rate or out migration that exceeds in migration. Of special note is that Mathews County hosts tourists and seasonal residents that are unaccounted for in population estimates. Because of the attraction of the coastal environment and other community assets, Mathews County is a destination for many persons who continue a long tradition of spending summers here. The Mathews Visitor and Information



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Center reports it serves nearly 1,200 visitors and seasonal residents a month. The following chart provides an estimate of the number of visitors frequenting Mathews County and being tracked by Mathews County Visitors and Information Center annually.

Mathews County Annual Visitor Information

Year	# of Visitors
2012-2015	+/- 12,000
2016	12,258
2017	10,867

Source: Mathews County's Visitors and Information Center

Demographic Trends for Mathews County

In summary, given these population statistics and their effect on the future of Mathews County, the following trends should be considered for the purposes of long-range planning:

- The population of Mathews is aging. Thus, the number of persons 19 and younger is continuing to decline and the number of persons over 65 is increasing. This trend will influence housing and community facilities' needs.
- The projected decrease in County population (based on 2017 Weldon Cooper estimates) although minimal, should be considered, especially with respect to managing land development and supporting public infrastructure and services (transportation, utilities, etc.).
- With the decrease in young families and persons under 19, there is an increased potential to lose young adults to more metropolitan areas, particularly because of greater job opportunities.
- The median household income continues to increase. This may be related to the incomes of those persons migrating into the County.
- The educational attainment of persons in Mathews County is favorable. Over 80% of the population over 25 is a high school graduate, attended college or earned a college degree.
- The number of seasonal summer residents in Mathews is not well documented. These residents can result in a significant fluctuation in the County population during peak summer months. Because these seasonal tourists and residents affect public services, special consideration is needed when planning for future community improvements related to public safety and health (e.g., water supply, waste treatment).

Housing

A summary of the housing characteristics in Mathews County is presented in the table below. According to the 2010 Census, most of the residential structures in the County were single-family homes (85%). Apartments or duplex structures represented less than 3% of the housing stock,



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while mobile homes represented approximately 12.5% of the housing stock. The median value of a single-family, owner-occupied home in 2010 was \$207,900; this equated to a median home mortgage of \$1,164 per month. In 2010, approximately 83% of homeowners paid one-third or less of their income toward housing costs.

**Mathews County  
Housing Stock, 2000-2010**

	2000		2010	
	Number	%	Number	%
<i>Housing Units, Total</i>	5,333	100	5,669	100
Owner-occupied housing units	3,331	63	3,858	68.1
Renter-occupied housing units	601	11	618	16
Vacant housing Units)	1,401 (seasonal use-891)	26	1,811 (seasonal use – 1,198)	31.9
<i>Housing Units, Type</i>				
Single-Family	4,644	87	4,804	85
Duplex	18	<.5	13	<0.1
Multi-Family	127	2	123	2
Mobile Homes	532	10	711	12.5
Boat/ RV	12	<.5	0	0
<i>Housing Units, Age</i>				
Housing built after 1990		19		24
Housing built 1960-1989		39		40
Housing built 1959 & earlier		42		36
<i>Median Home Value</i>	\$111,400		\$207,900	
<i>Median Home Monthly Mortgage</i>	\$918		\$1,164	100

Source: 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, American Factfinder

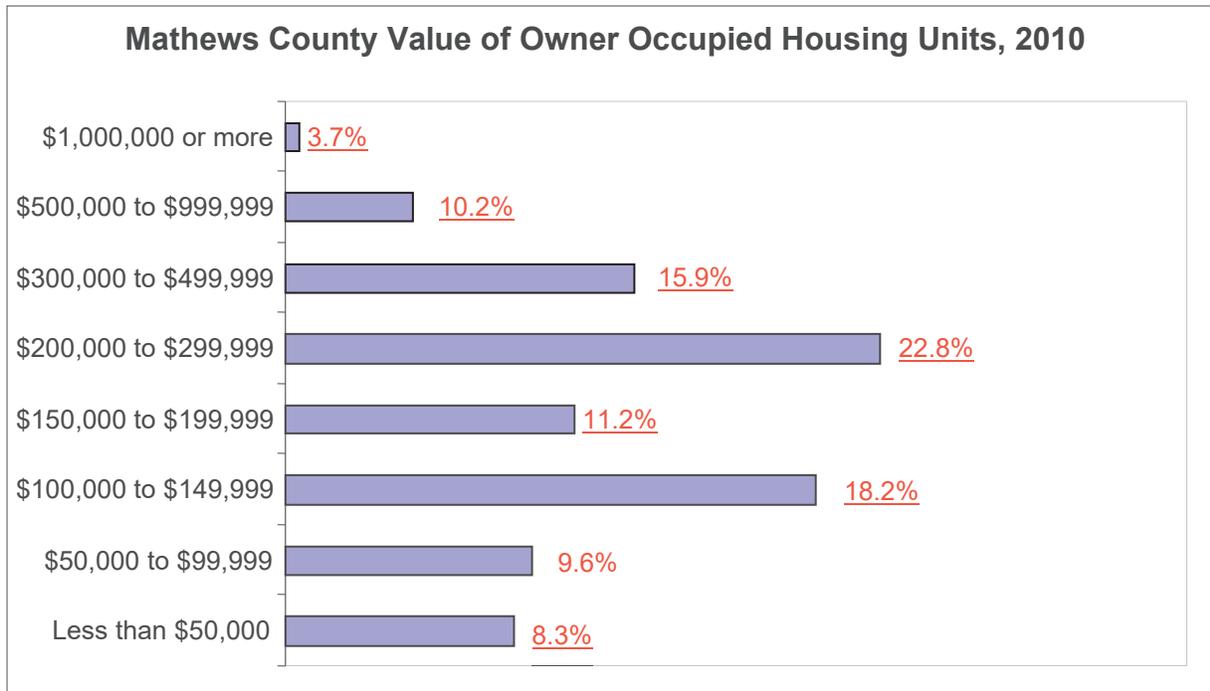
Building permit data for Mathews County from 1990 through 2014 indicate a sharp decline in residential development. Information received from the Mathews County Building Department also confirms that less than 100 building permits were issued for new development from 2012-2015.



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Mathews County Annual Residential Building Permits		
Single-Family Dwelling Building Permits	No.	Value
1990	194	\$ 17,069,150
2000	45	\$ 6,807,880
2005	91	\$ 17,857,444
2010	30	\$ 7,779,710
2014	25	\$ 5,787,792
Note: There were no other residential building types built during these years according to data source.		
Source: U.S Census		

The value of housing units in Mathews County in 2010 is shown in the following table. In general, housing values have increased since 2000. More than 50% of the housing unit values lie in the \$100,000 to \$300,000 range while median housing value in 2010 was \$207,900 and expected to rise to \$263,700 by 2014.



Source: 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, 5 year estimates Survey

While census data shows an increase in housing value, data collected through the Virginia



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Department of Taxation shows a decrease in estimated true tax value of Mathews County property.

Estimated True Value of Locally Taxed Property

Year	Value
2008	\$2,088,615,479
2009	\$1,936,040,362
2010	\$1,898,045,946
2011	\$1,718,289,993
2012	\$1,682,251,203
2013	\$1,670,844,900

Source: Virginia Department of Taxation, 2008-2013 sales ratio study.

Population and residential development activity have decreased in Mathews County since 2007, while, per 2009-2014 US Census estimates, housing values have increased.

**Housing Trends for Mathews County**

Based on review of the information available, some of the housing trends that should be considered in future planning for Mathews County include:

- Housing and real estate continue to be a primary revenue generator for Mathews County. The County’s economy still relies heavily on property taxes as a primary source of revenue.
- There is a deficiency of alternative housing types in the County. There are very few multi-family units. Specialized housing (e.g. for seniors or handicapped persons) is either very limited or non-existent. Most building permit applications are for construction of single-family homes.
- The County housing stock is aging. Approximately 75% of it was constructed prior to 1989 and with almost one third of the total housing units constructed prior to 1959.
- The value of homes in the County is increasing. The estimated median home value in 2014 was \$263,700, up from \$207,900 in 2010.



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**People and Housing - Challenges and Opportunities 2030**

Given the historical population trends and the development constraints within the County (topography, water supply, septic system challenges, wetlands, floodplains, etc.), it is reasonable to continue to expect conservative growth in the future. Like many rural communities, Mathews County appears to be aging and losing youth to larger metropolitan areas. The loss of young adults also means decreases in the available labor workforce, as well as decreased numbers of children and young families. Mathews must find creative ways to attract and retain young persons in the future. A viable community should be representative of all age groups and include native residents, as well as those from other areas.

Also, it is important to understand that each age group has associated demands for varying types of supporting goods and services; thus, there may be shifts required in business types and available services. Social demographics must be considered and business services carefully tailored to sufficiently meet the needs of residents and targeted populations; otherwise, the County loses economically and fails to nurture those that it wishes to retain or attract.

New residents are drawn to the coastal environment, but may not fully understand County culture or settlement patterns and may not be familiar with the true dynamics of living in a coastal community. Both new and existing residents must be educated about environmental factors and respect the ecological systems that have been an asset and part of the County's way of life for centuries. Since waterfront residential property presently contributes substantially to the tax base of the County, the challenge will be to manage future land development in an environmentally sensitive manner while balancing revenues and public investments and services.

Finally, seasonal residents should be a factor in future decisions. At present, there is limited information available on the number of persons moving to Mathews County during warmer months. Additional data should be collected to better define public service and safety needs, and to evaluate options for equitably funding any increased service levels.

With respect to housing, there should be more targeted efforts for encouraging clustered development in suitable areas. This approach can protect sensitive environmental areas and preserve open space for the benefit of residents and the community. Housing types can be diversified by utilizing this approach, as well. There are opportunities for encouraging workforce housing in some of the small hamlet areas of the County. These could include live-work spaces, second-story apartments, or small clusters of duplex, triplex or quadruplex units. Other options are to encourage the adaptive reuse and improvement of existing buildings for mixed-use commercial/ residential purposes and rehabilitation of vacant houses.

Both County Officials and citizens have expressed a need for age-restricted housing. This seems



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to make the most sense near a small village center, like Mathews, where there are supporting services and easy access to activities. Many residents of Mathews want an option to remain in the County in a quality independent and/or assisted living environment as they age.

**Planning/Development Policies, Action Strategies for People and Housing 2030**

The following planning and development policies and action strategies are established to achieve the desired vision for people and housing in Mathews County by 2030:

Planning / Development Policies and Strategies for People and Housing	
PH 1	<b>The neighborhoods of Mathews County are essential building blocks for the health and prosperity of the entire community. They should be carefully planned, designed, and maintained to complement the rural character of the County, protect sensitive environmental features, promote public safety, and provide quality living for all residents.</b>
	1. Encourage grouped development for new housing subdivisions to preserve open space and the environment. Revise the Zoning Ordinance to allow flexibility in setbacks and site design for subdivisions to promote grouping of development. Key emphasis should be on environmental protection and common open space.
	2. Investigate the use of increased density, transfer of development rights purchase of development rights, or other state enabled development tools that can encourage grouped development or help achieve specific housing targets. Revise zoning ordinance, as appropriate.
	3. Identify "priority neighborhoods" that are experiencing decline, repeated flooding, or other threats to their stability. Seek out grant funding to survey housing conditions and undertake hazard mitigation and/or rehabilitation activities.
	4. Review and update zoning and subdivision regulations to reflect the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.
	5. Increase community awareness and education of the environmental issues associated with coastal living. Consider a variety of media communications, public announcements, series of speakers, school curricula, realtor packages, etc.
PH 2	<b>Mathews' residents have long recognized the need for age-restricted independent and assisted living housing. Workforce housing is also</b>



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Planning / Development Policies and Strategies for People and Housing	
	<b>needed.</b>
	1. Assemble more definitive information on housing in the County (types, value, condition, etc.). Include a housing survey of residents to identify specific needs. Consider applying for a housing rehabilitation planning grant from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development.
	2. Promote a diversity of housing types and price ranges within new residential developments to provide greater housing opportunities to all residents. Ensure quality building designs and site development through careful review of proposals.
	3. Identify infrastructure requirements that would encourage for-profit and non-profit housing groups to develop independent living, assisted living and workforce housing in the County. Promote well-designed low-to medium-density housing options in the Mathews Court House area.
	4. Work with qualified private and public housing providers to address the County's housing needs.
	5. Encourage mixed-use housing and business development in the small commercial centers of the County by revising the zoning code to provide for upper-story housing above ground-floor commercial uses, live-work spaces, and other residential/commercial mixed uses.
<b>PH 3</b>	<b>Maintenance of the aging housing stock of the County is fundamental to the continued viability of its communities and neighborhoods. There must be careful monitoring of the housing stock through enforcement of the Uniform Statewide Building Code and assessment of environmental conditions to ensure public health, safety, and welfare.</b>
	1. Improve code compliance by conducting a field survey of properties in the county to identify structures that are subject to "spot blight" abatement measures. Work cooperatively with the Building Official and various County staff (planning, police, etc.) to develop a strategy to enhance building maintenance and achieve compliance.



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Planning / Development Policies and Strategies for People and Housing	
PH 4	<p><b>Young persons and families are important to the future of Mathews County, particularly in helping to achieve a healthy balance in County population, continuing the community’s heritage, and enriching the overall quality of life.</b></p>
	<p>1. Work with the high school, area colleges, and other youth organizations to identify opportunities to enhance the quality of life for young persons in Mathews County. Consider implementing special programs, initiatives, businesses, or events that may boost involvement of youth in the community.</p>
	<p>2. Work with area businesses to identify employment and training opportunities for youth with various levels of education and skills. Promote mentoring programs, on-the-job training, specialized programs in the schools, or other means of encouraging young people to continue to live and work in the County. Create focused marketing plan to target employers and potential employees.</p>
	<p>3. Encourage youth exposure to local government decision-making, particularly with respect to planning for the County and governmental activities. Consider adopting a youth government day that provides hands-on experience for high school seniors regarding local government operations and activities of public bodies.</p>
	<p>4. Increase workforce housing options for young adults and families. Encourage programs that assist in acquiring and improving existing residential structures. Encourage live-work space and second-story rental units above commercial spaces in the Mathews Court House area.</p>
PH 5	<p><b>The seasonal population is important to the overall economy, health, and welfare of the County. Improved public facilities and services should serve permanent residents and seasonal visitors; such improvements should be financially structured to balance costs and benefits to taxpayers.</b></p>



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Planning / Development Policies and Strategies for People and Housing	
	1. Develop a more accurate accounting of the number of seasonal residents and tourists visiting Mathews County, including their economic impact on the County. Use updated figures when considering public facility and service needs, especially as it may relate to responding to public health and safety.
	2. Consider funding options for addressing any increased public facility or service needs arising from seasonal residents. Ensure equitable treatment for seasonal residents regarding benefits and costs as County taxpayers.

**People and Housing: Special Action Projects**

The neighborhoods and housing types of Mathews County are important to the future quality of life for residents and the overall welfare of the community. The following are suggestions for projects that could move the County toward the goals for People and Housing.

**Age-Restricted Housing Development**

Officials and residents of Mathews County recognize the need to provide expanded housing opportunities for senior citizens. This could include a single independent housing development or various development options that provide a continuum of care from independent to assisted living to long-term care. One form of desired senior housing would enable residents to live independently and meet their changing lifestyles, while remaining close to supporting services. Opportunities for such a development exist in the Central Mathews District, near Mathews Court House. The development should complement the surrounding residential and business development, be developed using sound environmental design principles, and be of a suitable scale to fit the rural character of Mathews.



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*An age-restricted development could be developed like the example shown here focusing on a grouping of units surrounding a common green. An interior courtyard would provide opportunities for activities or passive recreation. Typical community amenities would include interior sidewalks, landscaping, and designated guest parking.*





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**Economy**

The regional economy and the contributions and comparison of Mathews County to surrounding counties are discussed in the previous chapter, *Mathews County and the Region*. The following section provides additional insight into some economic factors of the County and how those factors may influence the County in the future.

**Labor Force and Employment**

In 2008, census economic statistics for the region indicated that health and social services, manufacturing and retail trade were the industries employing most persons. The most recent data for 2014 indicates that employment trends of Mathews County have changed; the largest employer is government, followed by retail trade and then accommodation and food services. Given the development patterns in the County with the County seat and a government center in Central Mathews and a focus on tourism, it is not surprising that these sectors are the most prominent.

In 2000, approximately 56% of Mathews' population over the age of 16 was in the labor force, which was less than that of the United States (64%). In 2008, the labor force had declined to approximately 48% of the County population however, rebounding to almost 54% in 2014. The reduction in the available labor force is likely related to the aging of the population and the number of retired persons residing in the County.

Mathews County Labor Force and Employment Characteristics		
	2008	2013-2014
Persons in Labor Force (16 and over)	48%	53.7%
Average Weekly Wage	\$483	\$526
Per Capita Income	\$43,431	\$56,000
Work Commuting Patterns		
Lived & work in County		6%
Work outside County		71%
Live out, commute in		21%
Average commute time (mins)		31%
Source: U.S. Census, VA Workforce Connection, Virginia Employment Commission		

In 2000, approximately 35% of Mathews' residents lived and worked in the County. In 2014, most workers (71%) commuted to an employer outside of Mathews County (mostly to Gloucester County, Newport News, and York County), averaging a 31-minute commute time. Approximately 21% of those employed in Mathews County commuted from outside the County (these were mostly residents of Gloucester and Middlesex Counties).

According to the Virginia Employment Commission, the average weekly wage in Mathews County as of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2015 was \$526.; this equates to \$13.15 per hour or \$27,352 per year.



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According to the Virginia Employment Commission, the top fifty employers for Mathews County as of the second quarter of 2015 are listed in the following table. Most of the employers in the County are small businesses, employing less than twenty employees. The largest manufacturing employers were those in the textile trades and seafood.

50 Largest Employers

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Mathews County School Board         | 26. Shore Stop Store                |
| 2. Brambles Inc                        | 27. VDOT                            |
| 3. Riverside Regional Medical Center   | 28. Moughons, Inc.                  |
| 4. Mathews County Board of Supervisors | 29. Postal Service                  |
| 5. Food Lion                           | 30. Boys & Girls Clubs of the       |
| 6. Star Fields LLC                     | 31. Chesapeake Bank                 |
| 7. Sea Farms                           | 32. R & W Marine Construction       |
| 8. Zimmerman Marine                    | 33. The Medicine Shoppe             |
| 9. Hardee's                            | 34. 7-Eleven                        |
| 10. Best Value Supermarket             | 35. Dolgencorp LLC                  |
| 11. Mobjack Nurseries                  | 36. East River Construction Inc     |
| 12. Richardson's Cafe                  | 37. M & M Building Supply           |
| 13. Tatterson Greenhouses              | 38. Morse Enterprises, Inc.         |
| 14. Peninsula Metropolitan YMCA        | 39. Mrs Georgiana R Simmons         |
| 15. Southwind Cafe                     | 40. P. Buckley Moss Galleries Ltd.  |
| 16. Mathews Volunteer Rescue           | 41. Subway                          |
| 17. Island Seafood Company             | 42. The Island Stop                 |
| 18. Ocean Products Research            | 43. Ambrose Lawncare LLC            |
| 19. Ambrose Disposal Service Inc       | 44. Cobbs Creek Body Works Division |
| 20. Msc Development Inc                | 45. Doziers Auto Parts Inc          |
| 21. Chimney Corner Lawnmower           | 46. Foster Faulkner Funeral Home    |
| 22. Covansys                           | 47. Linda's Diner                   |
| 23. Lynne's Family Restaurant          | 48. Seabreeze Restaurant            |
| 24. Mathews Co Dept of Social Service  | 49. Bank of America                 |
| 25. Mathew's Yacht Club                | 50. Bay Construction & Gutter Inc   |

Source: Virginia Employment Commission, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), 2nd Quarter (April, May, June) 2015.



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**Agriculture and Forests**

In general, Mathews County can be described as a rural county with large tracts of forests, open fields and expansive shorelines. These economic sectors are summarized in the following tables and paragraphs. Although these segments of the economy have declined over the years, there may be future potential to improve management practices and expand the economic development potential for these natural amenities.

In 2007, agricultural lands contributed approximately \$3 million in production value to the local economy. The number of farms has slightly increased over the past five years, but the production value declined by approximately \$2 million since 2002.

<b>Mathews County Agriculture</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2012</b>
Farms	47	50	55
Land in Farms (acres)		4,412	4,646
Avg. Size Farm (acres)		88	84
Market Value Production	\$4.3M	\$3.0M	\$2.4 M
Crop Production	\$4.0M	2.6M	\$2.2 M
Livestock Production	\$0.3 M	\$0.4 M	\$0.17 M
<i>Source: USDA, 2012 Census of Agriculture County Data</i>			
<b>Mathews County Forests</b>			
Forests (Privately owned, 2005)	62% of county		
Production Value (Avg. 1986-2001)	\$416,325		
Production Value (2007)	\$249,000		
<i>Source: VA Dept. of Forestry</i>			

In 2005, forests accounted for approximately two-thirds of County land. Figures for 2007 timber were approximately \$250,000.

**Maritime Industry**

A part of Mathews County economy is its rich and traditional maritime industry. In 2012 maritime related businesses provided 1.4 percent of the total jobs in Mathews County. This is an 83% decrease since 2005. In 2012, maritime jobs in Mathews County accounted for 21 employees and \$456,000 in wages and \$813,000 in goods and services.

According to National Oceanic Atmospheric Association 2012 Coastal snapshot, marine construction is the predominant sector in Mathews County's maritime industry.



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Maritime Jobs Snapshot

COASTAL COUNTY SNAPSHOTS  
www.coast.noaa.gov/snapshots/

# Mathews County, Virginia

**Maritime Jobs = A Healthy Economy**

In 2012, maritime-related businesses provided 1.4% of the total jobs in Mathews County. This represents a 83% decrease in maritime jobs since 2005. Nationwide, maritime jobs represent double the number of jobs supported by agriculture.

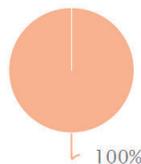
Mathews County maritime jobs account for



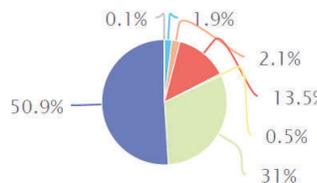
**Maritime Jobs by Sector**

Comparing Mathews County's maritime sectors to the state and nation shows how local concerns may or may not coincide with state and national priorities.

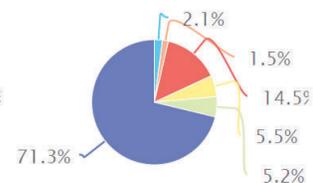
Mathews County



Virginia



Nation



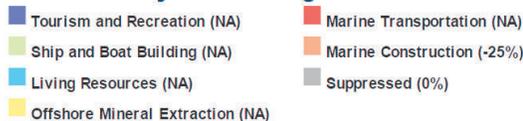
**Mathews County Percentages**



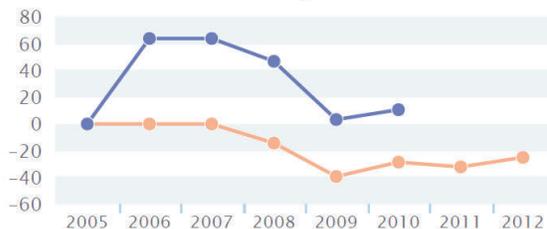
**Job Trends**

When making coastal management decisions, it is important to understand how the six sectors have changed over time.

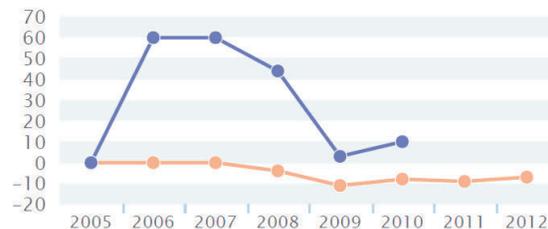
**Mathews County Percent Changes**



Percent Change in Jobs



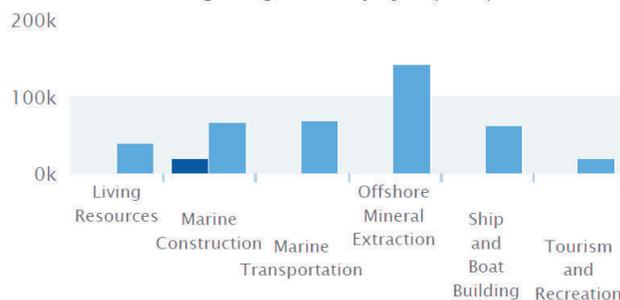
Number of Jobs Gained or Lost



**County and National Wages**

Higher local wages can be attractive to employees but a deterrent to new or expanding businesses. Managers should consider cost of living rates when making this comparison.

**Average Wage Per Employee (2012)**



**Impact of Part-time Workers**

Average tourism wages can be smaller due to the high percentage of part-time workers, but total tourism wages are often among the highest because of the large number of people employed.

■ County ■ National



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#### **Aquaculture and Fisheries**

The aquatic resources of Mathews are of substantial environmental and economic value to the County and the Commonwealth of Virginia. Per a 2005 report by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS)<sup>3</sup> the commercial and recreational fisheries of Virginia provide both monetary and non-monetary economic and recreational contributions. In 2005, sport fishing and commercial harvesting activities generated a total of \$1.23 billion in output or sales, \$717.4 million in value-added contributions or income, and 13,015 full and part-time jobs for Virginia. Of note is that approximately two-thirds of these values were attributable to the recreational sector and one-third to the commercial seafood sector. In addition, it is important to recognize that the values attributed to commercial seafood sector declined approximately 30% between 1994 and 2004 because of decreased species diversity, infrastructure damages from Hurricane Isabel in 2003, increased fuel costs, and imported products, among others. The largest sales for the seafood industry were from sea scallops, blue crabs, and menhaden and approximately 50% of the economic impacts were generated by seafood processing.

For Mathews County, the 2005 study indicated that the commercial seafood industry represented approximately \$2.5 million in landings; in contrast, recreational fishing generated approximately \$10.4 million (\$3.9 million in income and \$6.5 million in sales) and 138 full or part-time jobs.

Updated economic reports in 2007 and 2008 on Virginia's shellfish aquaculture<sup>4</sup> indicate continued growth of the shellfish aquaculture industry. The studies documented increases in the cultured Virginia hard clams (*Mercenaria mercenaria*) and the culturing of disease resistant native Eastern oysters (*Crassostrea virginica*). Specifically, from the 2008 Outlook Report, predictions indicate that within the Middle Peninsula there will be a 46% increase in the number of cultured market oysters sold, a 10% decline in oyster seed planted, and a 23% increase in the number of eyed larvae planted by 2009. The 2008 findings also showed an increased growth in oyster aquaculture almost twice that of 2007 with both clam and oyster sales generating approximately \$26.9 million. In fact, Virginia is number one in farmed clam production. The continued health and expansion of shellfish aquaculture will be dependent on good water quality and strong environmental stewardship to maintain it.

Aquaculture generally refers to the raising of fish and shellfish. Over the years, aquaculture practices have become more complex, ranging from freshwater to marine and specializing in various plants and animals. The chart on the following page summarizes the various forms of

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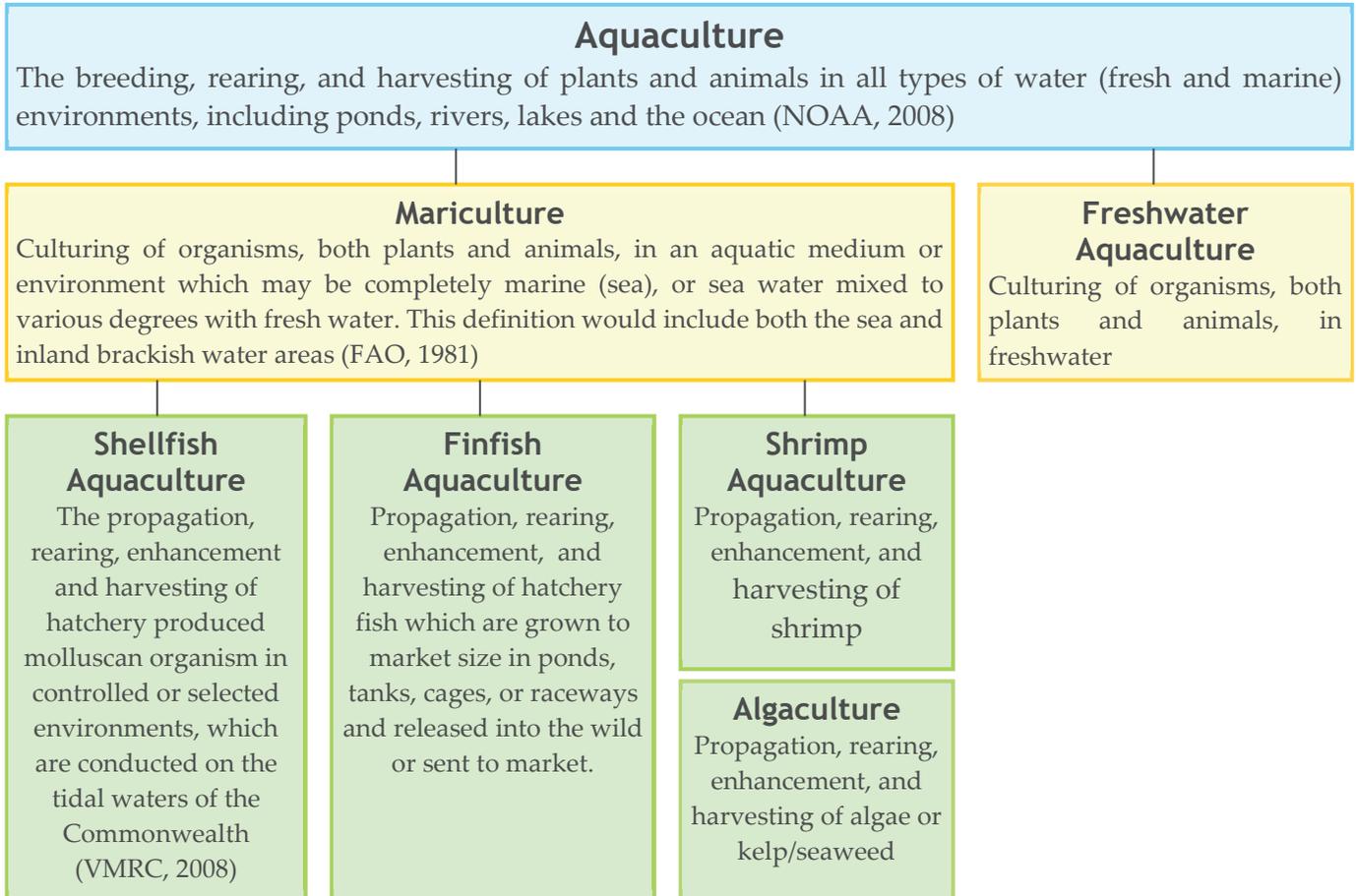
<sup>3</sup> Virginia Institute of Marine Science - Kirkley, Murray and Duberg. December 2005. *Economic Contributions of Virginia's Commercial Seafood and Recreational Fishing Industries: A User's Manual for Assessing Economic Impacts*.

<sup>4</sup> Virginia Institute of Marine Science - Murray and Oesterling. June 2007, June 2009. *Virginia Shellfish Aquaculture Situation and Outlook Report, Results of Virginia Shellfish Aquaculture Crop Reporting Survey 2005-2007 and 2007-2008*.



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aquaculture as it may apply to Mathews County.



Aquaculture Summary Chart Prepared by Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission, 2009.



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**Economic Trends for Mathews County**

Economic trends of Mathews County have varied from that of the surrounding counties. Some of the economic trends that should be considered in planning for the future of Mathews County are:

- The greatest number of persons was employed in government, followed by retail trade, and accommodation and food services.
- The available labor force in Mathews County is decreasing while the number of retired residents in the County continues to increase.
- Most businesses in the County are small businesses, employing twenty people or less.
- Businesses employing more than twenty persons were manufacturing establishments affiliated with textiles and seafood.
- Home-based businesses have increased over the past decade. From 2003 to 2008, there were 429 zoning permits issued for home-based businesses in the County. According to Mathews County Planning Department, the number of permits issued from 2011 to 2015 decreased significantly to an average of 30 per year totaling 150 over the five-year span.
- Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting employed about 4% of the labor force, down 1 percent in 2015. While these sectors have declined over the years, there may be opportunities for enhancing their economic contributions in the future, particularly with respect to recreational fishing and shellfish aquaculture.
- As Mathews County's tax base continues to diminish, renewed focus should be placed on innovative ways to promote tourism. Increased opportunity and support for arts, entertainment and recreation should be a part of a strategic approach. Currently, arts, entertainment and recreation employ approximately 2% of the labor force, also experiencing a 1 % decrease from the previous five years.
- Visitor's expenditures and Compared with the region, Mathews County had lower visitor expenditures than its immediate neighbors, Gloucester and Middlesex Counties.



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**Economic Challenges and Opportunities 2030**

To preserve the quality of life in the County and achieve its vision for an economy that is focused on heritage and eco-tourism and maritime trade, there must be a carefully constructed strategy for enhancing these industry sectors. Integrating protection and management of the natural resources that provide the baseline for these industries must be a key element of the strategy. Another important factor for success will be having supporting industries, such as retail trade, accommodations, and entertainment.

Tourism statistics for the region and those of the state indicate that there are opportunities for Mathews County to increase its market share in eco-tourism as well as capitalize from various revenue sources that are not currently being explored. The opportunity for increased food service businesses and accommodations can also potentially increase the County's revenue.

The shorelines of the County provide opportunities for increased aquaculture and aquatic-based businesses; however, these endeavors will require careful land use management to protect both the environment and businesses. Creativity, exemplary leadership, and multiple public-private partnerships will be needed to understand the complex, ecological dynamics and to educate officials, businesses, and the public.

Mathews County is constrained for development because of its topography and its proximity to surface water. This is further complicated by a lack of utility infrastructure for water and sewer. Consequently, the locations where development can occur with few constraints must be carefully planned to ensure that they are developed using best development practices and in the wisest manner with respect to land use and density. This will require careful choices to achieve a successful and balanced economy that can retain the quality of life desired in Mathews County.

*2030 Vision for Mathews*

*"County farms delight consumers and restaurant owners with local products, while area merchants and artisans welcome patrons with quality, creative offerings in services, products, and arts and crafts.*

*Forestry, fishery and ecotourism opportunities offer residents quality employment and wages while integrating business practices that protect and renew natural resources.*

*Seasonal visitors who appreciate Mathews' traditional heritage and natural environment are attracted to the County.*

*Eco-friendly enterprises – aquaculture, maritime museums, marinas, sailing schools, sea farms, kayak farms, boat tours – concentrate economic activities on the water.*

*Home-based businesses thrive on expanded Internet services and distribute Mathews' products worldwide.*

*Business enterprises offer quality services in appropriate locations, living-wage employment, limited environmental impact, and quality revenue contributions to the community."*



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**Planning/Development Policies, Action Strategies for Economy 2030**

The following planning and development policies and action strategies are established to achieve the desired vision for the future economy of Mathews County:

Planning / Development Policies and Strategies for Economy	
<b>E 1</b>	<b>The economy of Mathews County is linked to and dependent on the quality of the environment. Public decisions on land development and economic investment should be based on careful study of environmental impact, both short and long-term.</b>
	1. Develop an environmental information package and assessment check-list for developers that can be used by applicants and by County representatives when considering development and rezoning applications. Include agency resources and contact information. Update regularly.
	2. Continue to monitor and report environmental quality on at least an annual basis. Work with the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission and other environmental organizations to actively address environmental challenges that may affect the economy and quality of life.
	3. Identify and evaluate sensitive environmental areas and specific waterfront and inland land uses that may adversely affect water quality, environmental assets and long-term water-based economy. Use best management practices to resolve land use conflicts.
	4. Revise land development regulations to better manage land uses in waterfront areas and protect environmental quality. Provide public education and opportunities for public comment and input to ensure workable solutions.
<b>E 2</b>	<b>Mathews County has a proud, traditional heritage in water-based businesses. Increased efforts should be undertaken to enhance this sector of the local and regional economy.</b>
	1. Clarify, define and pursue County authority to regulate and manage land uses beyond the physical land area and shorelines, extending to include territorial boundaries over the water.
	2. Consider state and local financial incentives for aquaculture businesses that could assist their development (e.g. special loans, tax incentives, grants, etc.)
	3. Strengthen regulations to encourage and protect aquaculture in appropriate



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Planning / Development Policies and Strategies for Economy	
	areas of the County.
	4. Lobby general assembly for special aquaculture land use taxation category specific to aquaculture and water-based businesses, like agriculture land use taxation, to encourage continued use and production of important properties and operations. Consider an accompanying local use value ordinance.
	5. Educate the public regarding the importance of aquaculture and working waterfronts to the community, region and the state. Develop a brochure, webpage article, or other form of communication to promote increased understanding of water-based business operations and requirements, as well as the need for excellent water quality. Work with businesses and governmental agencies to coordinate efforts and improve communication of important coastal living issues and future goals and outcomes.
	6. Affirm the commitment of the County to protect the working waterfront as a priority for economic development and preserving coastal character. Improve communication regarding pending development matters, water quality monitoring/reporting, water access, etc. Consider appropriate “good neighbor practices” that enable shared information and communication regarding development activities.
	7. Consider adopting a formal resolution/policy that promotes and protects working waterfronts in Mathews County.
<b>E 3</b>	<b>Tourism is an important economic sector for Mathews County that should be encouraged and supported as an economic development strategy.</b>
	1. Develop a tourism strategy, updated annually, in cooperation with the Mathews Visitor and Information Center (MCVIC), and supporting businesses and organizations. Collaborate with MCVIC to develop educational materials that promote environmental stewardship. Support marketing and other outreach efforts by MCVIC, Mathews Main Street, Discover Mathews Business Group and others to attract tourists to the County. Continue to promote the “Be Here” branding/marketing campaign endorsed by the Board of Supervisors through various media.
	2. Encourage development of conference/lodging/event facilities in selected locations with water access. Ensure environmental compatibility with the



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Planning / Development Policies and Strategies for Economy	
	area.
	3. Encourage further development of bed and breakfast establishments and short-term vacation rental units in the County. Revise the zoning code to include appropriate standards for site development and management, parking, access and accessory uses.
	4. Encourage the development of additional outdoor recreation businesses such as canoe/kayak rental, bicycle rentals and guided tour services that utilize the Blueways Trail. Promote the use of Put-in Creek Park kayak/canoe launch located in the Historic Courthouse Area.
E 4	<b>Many of the Mathews County Planning Areas have small business centers that are valued by residents of the County for support services. These “community commerce centers” should complement the economy of the larger County and be carefully governed to ensure convenient, essential services, while enhancing community character and the environment.</b>
	1. Encourage carefully designed business and mixed-use development in existing community commerce centers (village, hamlet and crossroad areas) where public utilities are available. Businesses and services should focus on the needs of the aging population, tourist base and the young working population.
	2. Promote the use of local businesses for goods and services. Maintain a business guide of local merchants and products and distribute it to residents on a regular basis (e.g., County bulletins, utility notices, etc.).
	3. Promote and encourage specialty arts and crafts businesses in commercial centers. Support a Mathews for the Arts Committee to coordinate and market artisan efforts and events. Work with Bay School Cultural Arts Center, Mathews Art Group, area schools, and other educational institutions to promote the arts and nurture artisan skills.
	4. Real estate is a major tax revenue generator for the County. With the increase in the aging population and a need to diversify the demographic makeup, more diverse housing choices and recreational amenities should be considered to help expand the existing tax base.
	5. Encourage home-based business development that enriches the overall



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	economy of the County while protecting the residential integrity of surrounding properties. Update the zoning ordinance to meet requirements for enabling modern day small businesses, while ensuring protection of residential character.
	6. Encourage and pursue expansion of high-speed internet service throughout the County. Ensure careful design and placement of facilities to protect visual quality and the environment. Focus initial efforts in governmental and community commerce centers.
	7. Involve young adults in working with local businesses (internships, on-the-job training, after-school work, etc.) to encourage retention after graduation. Partner with area schools and colleges for special training programs to enhance local business services. Host special events in the community commerce centers oriented toward youth.
E 5	<b>Many existing commercial buildings in Mathews County have historic significance or architectural features that are in scale with or complement the built environment. Adaptive reuse of existing commercial buildings should be considered prior to considering demolition and redevelopment.</b>
	1. Encourage adaptive reuse of vacant/underutilized commercial structures throughout the County. Consider use of historic tax credits, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, or other financial incentives to eliminate blighting conditions and improve commercial properties.
	2. Solicit the involvement of the Mathews County Economic Development Authority and others in funding the purchase of existing buildings in the Courthouse Business District Area that could be adapted for use as a “business incubator” or other form of business development entity.
E 6	<b>The economy of Mathews County should be diversified to the extent possible to provide quality job opportunities for residents, while also providing sufficient goods and services.</b>
	1. Encourage and cultivate diverse forms of small business or clean industry. Target sectors suitable for the area such as arts & crafts, organic produce, flex office/business, plant nurseries and seafood.



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Planning / Development Policies and Strategies for Economy

- 2. Establish a permanent venue for music performances and festivals by local artists as a means of stimulating the local economy.

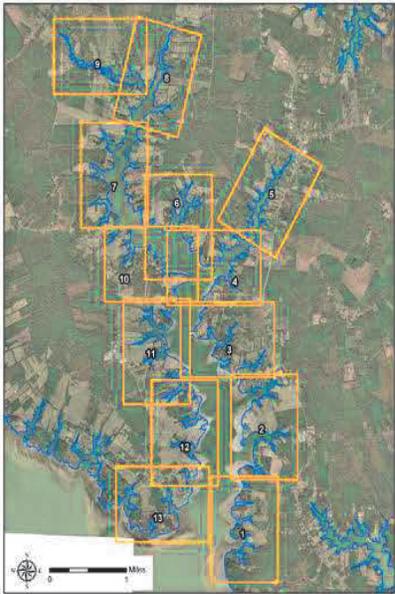
**Economy: Special Action Projects**

The economy of Mathews County is the foundation for the overall viability of the community. The following paragraphs discuss initial projects that can assist the County in progressing toward the established goals and strategies for the Economy.

**Tourism - Mathews County Maritime Heritage Trail**

Several agencies have developed mapping and attraction information on-line for the East River section of Mathews County. This project initiative is known as the Mathews County Maritime Heritage Trail. Mapping for additional areas of the County is planned. This ties in well with the expanded efforts of the National Park Service to promote the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail in the region.

Web GIS mapping of the East River by VIMS showing the Mathews County Maritime Heritage Trail Facilities and Attractions



**Aquaculture and Waterfront Infrastructure**



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In 2008, the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission received funding through the Virginia Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Program to study aquaculture and waterfront infrastructure. In 2009, the PDC focused on Mathews County and established an Aquaculture/Working Waterfront Steering Committee for the purposes of promoting aquaculture and preserving and strengthening the working waterfront infrastructure of the County. Consisting of commercial and hobby oyster and clam farmers, county planners, and the Maritime Foundation within Mathews County, the committee identified current challenges within the aquaculture industry, they shared business models, and discussed how the industry could be supported or enhanced by the county through public policy. As this Steering Committee continues its work and collaboration with businesses, citizens and governmental officials, there will be many worthy recommendations that can be pursued to enhance shellfish aquaculture, water quality and economic development opportunities in Mathews County.

Code of Virginia 15.2-2211 Cooperation of local planning commissions and other agencies.

“The planning commission of any locality may cooperate with local planning commissions or legislative and administrative bodies and officials of other localities so as to coordinate planning and development among the localities. Planning commissions may appoint committees and may adopt rules as needed to effect such cooperation. Planning commissions may also cooperate with state and federal officials, departments and agencies. Planning commissions may request from such departments and agencies, and such departments and agencies of the Commonwealth shall furnish, such reasonable information which may affect the planning and development of the locality.”

Aquaculture Overlay District



The Project

1. Explore how local government can support an active commercial seafood industry
2. Assess the economic webbing of the aquaculture and related commercial seafood industry and working waterfront infrastructure in Mathews
3. Suggest new or modified public policy to strengthen aquaculture-working waterfront infrastructure

Supported by:



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An Aquaculture Overlay District should be considered for the coastal areas of the County and applicable waters and submerged lands which are determined to be of significant value for aquaculture. Application of this district for land management purposes should be considered after careful study and collaboration with appropriate regional and state agencies. Public and business involvement in developing and establishing this district will be extremely important to share information, promote understanding, and ensure a successful tool for promoting and protecting aquaculture.

While federal and state agencies have jurisdiction over water quality and subaqueous lands, Virginia planning legislation provides for local government to have jurisdiction over land and waters within its territorial boundaries for the purposes of improving the public health, safety, convenience and welfare of its citizens to plan for future development. Also, the legislation provides for cooperation with other legislative and administrative bodies to coordinate planning and development; furthermore, it provides that the planning commission may appoint committees and adopt rules as needed to affect cooperation.



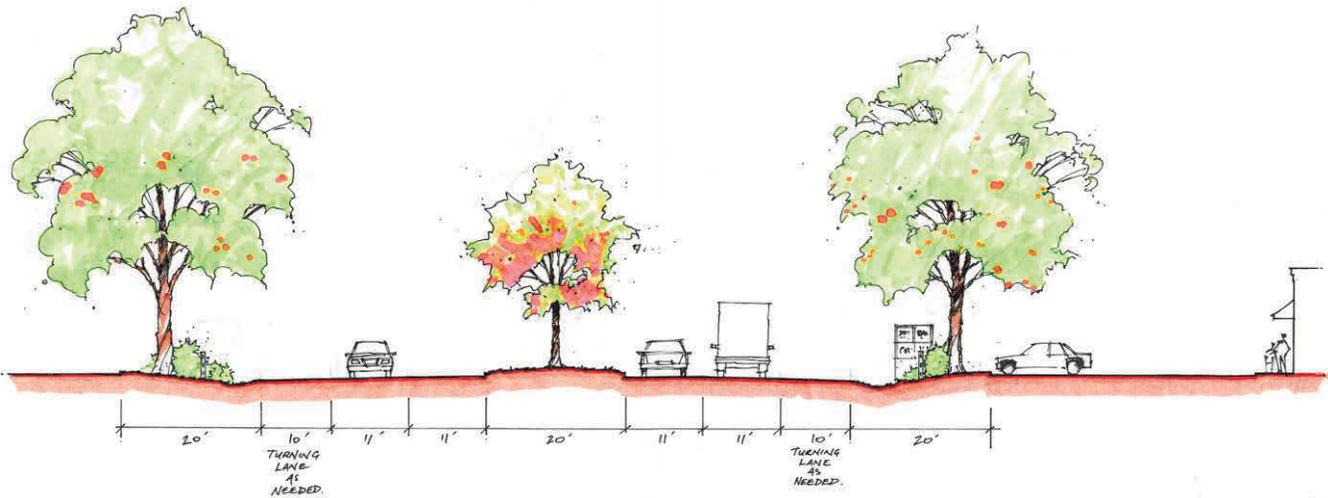
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**Hotel and Conference Facility**

In 2001, Mathews County commissioned a study to determine if there was a market for a conference center in the county. The study concluded that, as a tourist destination, the County would benefit from a quality hotel and conference facility with water access. The County should identify potential sites for development as well as existing facilities that could be redeveloped. Once a suitable location is determined, and its owner supportive, the County could assist in developing a concept plan to market to potential investors.

**Entrance Corridor Development Guidelines**

The gateway entrances into Mathews County and to historic Mathews Court House provide important first impressions to visitors and lay the foundation for development in the County. Commercial development in designated nodes along the corridor can benefit both the economic and aesthetic qualities of Mathews County. Corridor development guidelines could guide such elements as site and building layout, gateway and wayfinding signs, access points, and landscaping.



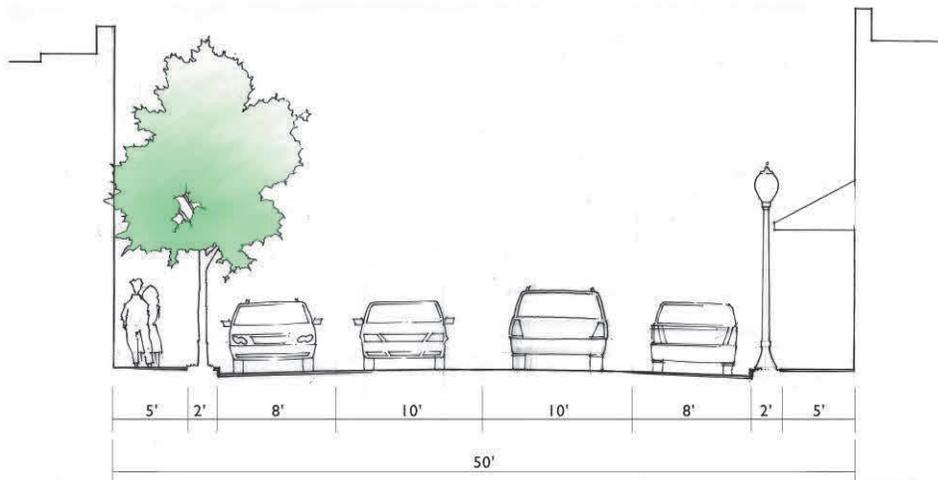
Typical cross-section of gateway entrance corridor (four lane example) showing landscaping at street and in the median, common access points, ground signs and screened parking at building front.



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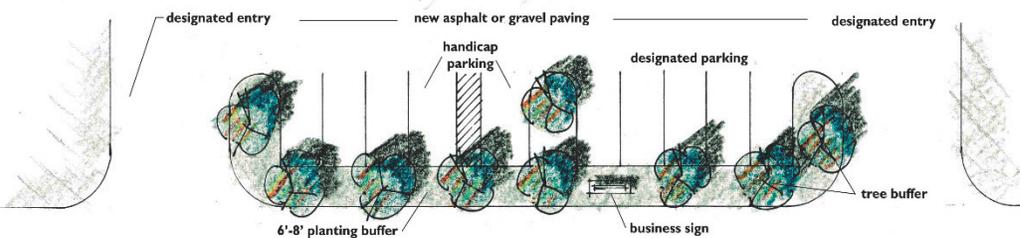
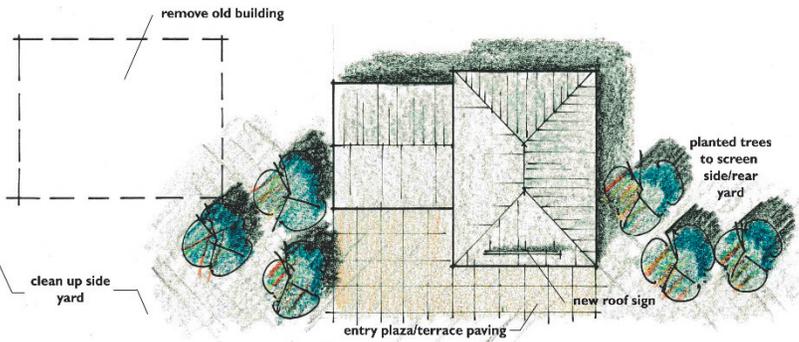
Typical cross-section of gateway entrance corridor (two lane example) showing landscaping at street and in a median (where possible) with a pedestrian/bicycle access trail or sidewalk. Shoulders of road could include natural swales or use pervious surfaces to manage stormwater runoff.



Typical cross section of commercial corridor in designated Village or Hamlet showing proposed development pattern. Buildings are located close to the street; lighting is pedestrian scale; sidewalks provide easy access to stores; parking is located on the street or to the sides or rear of buildings; street trees provide quality landscaping; an alternative may be large planters on the sidewalk; signs are appropriately located on the building or an awning.



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Above: Before and after illustration of renovated commercial building along Route 14 entrance corridor.

Left: Site plan for new commercial use of property showing improved street frontage with controlled entrances, screened parking, landscaping and appropriate signage.



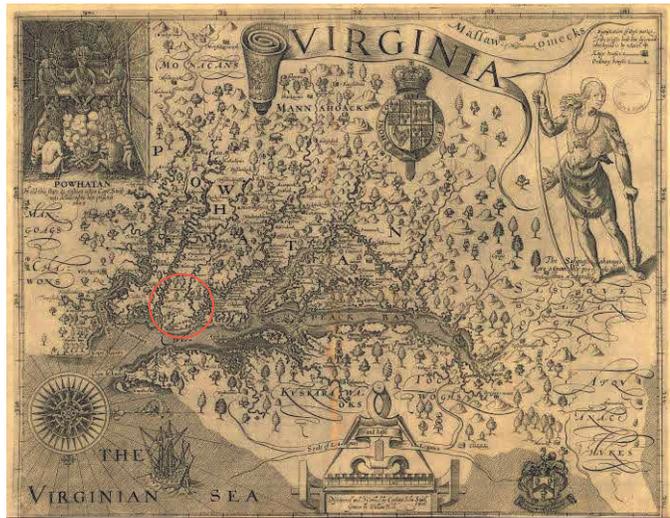
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## *History and Culture*

### **Brief County History**

Mathews County has a rich history<sup>5</sup> that extends back to Native Americans and the early English settlement of Virginia. Early artifacts found in Mathews on Gwynn's Island date back to 10,000 BC. The first known people of the region were the Chiskiake Indians who originated in York County and later relocated to the Piankatank River in the mid-1600s.

In 1608, Captain John Smith explored the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, mapping early Mathews County and the larger region. His historical map of Virginia, published in 1612, provided an early insight into the rich waters and lands of the region. While near Gwynn's Island on one of his voyages, he was wounded by a stingray and was taken ashore to what is now Stingray Pointe near Deltaville in Middlesex County. Several years later, Gwynn's Island was explored by Colonel Hugh Gwynn. In 1640, Gwynn received a grant of 1700 acres from King Charles I of England, marking Gwynn's Island as an early contribution to Mathews' settlement history.



*Captain John Smith's 1612 Map of Virginia. Mathews County area is shown as a circle for reference.*

The real settlement of Mathews County began circa 1650 with the establishment of Kingston Parish, which was then a part of Gloucester County. The original Anglican Church is no longer standing, but the settlement environs still exist today and Christ Episcopal Kingston Parish Church (1904). Many important Mathews' families and individuals have ties to the parish and its history.

Mathews County has a rich history in the American Revolution. It was the site of one of the Revolutionary War's first naval battles, the Battle of Cricket Hill. In 1776, General Andrew Lewis

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<sup>5</sup> Mathews History and Statistics, [www.visitmathewsva.com](http://www.visitmathewsva.com). A Brief History of Gwynn's Island, [www.gwynnsislandmuseum.org](http://www.gwynnsislandmuseum.org). Mathews County Historical Society, [www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~vamchs](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~vamchs). Middle Peninsula Historic Marker Tour, [www.mppdc.com](http://www.mppdc.com).



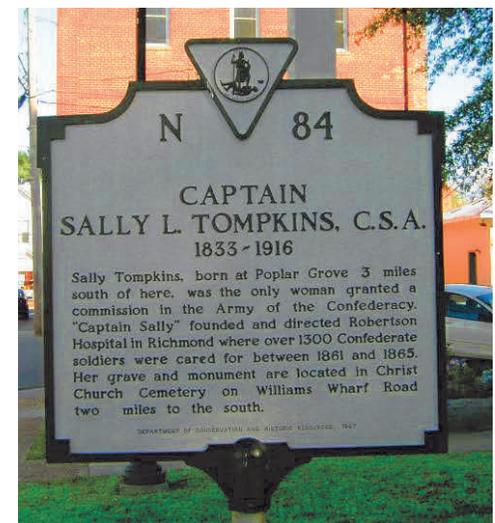
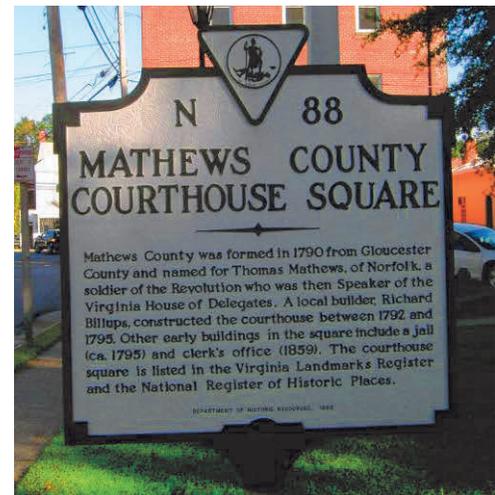
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of the Continental Army waged battle against Lord Dunmore and his troops just offshore of Gwynn’s Island. The encounter damaged the British camp and forced evacuation of the British from the island and back to sea. Another inland military post was at Fort Nonsense, located near County border with Gloucester County. This fort saw little battle; however, its earthworks are still visible today.

Following the Revolutionary War, Mathews was officially established as a County in 1791. It was named in honor of the Brigadier General Thomas Mathews, who was then speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates and introduced the resolution calling for the formation of a new county. He was also a prominent leader in the American Revolutionary War. The County seat was Mathews and in the early 1830s, the historic courthouse and square were constructed.

By the 1790s the County was an active shipbuilding center on the Chesapeake Bay<sup>6</sup>, supported by the abundant forests of live oaks. In 1804, President Thomas Jefferson commissioned the building of a stone lighthouse at the County southernmost tip on the Chesapeake Bay – New Point Comfort. This historical lighthouse still stands today, although only accessible by boat, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Per the Mathews Maritime Museum, more wooden sailing vessels were built in Mathews County than in any other part of Virginia from the late 1790s to 1845. It is estimated that more than 2,000 seagoing schooners were built in Mathews during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The East River and Williams Wharf were centers of maritime activity. Many Mathews’ men made their living as merchant mariners, watermen, or shipbuilders. By 1835, Mathews County was a bustling area with several post offices and small villages.

Mathews County also has a rich Civil War history. A



<sup>6</sup> History of the New Point Comfort Lighthouse, [www.newpointcomfort.com](http://www.newpointcomfort.com). Mathews Maritime Museum, [www.mathewsmaritimemuseum.com](http://www.mathewsmaritimemuseum.com).



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Confederate Coast Guard was active in Mathews, assisting the southern cause. A stone Confederate Memorial stands in the Mathews Court House Green in commemoration of the County Confederate soldiers. One resident, Captain Sally Tompkins, was appointed as the only female Confederate Officer. She operated the Robertson Hospital in Richmond that cared for over 1,300 soldiers during the war.

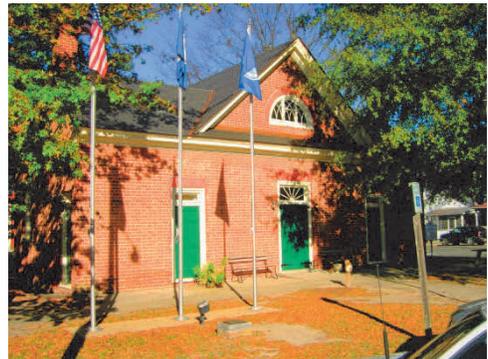
By the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, residents continued their relationship with the sea, either in their daily work as watermen or in their country's service as members of the naval forces. The fisheries and seafood of the Chesapeake Bay were productive and known for their quality and quantity all over the east coast. Today, Mathews County is still recognized for its fisheries, waterfront, and marine environment. While there are challenges that must be addressed with respect to the decreasing fisheries, sensitive ecosystem, and increasing demand for waterfront development, Mathews County continues to be in the forefront of looking carefully to the future, while continuing a long tradition of close-knit families, scenic water vistas, and a history with the sea.

#### **Properties on the National Register of Historic Places**

As of March 2009, Mathews County has eight properties that are officially listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>7</sup> Two additional properties are under study and pending designation. These properties are described in the following paragraphs and shown on the map on the following page.

#### ***Mathews County Courthouse Square***

Placed on the National Register in 1977, Mathews County Courthouse Square in downtown Mathews is significant for its collection of buildings that reflect the growth of the County since 1790. A study prepared by the William and Mary Center for Archeological Research revealed that the courthouse building, which was once thought to be constructed in the 1790s by Richard Billups, was more likely built in the 1830s. The jail has stood on the courthouse grounds at least since the early nineteenth century, and the clerk's office was constructed in 1859. In 1930, the Mathews Memorial Library was built on the square, and in 1957 the county administration offices building was added. In recent years, the County has restored several of the buildings.



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<sup>7</sup> Virginia Department of Historic Resources, National and State Historic Registers for Mathews County. [www.dhr.virginia.gov](http://www.dhr.virginia.gov).



Historic Resources





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*Milford (Billups House)*

Milford is an early home built circa 1770-1790 on the coastal plain of Billups Creek. The house was the home of George Billups, one of the first of the Billups family to come to Virginia. The house has remained in the family. The Billups Family has been involved in maritime pursuits in Mathews County over the years. There were officials of Kingston Parish and officers in the Militia. Also, they were planters. The house is an outstanding example of a dwelling for well-to-do country gentry of the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century in Tidewater Virginia. It is notable for its exceptional woodwork.

*New Point Comfort Lighthouse*

The New Point Comfort Lighthouse was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. The stone lighthouse was commissioned by President Thomas Jefferson and constructed by Elzy Burroughs (Mathews County) in 1804. The light was constructed in 1805. A retired sea captain, Isaac Foster, was the light keeper. It is the third oldest lighthouse on the Chesapeake Bay. The 63-foot lighthouse has been separated from the land and the light keeper's house disappeared prior to 1963. The New Point Comfort peninsula upon which the lighthouse stands has been a landmark for navigators since the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. The lighthouse is endangered today because of erosion and the rising sea level. It is owned by Mathews County and is supported by several local groups, the New Point Lighthouse Preservation Task Force and the Mathews County Historical Society.

*Hesse*

Hesse is a Georgian plantation house near Blakes in the Piankatank District of Mathews County. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. Hesse is set on a bluff overlooking the Piankatank River and Godfrey Bay. It was the originally the home of the Armistead family, a prominent colonial Virginia family. William Armistead patented 500 acres on the Piankatank River in 1659. The plantation at one time numbered about 3,900 acres. The construction date of the house has not been established; it is thought to be built between 1725 and 1750. Today, the house includes a 1952 south wing addition.

*Poplar Grove Mill and House*

Poplar Grove was built on the East River in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century by Richard Billups. It was built for John Patterson and named for the many poplar trees he planted on the property. A tide operated mill has existed at Popular Grove since colonial times; however, the present building replaced the original mill that burned during the Civil War. Captain Sally Tompkins was born at Poplar Grove in 1833; she was the grand-daughter of John Patterson. Also, it is believed that the Poplar Grove mill ground corn for General Washington's troops when they camped nearby.

*Old Thomas James Store*

The old Thomas James Store stands behind the Sibley General Store on Main Street in historic



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Mathews Court House. At some point the building was moved from its original location fronting on Main Street. It is a one-story frame commercial building that is an excellent example of early 19<sup>th</sup> Century commerce. It has been described as being among a handful of surviving antebellum commercial buildings in the South today and a rare example of basic, one-story commercial building. It was operated by Thomas James; however, the date of the building has not been established – it is listed on the nomination as being circa 1810-1899.

*Wolf Trap Light Station*

The Wolf Trap Light Station was constructed in 1894 and operated by the U. S. Coast Guard. It replaced an earlier lighthouse that had been constructed in 1821. The structure is comprised of a cast-iron foundation cylinder, topped with a two-story brick, octagonal-shaped dwelling and a lantern. It is located offshore of the Bethel Beach Natural Area Preserve.



*Methodist Tabernacle*

The Methodist Tabernacle is a large, open pavilion built in 1922 that is a rare example of an early 20<sup>th</sup> Century revival meeting facility in Virginia. The tabernacle is in a cleared field amid woods near historic Mathews Court House. A large ditch still exists on the property which helped to drain the low-lying land and prevented worshippers from driving too close to the building.



*Sibley's General Store*

Sibley's General Store consists of two joined buildings that have been used commercially to conduct retail trade in Mathews for almost 200 years. The front portion of the Sibley Store was built in 1899; the rear portion is circa 1840. The Old Thomas James Store lies behind the two buildings. Sibley's General Store is significant to the local economic and social development of Mathews County. It was Sibley's where all of Mathews County residents shopped. It received many goods via steamboat from other port cities and made them available to County residents. In addition, it also served as the Mathews post office, serving as a social hub.

*B. Williams and Company Store*

The B. Williams and Company Store is a two-story frame mercantile building built circa 1869-70 that still occupies a strategic location beside the East River at Williams Wharf. It was constructed near the old Customs House that operated on the East River. For over three centuries, it has served the surrounding community in a variety of uses including tobacco port, customs facility, store, post office shipyard, steamboat dock, oyster shucking, canning house, and public landing. The store represents a link to Mathews' maritime and commercial history and is an important



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cornerstone in the history of the Williams Wharf area.

Other Properties on the National Register of Historic Places

- Fort Cricket Hill
Donk's Theatre
The Lane Hotel
Riverlawn
Springdale

Other Properties of Historic Significance

In addition to properties that are listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places, there are other properties of known local significance that are worthy of preservation. Some of these properties are identified and described below; additional properties may be identified later in conjunction with a more thorough study of historic properties in the County.

Tompkins Cottage

The Tompkins Cottage, circa 1815, is believed to be the oldest frame structure remaining in the County. It was the home of Captain Sally Tompkins, and her father, Christopher Tompkins, a local planter, merchant, sea captain and ship builder. It is in Mathews, adjacent to the historic Courthouse Square and houses the Mathews County Historical Society. The property is owned by the County and is leased to the Historical Society.



Community Post Offices

Throughout Mathews County, there are small post offices in each of the communities. These small buildings are centers for social activity and represent a significant culture that is unique to the County and to each smaller community. Shown below are post offices in Hallieford, Gwynn, and Bavon.





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*Gwynn's Island Museum and Community Center*

Gwynn's Island played an important part in the history of the County from its earliest beginnings. In celebration of that heritage the island has a museum dedicated to its history and a community center that is of notable architectural quality.



*West Mathews Community Center*

The Community Center in West Mathews is an old school that has been renovated for community use.

*Other Historic Sites*

**Additional sites noted as being of historic importance include the following properties:**

- Auburn
- Green Plains
- Kingston Hall
- Providence
- Woodstock

**Preservation Challenges and Opportunities 2030**

Mathews County has a rich history that dates to early Colonial times with relatively few documented properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Much of the charm of the County is tied to its maritime heritage and its role as a center for small community commerce. Not only is County history important for residents to understand their community and provide a "sense of place," County history also is important from a tourism perspective that can substantially aid the local economy. There are many structures in the County that may be of important historical or cultural significance. More research and planning are needed to identify these important sites and to plan how the community should preserve and utilize these resources.

As of 2009, the Center for Coastal Resources Management at VIMS, the Mathews Maritime Foundation and other partner agencies have been working on the Mathews Maritime Heritage Trail which will showcase the valued coastal landscape and maritime history of the County. As this important project progresses, the historic information should be incorporated into future planning documents and appropriate user-friendly maps developed for residents and visitors.



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**Planning/Development Policies**

**Action Strategies for History and Culture 2030**

The following planning and development policies and action strategies are established to achieve the desired vision for historical and cultural resources in Mathews County:

Development Policies and Strategies for History and Culture	
HC 1	<p><b>History and culture are fundamental to the quality of life in Mathews County. Significant historic, architectural and archeological sites should be identified, preserved, and protected.</b></p>
	<p>1. Promote and support the public policy initiatives identified in the 2014 Mathews County Architectural Reconnaissance Survey Report. In addition, promote and support the community historical interest groups initiatives to survey archeological and architectural sites in the County.</p>
	<p>2. Encourage and assist in the development of a long-range Preservation Plan for managing and protecting important County historic and cultural resources.</p>
	<p>3. Consider adopting historic preservation overlay districts for the County zoning ordinance based upon the findings of the Architectural Reconnaissance Survey Report. In establishing a district, consider including a “buffer” area around the district or important sites to assist in preservation efforts.</p>
	<p>4. Identify or develop incentives that can assist property owners in managing and preserving their properties. Develop and maintain a list of potential resources and funding opportunities that may be available for preserving, rehabilitating, or restoring historic and cultural properties.</p>
	<p>5. Maintain and preserve important County-owned buildings and semi-public properties including the Courthouse Green, Fort Nonsense, New Point Comfort Lighthouse, and the Tompkins Cottage.</p>
HC 2	<p><b>History and Culture are potential economic tools for the future of Mathews County. The history and culture of the County represent an opportunity for tourism which is an important economic strategy for sustaining the economy and quality of life for the long-term.</b></p>



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Development Policies and Strategies for History and Culture	
	1. Promote the visitor’s guide to the historic, natural and cultural resources of Mathews County. Promote driving, bicycling, canoeing/kayaking and walking tour maps.
	2. Work with the Mathews County Visitor and Information Center (MCVIC), and other local historical organizations to publicize materials and coordinate heritage tourism efforts.
	3. Continue to promote cultural and performing arts as a magnet for drawing tourists to Mathews.
	4. Celebrate the heritage of Mathews County by developing a special heritage festival that can be hosted annually. Establish a Heritage Festival Committee to plan the event and coordinate activities throughout the County.
	5. Work with VIMS Center for Coastal Resources Management, Mathews Maritime Foundation, and other partner agencies to develop user-friendly guides, maps, etc. that promote the Mathews Maritime Heritage Trail.

**History and Culture: Special Action Projects**

The heritage of Mathews County provides an important sense of place for the community. The following discussions represent some initial projects that can further the goals and strategies discussed for History and Culture.

**County-wide Historic Survey**

The Virginia Department of Historic Resources provides matching funds for a historic survey. These funds are awarded on an annual basis and have been used by many localities in building their database of important historic properties.

The Mathews County Architectural Reconnaissance Survey, conducted in 2013-14, was funded by Mathews County and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) through its Cost-Share program with significant logistical support from the Mathews County Historical Society. DATA Investigations, LLC (DATA) and Commonwealth Preservation Group (CPG) that partnered to undertake the survey.

The main objective of the survey was to document 180 previously uninventoried historic properties along with updating 50 previously inventoried properties in the County.



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## **Public Facilities and Services**

Public facilities and services provide important support to residents and businesses of the County. Often, community residents fail to truly acknowledge the diversity of support services that are needed for community well-being and safety. Many of these facilities and services are provided by the County and some are provided by state, private, or volunteer agencies. The cost of providing these facilities is a frequent budgetary struggle using tax dollars and privately-raised funds. The following section discusses existing conditions, challenges and opportunities for the future for important community infrastructure and services, including: utilities, transportation, recreation, schools, public safety (police, fire and rescue) and human services (social, mental health, medical, etc.).

### **Utilities**

#### **Water**

Mathews County is underlain by the Yorktown-Eastover Aquifer, which is part of the Virginia Coastal Plain Aquifer System. An illustration of the primary aquifer systems in the coastal plain region is shown on the following page (Mathews County would be toward the east). This aquifer is positioned approximately 100 to 200 feet below the surface and is the second most heavily used source of groundwater for the region, supplying domestic yields of 10-20 GPM, and some large production wells (near West Point in King William County).<sup>8</sup> With the exception of Gloucester County, the region depends mostly on groundwater to provide its domestic and industrial water supplies.

Much of the residential and small commercial water supply of the County is provided by private wells that draw water from the Yorktown-Eastover aquifer at 100-120 feet. (A map illustrating the depth to water table follows the aquifer system graphic.) Shallow wells, however, are susceptible to failing septic systems, deteriorating underground storage tanks, and contaminated surface runoff and can pose significant threats to water quality in Mathews County. Consequently, the adequate supply of safe drinking water and protection of groundwater quality is a continuous challenge.

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<sup>8</sup> EEE Consulting, Inc. and Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission. *DRAFT Regional Water Supply Plan, Existing Water Sources/ Water Uses/ Water Resources, Essex, King and Queen, King William, Mathews, and Middlesex Counties and Towns of Tappahannock, Urbanna, and West Point.* May 30, 2008.



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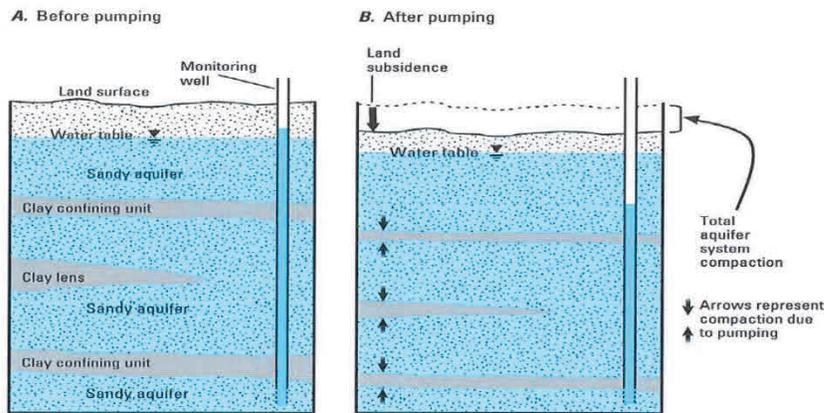


Figure 10. Aquifer-system compaction caused by groundwater withdrawals A, before and B, after pumping. Modified from Galloway and others (1999).

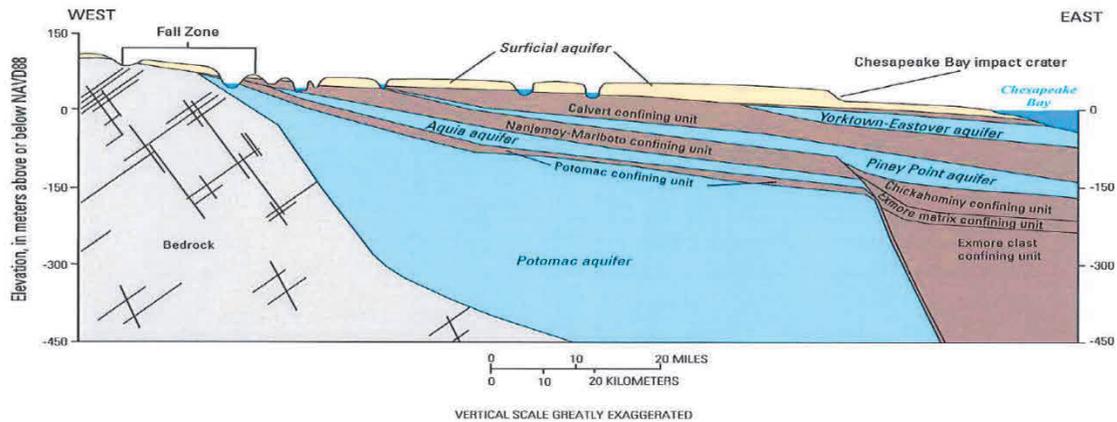


Figure 11. Section illustrating layering in the Virginia Coastal Plain aquifer system from west to east. Elevation relative to North American Vertical Datum of 1988 (NAVD88). Modified from McFarland and Bruce (2006).

In 1995, R. Stuart Royer and Associates prepared a *Preliminary Water Study for the County Court House Community*. The study recommended an initial water supply plan for the central business district in Mathews, at the Courthouse, using three existing well systems (Cricket Hill Apartments, Riverside Convalescent Center, and the Lee-Jackson School). The study was updated in 1997 to determine estimated capacity, service area, water quality, costs and financing options. It was estimated that the first phase water system could serve 173 single-family units (all then existing). As of 2016, the County has not implemented a public water system for the Mathews Court House District area.

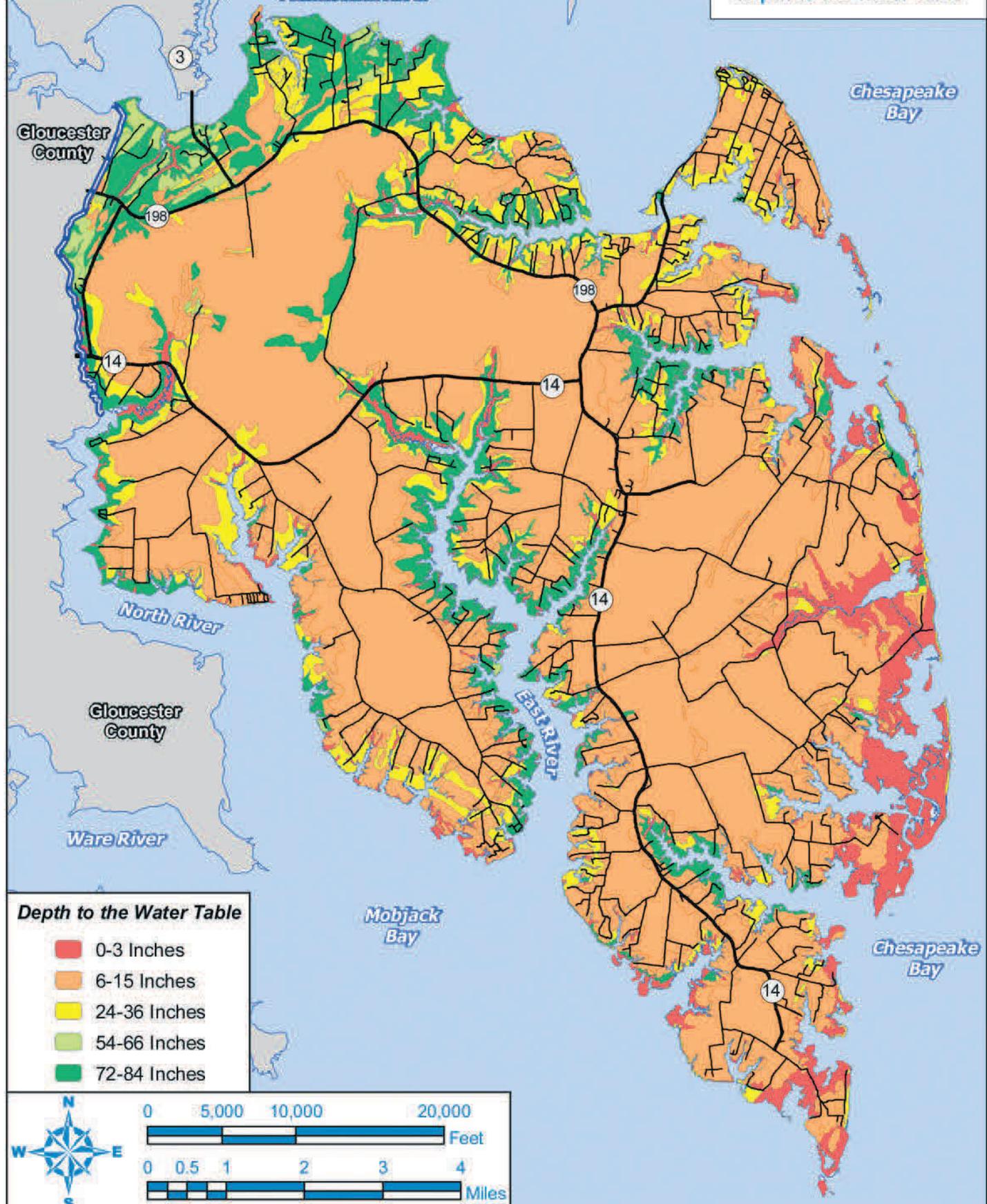


Middlesex County

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Comprehensive Plan  
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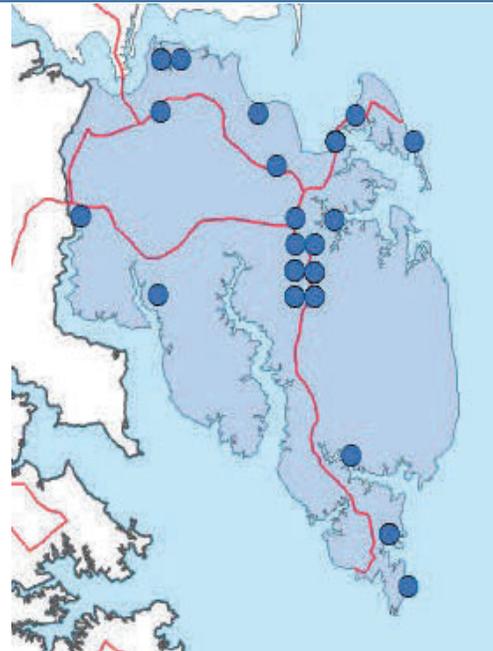
Depth to the Water Table





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In 2005, state legislation was passed that required all counties, cities and towns in Virginia to prepare a local water supply plan, or be a part of a regional water supply plan by 2011. Mathews County elected to be a part of a regional plan that is being prepared by the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission using water supply planning grants (2008, 2009) from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. The regional plan was completed in 2010 and found in compliance by the Department of Water Quality in 2013. It covers the counties of Essex, King and Queen, King William, Mathews and Middlesex, as well as the towns of Tappahannock, Urbanna and West Point. The regional water supply plan consists of three phases: Phase I – Existing Water Sources, Uses and Resources; Phase II – Projected Water Demands, Management, and Drought Emergency Consistency Planning; and Phase III – Public and Agency Coordination and Adoption. All three phases have been completed and adopted by all the localities in the region.



Community Well Systems in Mathews County, May 2008. Source: Draft Phase I, Regional Water Supply Plan, EEE Consulting, Inc.

A 2011 Regional Water Supply Management Study<sup>9</sup> by the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission indicated that from 2020-2030, Mathews County’s water demands estimated to be .041 MGD, based on an estimated population of 9077. Most of the regional demand is expected to be from residential development; however, the greatest potential for depletion of the region’s groundwater could be from large industrial or commercial users in urban areas outside the region. At present, King William County (along with other counties outside the Middle Peninsula Region) is defined as a “groundwater management area” which regulates water withdrawals; given water supply challenges, the management boundary could be expanded in the future to include additional counties in the region.

Per the 2011 Regional Water Supply Plan, Mathews County has 21 permitted community wells (see map) which provide water for eight community systems. In addition, there are two documented large agricultural users of water in Mathews County.

According to the Virginia Department of Health in conjunction with their Source Water

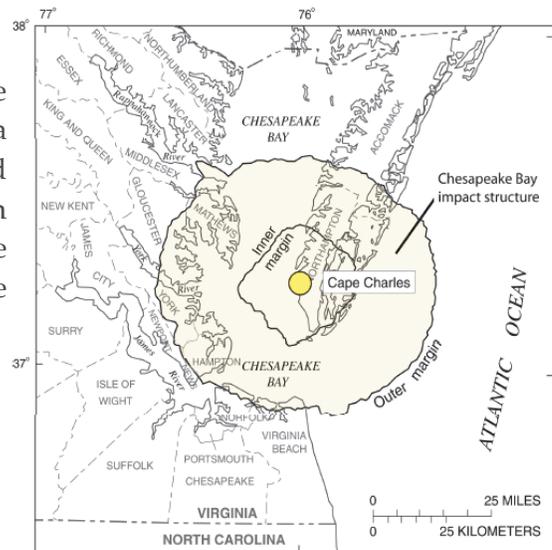
<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



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Assessment Program (SWAP), 30 water sources were monitored in Mathews County as of March 2016. These are privately owned wells that serve as a source of drinking water to the public. One option for reducing the risk for contamination to existing and future potable water sources would be to consider implementing a wellhead protection program in the County. Such a program should include provisions for public education; recommendations for land use management near water supplies; best management/development practices; and provide a designated local coordinator and other administrative partners.

Of special note is that most recent drilling studies by U.S.G.S. of the Chesapeake Impact Crater<sup>10</sup> indicate that the impact affected the geology and hydrology of the region more than originally thought. It is recognized that the impact resulted in subsidence, faulting, and saline groundwater in the region; however, core drilling samples indicate that the extent of the embedded, highly saline water may be a significant threat. In the Hampton Roads and Chesapeake Bay region this highly saline layer can intrude into potable groundwater when there are large withdrawals. This has occurred in the Middle Peninsula with large industrial withdrawals. Thus, there is continued interest in managing groundwater and in defining the limits of the salt "wedge" to prevent contamination of the groundwater.



Regional map of the Chesapeake Bay Impact Crater and the USGS drill site at Cape Charles  
Source: U.S.G.S., Open-File Report 2007-1094, Site report for USGS test holes drilled at Cape Charles, Northampton County, Virginia, in 2004

An update to the regional water supply plan is being discussed between Middle Peninsula localities and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and could potentially begin in 2017. The update will entail revisions to detailed information on water sources, water quality and quantity issues, and specific recommendations for managing the County water supply and protecting surface and groundwater.

<sup>10</sup> Approximately 36 million years ago, a meteorite impacted the eastern part of what is now the Chesapeake Bay and Virginia. It left a crater about 85 kilometers (or 52 miles) in average diameter, the sixth largest on earth, and had a dramatic effect on the geology and hydrology of the region. The physical impact of the meteorite can be seen in the rivers of the region and as a ridge along Route 198 in the Cobbs Creek area of Mathews County.



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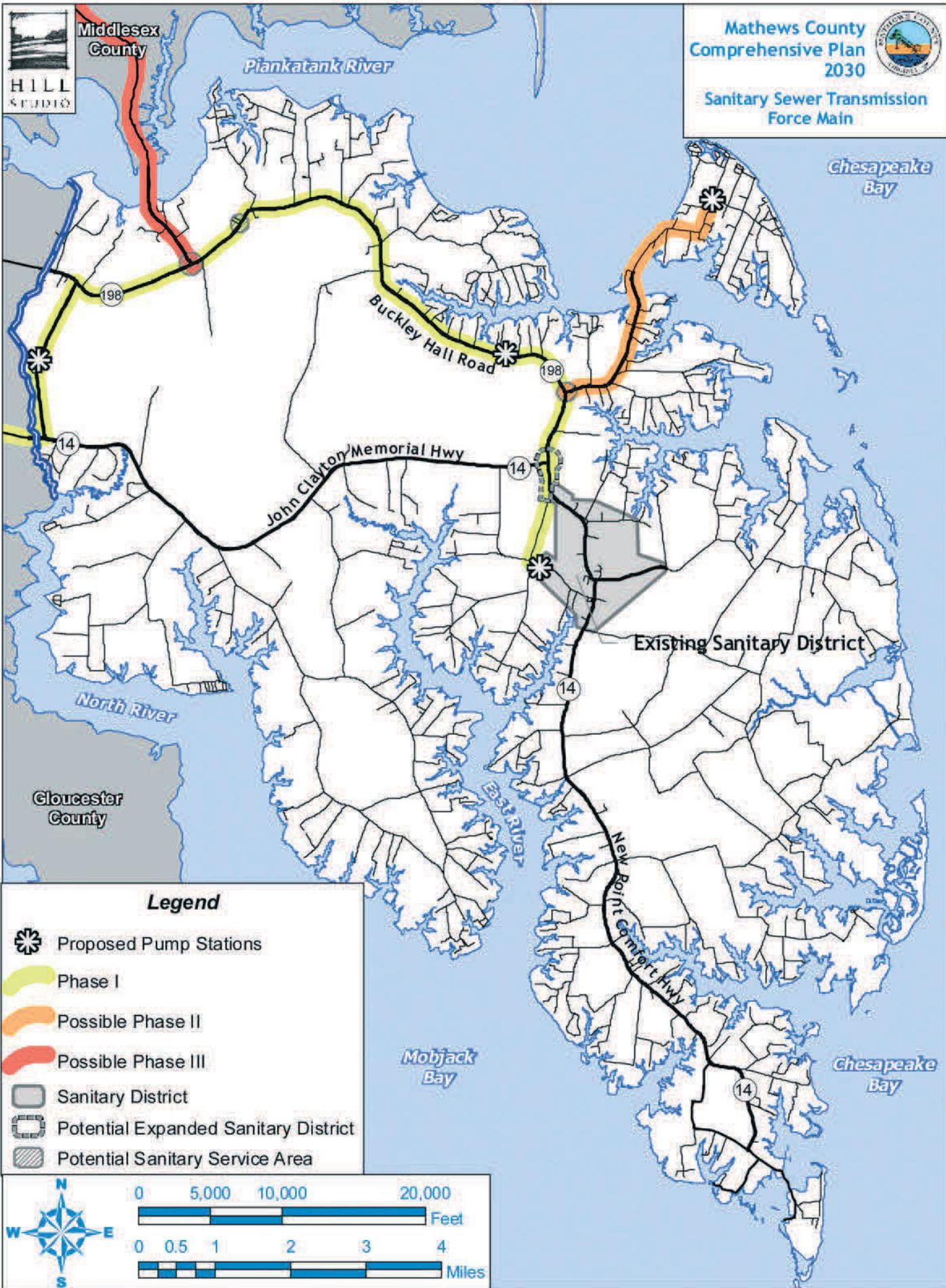
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**Sanitary Systems & Sewer**

Most of Mathews County is served by private septic systems. With the high-water table in the County, these systems have presented many challenges to water quality and to maintaining safe water supplies. Installation of new septic systems is regulated by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and the Virginia Department of Health; however, regular monitoring of the installed systems is more complex and often not routinely done, unless there is a public health concern. Consequently, to protect water quality and comply with the Chesapeake Bay Act, the County focuses preventative efforts on working with property owners to educate them on the need for regular pump-outs of septic tanks and to promote a septic tank pump-out program. The regional program is coordinated through the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission and has limited regional funding; typically, the available County allocation is targeted to specific areas and income levels of residents of the localities in the Middle Peninsula.

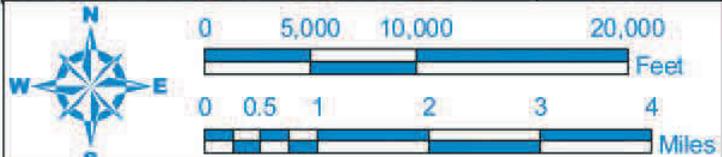
While new alternative septic systems may provide some technological advances for property owners, the future of these systems and the maintenance challenges are uncertain. Thus, there is public concern with respect to potential for failing systems and/or the effectiveness of new experimental systems. This concern was elevated in 2009 when the Virginia General Assembly passed new legislation that assigned state regulation and permitting of these alternative systems to the Virginia Department of Health, pre-empting any review or permitting process by local government. While additional regulations on alternative on-site sewage systems are to be developed by the Virginia Department of Health, the resolution of this issue is of special interest to Mathews County, as well as other communities throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia that have an abundance of private sanitary systems.

As of 2015, Mathews Court House is the only area served by a central wastewater treatment plant and sewage system. Connection to a Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD) transmission force main line has been approved by the Board of Supervisors for several commercial properties in the Hudgins area, however, no connections to the line have been initiated as of March 2016. The County sewage treatment facility, constructed in 1976 with a design capacity of 100,000 GPD, is owned and operated by the HRSD which assumed responsibility of the system in 2000. The average daily flow of the plant is approximately 70,000 GPD (2009). With the system nearing the end of its useful life, the County worked with HRSD to upgrade and expand the existing Mathews Court House sanitary system. It was decided that the best alternative was to close the existing sewage treatment plant and develop a transmission force main with pump stations to serve the existing Sanitary District with the potential expansion for defined sanitary sewer areas. The new system was completed and extends from Mathews Court House generally along Church Street, Glebe Road, Buckley Hall Road, Windsor Road and John Clayton Memorial Highway to Gloucester and then to the regional HRSD treatment plant in York County. A map of the Mathews Sanitary Sewer Transmission Force Main and phased improvements is illustrated on the following page.



**Legend**

-  Proposed Pump Stations
-  Phase I
-  Possible Phase II
-  Possible Phase III
-  Sanitary District
-  Potential Expanded Sanitary District
-  Potential Sanitary Service Area





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The Preliminary Engineering Report (2007) for the improvements prepared by Camp Dresser and Mckee, Inc. recommended several alternatives and phasing for constructing the transmission force main and pump stations to Gloucester and the York River Treatment Facility. The proposed construction of the improvements will be in three phases – Phase I would convey wastewater from the Mathews Court House District to the Gloucester Courthouse area via a transmission force main along Church Street, Buckley Hall Road and Windsor Road with pump stations in the Mathews Court House area, Hudgins area and off Windsor Road between Rtes. 198 and 14. Phase II is proposed to convey wastewater from eastern Middlesex County (Deltaville) across the Piankatank River and connect with the Mathews County system. At present, the design and construction of Phase I improvements have been completed; there are no present plans to move forward with designs of the proposed Phase II and Phase III improvements.

Careful land planning and appropriate choices of future land uses abutting the sanitary sewer transmission force main will be important in managing growth and development along the Route 198 corridor and to the County as a whole. (Of course, the amount of development that can be accommodated also depends on available water supply.) For sanitary service planning purposes, Phase I is designed to accommodate an average flow capacity of up to approximately 150,000 GPD; the flow capacities for Phases II and III have not yet been designed, but would be in accordance with requested development demands and negotiated community financial participation. In addition, the transmission line could be expanded to meet additional requested demand by adding a parallel transmission line, pump stations, storage, etc.





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behind the nation in high-speed access.

In 2010, Mathews County joined with three other Middle Peninsula counties to establish the Middle Peninsula Broadband Authority. In September 2013, the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission received funding from the Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration to conduct a regional broadband study. Mathews County participated in the initiative which provided a comprehensive telecommunications plan for the region that established the extent and structure of recommended networks, funding options, and implementation strategies and models for broadband deployment throughout the region. The Commonwealth's priority is to connect the region's educational and health-care related facilities first, followed by residential users.

In early 2018, GO Virginia, a state board tasked with job creation, issued approval to PamunkeyNet, a business entity of the Pamunkey Indian Tribe. PamunkeyNet will deliver high speed broadband to the Middle Peninsula, Northern Neck, and other localities in the Fredericksburg area. This effort will aid in last mile distribution of broadband in the region.

#### **Transportation**

In accordance with Sections 15.2.2222.1 and 2223 of the Virginia Code, each locality in the Commonwealth shall develop, as a part of the comprehensive plan, a transportation plan that designates a system of transportation infrastructure needs and recommendations. The transportation plan shall include the designation of new and expanded transportation facilities and that support the planned development of the territory covered by the plan and shall include, as appropriate, but not be limited to, roadways, bicycle accommodations, pedestrian accommodations, railways, bridges, waterways, airports, ports, and public transportation facilities. This section of the Comprehensive Plan identifies critical transportation systems and infrastructure serving Mathews County, their deficiencies and recommendations for improvements. This section also highlights goals of both the County and the State in meeting transportation needs and demands.

#### **Highway/Road Corridors and Systems**

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) manages and plans for the streets and highways systems in Mathews County, as well as the surrounding region. In addition to the local Comprehensive Plan, long-range planning for Mathews County is done as part of the Rural Transportation Planning Program conducted by the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission and VDOT.

The 2035 Rural Long Range Plan was completed in 2012 by the Virginia Department of Transportation, Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission and local planners. The regional plan evaluates population, employment growth and land use on the transportation system and



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identifies any operational deficiencies, growth areas, critical freight infrastructure, bicycle/pedestrian improvements, and transit needs. The plan also incorporates recommended improvements that are prioritized by the locality in this Comprehensive Plan and should be adopted as an updated transportation component.

Mathews County's existing highway transportation network is presented in the map in the following pages. The two primary roads leading into Mathews County are State Route 14 (John Clayton Memorial Highway) and State Route 198 (Buckley Hall Road); these are classified as rural "minor arterials". Several other roads are classified as rural "major collector" roads; these include Windsor Road (Route 3); Church Street to Main Street (Route 14) in Mathews and New Point Comfort Highway (Route 14) to Bavon; Route 223 (Crickett Hill Road) to Old Ferry Road to Gwynn; and Fitchetts Wharf Road and Haven Beach Road to Diggs. The nearest Corridor of Statewide Significance is Corridor A, the Route 17 corridor, also known as The Coastal Corridor, which passes through adjacent Gloucester County. FHWA has seven functional classifications, interstate, other freeways and expressways, other principal arterial, minor arterial, major collector, minor collector and local. Roads falling under four of these classifications exist within the context of Mathews County. Each classification is based on the roadway's function within the roadway system. FHWA sets requirements for the functional classifications. FHWA provides descriptions of typical features of each functional classification.

**Minor Arterial:** Minor Arterials provide service for trips of moderate length, serve geographic areas that are smaller than their higher Arterial counterparts and offer connectivity to the higher Arterial system. Classification is based on whether the facility is in an urban or rural area.

In rural areas, Minor Arterials link cities and large towns, along with other major traffic generators, and form an integrated network providing interstate and inter-county service. The design in rural areas typically provides for relatively high overall speeds, with minimum interference to the through movement. Minor Arterials are spaced at intervals, consistent with population density, so that all developed areas within the state are within a reasonable distance of an arterial roadway. They also provide service to corridors with trip lengths and travel density greater than those served by rural collectors or local systems.

**Major Collector:** Major Collector routes are longer in length; have lower connecting driveway densities; have higher speed limits; are spaced at greater intervals; have higher annual average traffic volumes; and may have more travel lanes than minor collectors may. In rural areas, Major Collectors provide service to any county seat not on an arterial system, to larger towns not directly served by higher systems. Major Collectors also link these places to nearby larger towns and cities or with arterial routes and serve the most important intra-county travel corridor.



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*Minor Collector:* In rural areas, minor collectors are spaced at intervals, consistent with population density. Minor Collectors collect traffic from local roads and bring all developed areas within a reasonable distance of a collector road. Minor Collector facilities provide service to the remaining smaller communities and link local traffic generators with their rural hinterland.

*Local Roads:* Locally classified roads account for the largest percentage of all roadways in terms of mileage. They are not intended for use in long distance travel, except at the origin or destination end of the trip, due to their provision of direct access to abutting land. Bus routes generally do not run on Local Roads. In rural areas, local roads serve primarily to provide direct access to adjacent land. Local Roads provide service to travel over relatively short distance as compared to collectors or other higher systems. All facilities not classified on one of the higher systems in rural areas are classified as Local Roads.

The VDOT 2025 State Highway Plan and the 2035 Rural Long Range Plan for the Fredericksburg District recommends improvements to some of the most travelled sections of Routes 3, 14 and 198. A summary of the prioritized improvements is provided in the following table. The entire list of VDOT deficiencies and recommendations for Mathews County transportation system are provided in the following pages.

Mathews County Proposed Road Improvements VDOT 2025 State Highway Plan				
Route	Location Improvement	Length	Description	Est. Cost/Mile (2002)
Route 3	From Middlesex Co. to Route 14	4.78 miles	Rural, 4-lane + median	\$3.5 M
Route 14	From Route 3 to Route 198W	7.28 miles	Rural, 4-lane + median	\$3.5 M
Route 198/14	From Route 198W to Route 9246*	1.31 miles	Urban, 4-lane+ median	\$6.0 M
Route 198/14	From Route 9246 to Route 198E*	0.38 miles	Urban, 4-lane	\$5.0 M
Route 198	From Route 223 to Route 14W	0.93 miles	Rural, 4-lane + median	\$3.5 M
* Note: Lee Jackson Road was eliminated when the new Courthouse Facility was constructed at Liberty Square. Thus, the length of proposed improvements will be different for any future improvements to Route 198.				

As of 2016, many of the transportation improvement projects listed have either commenced or are listed on the district’s Six-Year Improvement Plan (SYIP). Several minor safety improvements have been programmed, as well as storm drainage improvements in the Mathews Court House area. A Drainage Improvement Study has been completed however no award of a construction contract for the improvements has occurred as of 2016. These are outlined in the following table.



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VDOT Fredericksburg District - FY2016-2021 Six-Year Improvement Program, Mathews County			
Location	Improvement	Est. Cost	Schedule
Route 14 at Route 198	Construct turn lanes	\$3.7 M	Complete
Route 14 at Route 617	Construct turn lanes	\$1.1 M	Complete
Route 14 at Route 660	Construct turn lanes	\$1.3 M	Complete
Route 617 to Route 654	Reconstruction (Widening)	\$2.9M	Underway
Route 14 at Mathews Court House	Drainage improvement study	\$4.3M	Complete
Route 3 over Burke Mill Stream	Bridge Replacement	\$2.2M	Construction Scheduled for FY2022
Restore Drainage Facilities (outfalls)	Secondary Roads	\$65,000	Preliminary engineering Underway Construction scheduled for FY2020
New Point Lighthouse Stabilization and Restoration	Environmental Study	\$1,625,000	Preliminary Engineering and Construction Complete
Route 14 over N End Branch Road	Bridge Replacement	\$2,536,000	Preliminary Engineering Scheduled for FY2020 Construction in FY2022

Virginia Department of Transportation’s Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) Estimates provide travel patterns on segments of major highways in Mathews County. The most recent estimates show traffic patterns have increased/decreased slightly from 2010 to 2015. Approximately 97 percent of the traffic generated throughout the county is from “four-tire” or automobile traffic while approximately 1 percent is generated from 3-axle, “truck and trailer” vehicles.

**2015 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) Volume Estimates for Primary Routes**

Route #/Name	Length (in miles)	From	To	2010	2015
3/Twigg's Ferry Rd.	1.37	Middlesex Co. Line	198 (Buckley Hall Rd.)	5,900	5,800
3/198	1.55	Windsor Rd.	Twigg's Ferry Rd.	8,200	7,900
3/Windsor Rd.	2.07	198	14/John Clayton Mem. Hwy.	5,700	5,800
3/14	0.11	Fort Nonsense	14/Gloucester Co. Line	11,000	12,000



## Mathews County Comprehensive Plan 2030

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14/John Clayton Mem. Hwy.	3.15	660/East River Rd.	14/198–198 @ Wards Corner	6,000	5,300
14/198	1.69	Wards Corner	Main St @ 198 E	6,900	6,700
14/Main St.	0.62	198/Buckley Hall Rd.	611/Tabernacle Rd.	5,000	5,000
198/Buckley Hall Rd.	0.44	Gloucester Co. Line	3/Windsor Rd.	2,400	2,600
198/Buckley Hall Rd.	6.24	3/Twiggs Ferry Rd.	223/Cricket Hill Rd.	4,100	4,100
198/Buckley Hall Rd.	0.93	223/Cricket Hill Rd.	14/Wards Corner	6,200	6,200
223/Cricket Hill Rd.	2.07	198 @ Hudgins	Gwynn's Island Bridge	2,100	2,400



Middlesex County

Mathews County  
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Transportation  
Network



**Legend**

**Road Classifications**

Rural Minor Arterial

Rural Major Collector

Rural Minor Collector

Rural Local

Bicycle Routes

Park & Ride

Prop. Alt. Evacuation Rt.



0 5,000 10,000 20,000

Feet

0 0.5 1 2 3 4

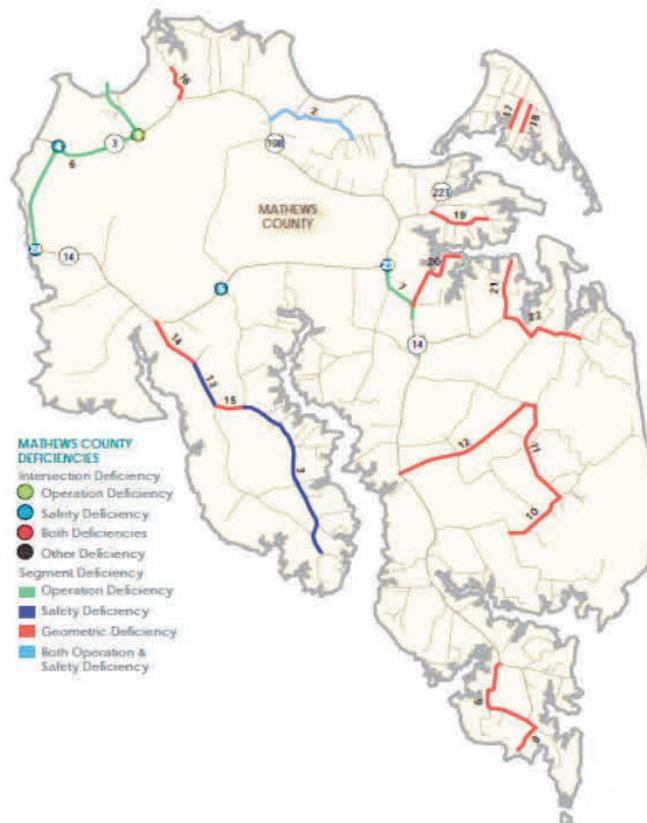
Miles



IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow: Conditions, Opportunities, Policies, and Strategies

MATHEWS COUNTY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 VA 3 (Twiggs Ferry Rd.)/VA 198 (Buckley Hall Rd.)  
Mid-term consider signalization.
- 2 VA 626 (Hallieford Rd.) from VA 198 N. to VA 666  
Short-term install stop bar; Long-term reconstruct to design standards and improve drainage and consider widening VA 626 where feasible.
- 3 VA 660 (East River Rd.) from VA 617 N. to VA 618  
Short-term improve pavement markings; Mid-term add turn lanes as needed; Long-term realign intersections and implement access management.
- 4 VA 3 (Windsor Rd.)/VA 198 (Buckley Hall Rd.)  
Long-term straighten VA 3 approach.
- 5 VA 14/VA 660  
Long-term continue to monitor for safety improvements.
- 6 VA 3 (Windsor Rd.) from VA 14 to Middlesex Co. Line  
Long-term widen to rural four-lane roadway with median.
- 7 VA 14 (Buckley Hall Rd.) from VA 198 W. to VA 9246  
Long-term widen to rural four-lane roadway with median.
- 8 VA 14 (Old Bayside Drive) from VA 600 (Circle Drive) to Bayside Wharf  
Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (including full-width lanes and shoulders).
- 9 VA 600 (Circle Drive) from VA 14 N. to VA 14 S.  
Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (including full-width lanes and shoulders).
- 10 VA 609 (Bethel Beach Rd.) from VA 608 to VA 611  
Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (11-foot lanes).
- 11 VA 611 (Garden Creek Rd.) from VA 613 W. to VA 609  
Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (11-foot lanes).
- 12 VA 613 (Beaverdam Rd.) from VA 14 to VA 611 W.  
Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (11-foot lanes).
- 13 VA 617 (North River Rd.) from VA 618 (Cardinal Rd.) to VA 654  
Short-term reconstruct and realign roadway; Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiencies (including full-width lanes and shoulders).
- 14 VA 617 (North River Rd.) from VA 654 to VA 14  
Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiency (including full-width lanes and shoulders).
- 15 VA 618 (Cardinal Rd.) from VA 617 to VA 660  
Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiency (including full-width lanes and shoulders).
- 16 VA 628 (Cobbs Creek Ln.) from VA 198 to VA 725  
Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiency (including full-width lanes and shoulders).
- 17 VA 636 (Bay Haven Drive) from VA 672 to VA 633  
Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiency (including full-width lanes and shoulders).
- 18 VA 637 (Gwynnsville Rd.) from VA 680 to VA 633  
Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiency (including full-width lanes and shoulders).
- 19 VA 639 (Crab Neck Rd.) from VA 223 E. to VA 648  
Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiency (11-foot lanes).
- 20 VA 641 (Pine Hall Rd.) from VA 14 to End of Rd.  
Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiency (11-foot lanes).
- 21 VA 642 (Fitchetts Wharf Rd.) from VA 643 to Fitchett Wharf  
Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiency (11-foot lanes).
- 22 VA 643 (Haven Beach Rd.) from VA 642 to VA 645  
Long-term reconstruct road to address geometric deficiency (11-foot lanes).
- 23 VA 14/VA 198  
Short-term construct turn lanes.
- 24 VA 3/VA 14  
Mid-term extend existing turn bays to standards.





*IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow:  
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**Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities**

In recent years, transportation planning has emphasized including more multi-modal transportation options such as trails, bike lanes, pedestrian accommodations, bus/train, etc.). In 2000, the Middle Peninsula developed a Regional Bicycle Facility Plan which included Mathews County. The plan recommended a Class III bikeway network in the County of shared road facilities with bike route signage. Designated bike routes were proposed along State Routes 198 and 14. Additional County bike routes are included on the Transportation Network Map on the preceding page. At present, there are no signed bicycle route(s). This would be very beneficial to Mathews County for seasonal visitors and for the annual "Tour de Chesapeake" which has been a large draw for visitors and a boost to the local economy.

Diversification of transportation options such as bike and pedestrian facilities also promote the tourism and recreational sectors of Mathews County's economy. In 2016, the Mathews Board of Supervisors reaffirmed its goal of promoting tourism through the creation of a Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Plan. The Middle Peninsula Rural Transportation Work Program helps localities in creating local plans and studies to help determine the need and location of such facilities at little to no cost to its localities. Funding through VDOT's Rural Work Program and DCR's Transportation Alternative programs may be available to assist the County with Bike and Pedestrian planning.

Pedestrian sidewalks are in the more densely populated areas of Mathews and Hudgins, though many of the existing sidewalks need improvement. As additional development occurs in commercial centers and other designated commercial areas, pedestrian facilities should be expanded to accommodate pedestrian activity. A Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) project in downtown Mathews includes proposed improvements to the sidewalk on the west side of Brickbat Road south to the last commercial building on the block. Beginning in 2015, the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission, under the Rural Work Program, conducted a sidewalk gap analysis that identifies opportunities for developing new sidewalks and/ or making improvements to existing infrastructure. The final draft is expected to be completed late 2016.

**Public Transportation**

Public transportation for residents of Mathews County is provided by Bay Transit, a non-profit organization affiliated with Bay Aging. The transportation authority services twelve counties in the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula regions and hosts forty buses (2009). The service operates from Urbanna (Middlesex County) and a new transit facility was constructed in 2013 in Gloucester County with funding provided by the Department of Public and Rail Transportation. The affordable transportation service operates weekdays from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM and transportation must be scheduled one day in advance. Bay Transit operates one bus within the county Monday through Friday based on a demand/response model. Bay Transit provided 6,447



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one way trips from the county requested by residents in fiscal year 2015, and 6,336 one way trips in fiscal year 2016. Bay transit was unable to accommodate 736 requests in fiscal year 2015 and 848 requests in fiscal year 2016. Bay Transit also offers a seasonal trolley services in some communities within the service area.

In addition to the public bus service, the Middle Peninsula Rideshare Program operated by the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission coordinates carpools, vanpools, telecommunication opportunities for residents of the region. This program is administered and advertised by the MPPDC via a web presence at <http://www.midpenrideshare.org/> and <http://www.freecarpool.info/>. MPPDC also advertises using bus wrappers on Bay Transit Buses, radio advertising time and sponsorships, print advertisements in local newspapers, and flyer distribution at Park & Ride lots.

**Park & Ride Facilities**

Another facet of the multimodal transportation alternatives available in Mathews County is the location of Park and Ride facilities throughout the County. There are three park and ride facilities in Mathews County – on Route 14 (West Mathews) accommodating 63 vehicles, on Route 198 north of its intersection with Route 3 at Dixie accommodating 35 vehicles, and on Route 198 at Mathews Park accommodating 50 vehicles. These facilities provide opportunities for ridesharing to the out-commuters traveling to employment hubs throughout Hampton Roads, Richmond and Northern Virginia.

**Storm Water Management & Road Drainage**

Mathews County has poor drainage patterns because of the low elevation topography, poorly drained soils, high water table and tidal influences. The road network in the County includes side outfall ditches that assist in managing stormwater, when they are maintained; however, these ditches are not routinely maintained and frequently become overgrown and filled with sediment and debris. Unmaintained ditches, which do not drain dry, foster the growth of invasive wetland vegetation, which can block normal stormwater flow.



Over the past several years, Mathews County, the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission (MPPDC) and VDOT have worked to address the issue of recurrent flooding contributed to in part by lack of ditch maintenance. These efforts include the exploration of the factors contributing to flooding and possible solutions to address flooding in highly susceptible areas.



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As identified in the transportation section, VDOT has an outfall ditch maintenance project scheduled in the Six-Year Improvement Plan for the County as well as a drainage project scheduled for the Mathews Courthouse area. In addition, MPPDC has received funding from Virginia’s Coastal Zone Management Program (CZM) to identify those recurrent flooding areas most impacted by lack of ditch maintenance and recommend solutions for improving ditch systems operation. In 2014, MPPDC, through funding from CZM, contracted with Draper Aden and Associates to complete an outfall ditch study of four areas in Mathews County that experience recurrent flooding during significant storm events. The study revealed that one of the factors that contributes to recurrent flooding in the four areas is lack of regular ditch maintenance and made recommendations on addressing the issue. MPPDC received subsequent funding from CZM for a ditch inventory and mapping project in Mathews County which is currently underway.

**Recreation Facilities**

Mathews County has one inland community park, Mathews Park, that hosts a variety of public recreation facilities on ten acres, including picnic shelters, playground, tennis courts, basketball courts, and multi-purpose ball fields. The facilities are in Central Mathews, adjacent to Mathews High School. While the County manages and maintains Mathews Park, the Mathews YMCA is under contract to the County for managing leisure programs and recreational events. In addition to the park, there are several community centers located throughout the County that offer specialized or recreational programs, and community meeting facilities. These include the Boys’ and Girls’ Club in Central Mathews, as well as community centers in West Mathews and on Gwynn’s Island. A map showing the location of major park facilities, community centers, and the Mathews Birding and Wildlife Trail Loop is on the following page.



In addition to inland facilities, there are waterfront properties throughout the County that provide access to the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Some of the most popular public waterfront facilities include: Haven/Festival Beach, Williams Wharf Landing, and Piankatank River Landing, owned by the County. Also, Bethel Beach Natural Area Preserve, owned by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, the New Point Comfort Lighthouse Observation Walkway, owned by the Nature Conservancy, and

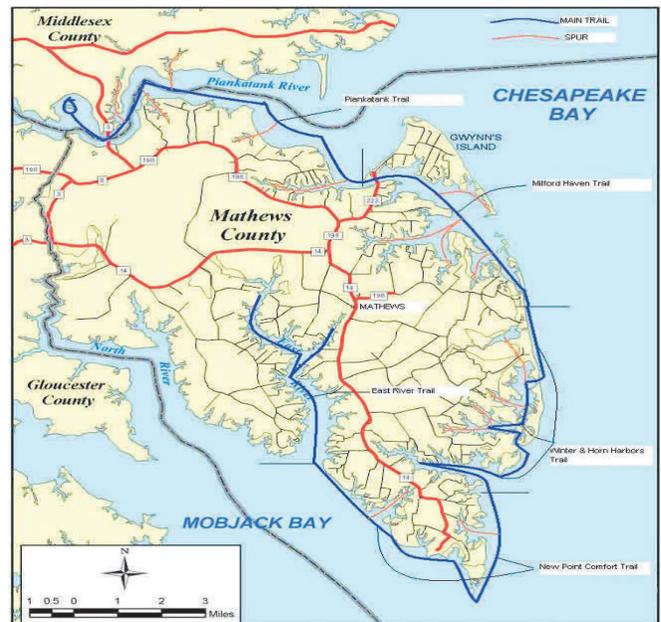


IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow: Conditions, Opportunities, Policies, and Strategies

the Bayside Observation Deck/Picnic Pavilion owned by the Mathews Land Conservancy are important waterfront amenities.

Public access to County beaches and waterfront areas is of special interest to governmental officials and to residents of Mathews County. In 2003, the County adopted the *Mathews County Statewaters Access Plan* which provides an inventory of all County public water access properties and established community goals and recommendations for expanding facilities and public access.

There are approximately twenty-one public access sites identified and discussed in the plan that provide public access to the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries with other potential access sites on publicly and privately owned property throughout the County. A list of those sites and the amenities associated with each are identified in the two tables that follow the recreation map. Privately owned access sites are shown on a map on page 97, and listed clockwise beginning in the upper left: Ginney Point Marina on Cobbs Creek, Queens Creek Marina on Queens Creek, Morningstar Marina on Milford Haven, Mathews Yacht Club on Stutts Creek, Horn Harbor Marina on Horn Harbor, Davis Creek Marina on Davis Creek, Compass Marina on the East River, and Mobjack Marina on Blackwater Creek. Another property acquisition by the County is the East River Boat Yard in West Mathews. In addition, a landowner donated nine acres of waterfront property to the Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority for public water access and environmental education.



Blueways Trails in Mathews  
Source: Mathews County Website  
[www.mathewscountyVA.gov](http://www.mathewscountyVA.gov)

The Blueways Network in Mathews County is a recreational asset for non-motorized watercraft that serves not only residents, but also many visitors. In the County, the blueways trail system



## Mathews County Comprehensive Plan 2030

### *IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow: Conditions, Opportunities, Policies, and Strategies*

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covers over ninety miles of water and includes: Piankatank River Trail, Milford Haven/Gwynn's Island Trail, East River Trail, Winter Harbor Trail, and New Point Comfort Trail. These trails were developed and mapped by a volunteer Blueways Committee established in conjunction with McSEED. The group also has published a trail guide map.

In 2009, VIMS worked with a variety of partners<sup>11</sup> to develop the "Mathews Maritime Heritage Trail" to preserve the valued coastal landscape and share the nautical heritage of the County. The first phase of the project is complete for the East River. More detailed mapping information on the trail can be found on line at <http://ccrm.vims.edu>.

These trails are part of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network and the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail.

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<sup>11</sup>Mathews Maritime Heritage Trail Partners include: VIMS, Mathews County, Archeological Society of Virginia (Middle Peninsula Chapter), Bay Trail Outfitters, Mathews County Historical Society, Mathews County Visitor Information Center, Mathews Memorial Library, Mathews Blueways Water Trail, Middle Peninsula PDC / Public Access Authority, New Point Comfort Preservation Task Force, Virginia Cooperative Extension Service/4H Youth Development, and National Park Service.



Middlesex County

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Recreation Facilities



**Legend**

- Birding & Wildlife Trail Loops
- Parks / Centers

0 5,000 10,000 20,000  
Feet

0 0.5 1 2 3 4  
Miles

New Point Comfort  
Preserve & Lighthouse



IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow: Conditions, Opportunities, Policies, and Strategies

Mathews County Statewaters Access – Site Information								
 Public Access Point	Priority	Waterway	Location in County	Map No.	Ownership	Zoning	Acreeage	Beach Frontage (lf)
Auburn Landing	L	North River	Rt 620	23-A-20	public & private	B1	0.67	80 ft.
Roane's Point Lndg	M	Piankatank	Rt 630	1-A-21	public	B1	0.4	216 ft.
Warehouse Crk Lndg	L	Piankatank	Rt 631	2-A-1	public	B1	0.24	
Piankatank River Lndg	M	Godfrey Bay	Rt 632	5-A-86A	public	B1	0.48	
Roses Creek Lndg	H	Queens Creek	Rt 662	10-A-206	public	B1	0.64	420 ft.
Grimstead Pblc Lndg	H	Milford Haven	Rt 223	11A5-A-6	public	B1/R1	0.927	130 ft
Milford Landing	M	Edwards Creek	Rt 672	11A6-A-11A	public	R1	0.5	
Whites Creek Lndg	M	Whites Creek	Rt 682	22-A-118	public	B1	0.25	61 ft
Festival Beach	H	Ches Bay	Rt 643	27-7-1,2,3	public	C	5.339	
Haven Public Beach	L	Ches Bay	Rt 645	27-6-1,2	public	C	15.8	
Town Point Landing	H	Put-In-Creek	Rt 615	29-A-201	public & private	B1		
William's Wharf Lndg	H	East River	Rt 614	29-A-221,222	public	B1	3.35	
Winter Harbor Lndg (Old Mill Landing)	M	Winter Harbor	Rt 611	36-A-21A	public	B1		< 125 ft
Winter Harbor Haven	H	Winter Harbor	Rt 608	36-A-148	public	B1	0.25	180 ft
Horn Harbor Landing	L	Horn Harbor	Rt 698	40-A-88	public	B1	0.9	1,000 ft
Davis Creek Landing	M	Davis Creek	Rt 689	43-A-36	public	B1	0.023	208 ft
Doctor's Creek Lndg	L	Doctor's Creek	Rt 699	42-5-4B	public	B1	0.5	
New Point Comfort	H	Ches Bay	Rt 600	45-A-2 & 3	private	C		
East River Bt Lndg		East River	Rt 619		public			



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Mathews County Statewaters Access - Site Amenities																									
 Public Access Point	Waterway	Signs	Shoulder Pkg	Sm Pkg Lot < 10	Lg Pkg Lot > 10	Trailer Pkg	Picnic Area	Waste Receptacles	Lighting	Restrooms	Hiking Trail	Bike Trail	Rules	Food	Fuel	Handicap	Fee/Permit	Slips/Mooring	Boat Storage	Fishing Pier	On-top Launch	Unimproved Ramp	Cement Ramp	Swim Beach	
		Auburn Landing	North River			◆																	◆		
Roane's Point Lndg	Piankatank			◆		◆															◆				
Warehouse Crk Lndg	Piankatank	◆																			◆				◆
Piankatank River Lndg	Godfrey Bay				◆	◆	◆	◆					◆								◆				◆
Roses Creek Lndg	Queens Creek			◆		◆												◆		◆		◆			
Grimstead Pblc Lndg	Milford Haven	◆			◆	◆			◆	◆				◆				◆	◆					◆	
Milford Landing	Edwards Creek	◆	◆															◆		◆	◆				
Whites Creek Lndg	Whites Creek			◆		◆														◆	◆	◆			
Festival Beach	Ches Bay	◆	◆										◆								◆				◆
Haven Public Beach	Ches Bay	◆	◆										◆								◆				◆
Aaron's Beach	Ches Bay		◆										◆												◆
Town Point Landing	Put-In-Creek	◆		◆	◆															◆	◆	◆			
William's Wharf Lndg	East River	◆			◆	◆			◆				◆			◆			◆	◆	◆		◆		
Winter Harbor Lndg (Old Mill Landing)	Winter Harbor	◆	◆															◆		◆	◆	◆			
Winter Harbor Haven	Winter Harbor	◆			◆	◆									◆					◆	◆				◆
Horn Harbor Landing	Horn Harbor		◆																		◆				
Davis Creek Landing	Davis Creek				◆	◆									◆					◆	◆				
Doctor's Creek Lndg	Doctor's Creek		◆																		◆				
New Point Comfort	Ches Bay	◆			◆		◆	◆								◆				◆	◆				
East River Boat Yd	East River		◆		◆															◆	◆			◆	



Middlesex County

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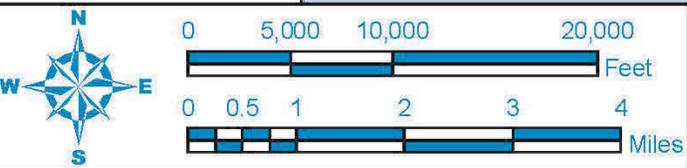


Recreation:  
Blueways & Public Access



**Legend**

-  Public Access Points
-  Blueways



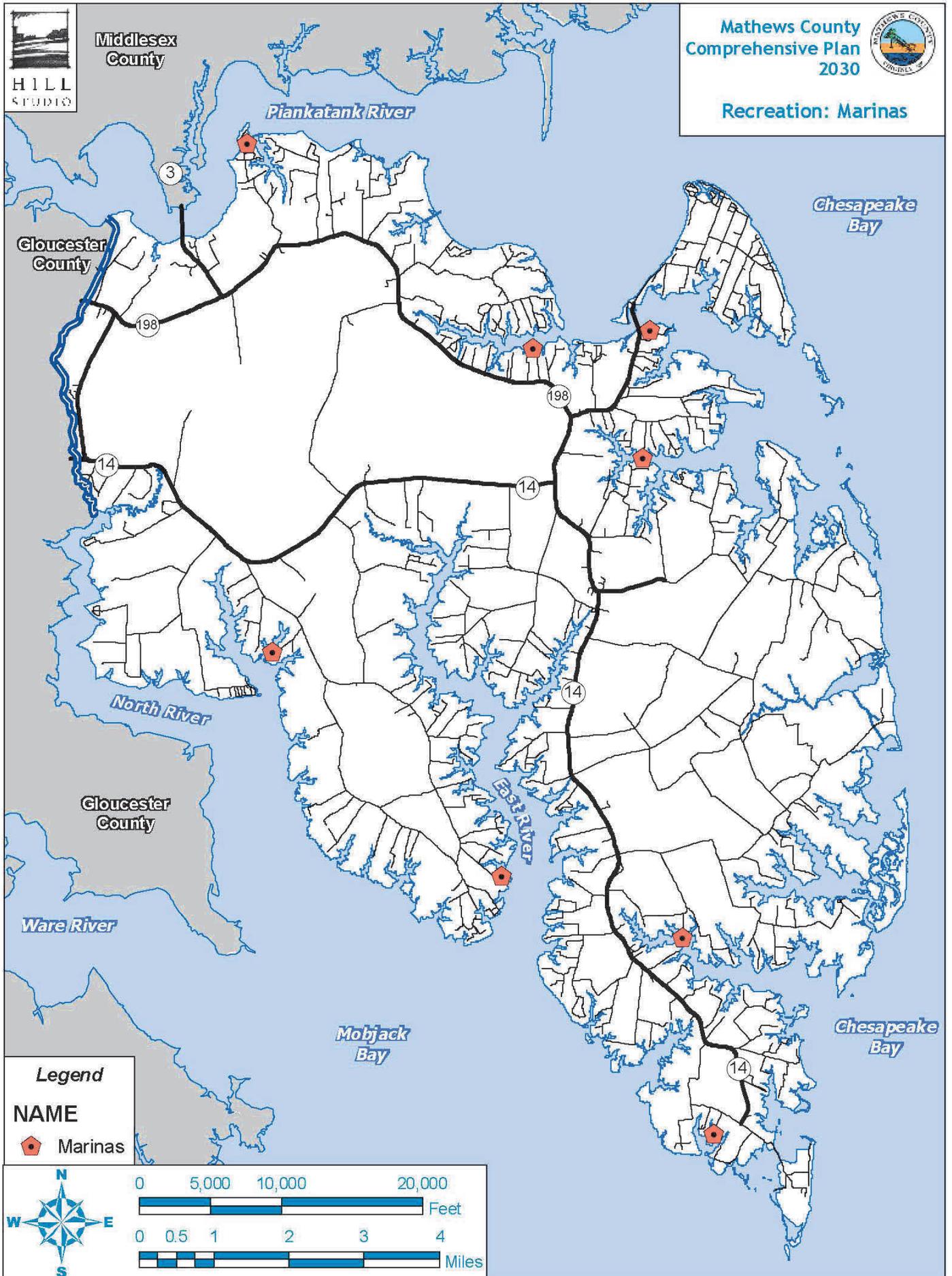


Middlesex County

Mathews County  
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2030



Recreation: Marinas



Legend

NAME

Marinas



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Feet

0 0.5 1 2 3 4  
Miles



*IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow:  
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Mathews County is a member of the Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority (PAA). The General Assembly created the PAA to promote recreational public access throughout the Commonwealth. Since its inception, the MP CBPAA has provided support to the Middle Peninsula localities in acquiring and identifying public recreational access to bodies of water in the region. Several waterfront properties in Mathews County have been donated to the PAA by private landowners for public use, including the Mathews Heritage Park site.

Recreational facilities are not only an important asset at the local level but also promote the regional and state tourism goals. Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) provides policy and direction to the public and private sectors so they may better manage recreational resources, and outdoor and open spaces. DCR helps local parks and recreation departments through expertise, training and funding. The Land and Water Conservation Fund program administered through Virginia Department of Conservation assists with acquisition and/or development of public outdoor recreation areas.

DCR provides guidance on management of recreational resources through the Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOP). The Virginia Outdoors Plan is the state's comprehensive plan for land conservation, outdoor recreation and open-space planning and is applicable at all levels of government and the private sector. The VOP receives input from public meetings and partnerships with local and regional staff who helped to identify the Plan's priority considerations.

**Public Safety**

A map of public safety and other community facilities in Mathews County is on the following page. The Mathews County Sheriff's Office provides law enforcement services and offers a variety of public safety programs. The Sheriff's Office employs approximately 17 persons (officers, dispatchers, and administrative staff). The Sheriff's Office also coordinates neighborhood watch programs for various areas of the County and offers business and residential security check services. Mathews County participates in a regional jail authority, which operates the Middle Peninsula Regional Security Center, located in Saluda, Virginia. In addition, several state police officers are assigned to Mathews County.



Fire and rescue services in Mathews County are provided primarily by volunteers. There are five fire stations and one rescue squad that provide emergency services to businesses and residents. Fire stations are in Bohannon, Cobbs



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Creek, Gwynn's Island, Mathews and New Point. A rescue squad station is in Hudgins and is the largest of the public safety stations; it includes personnel trained as "first responders" who can provide skilled emergency care. Some paid personnel help staff the rescue squad. In addition, the County has agreements with neighboring Counties to provide mutual assistance.



Middlesex County

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Public Safety &  
Community Facilities



**Legend**

- Rescue Squad
- Transfer Station
- Fire Stations
- Post Offices
- Elementary & Middle School
- Mathews High School

0 5,000 10,000 20,000 Feet

0 0.5 1 2 3 4 Miles



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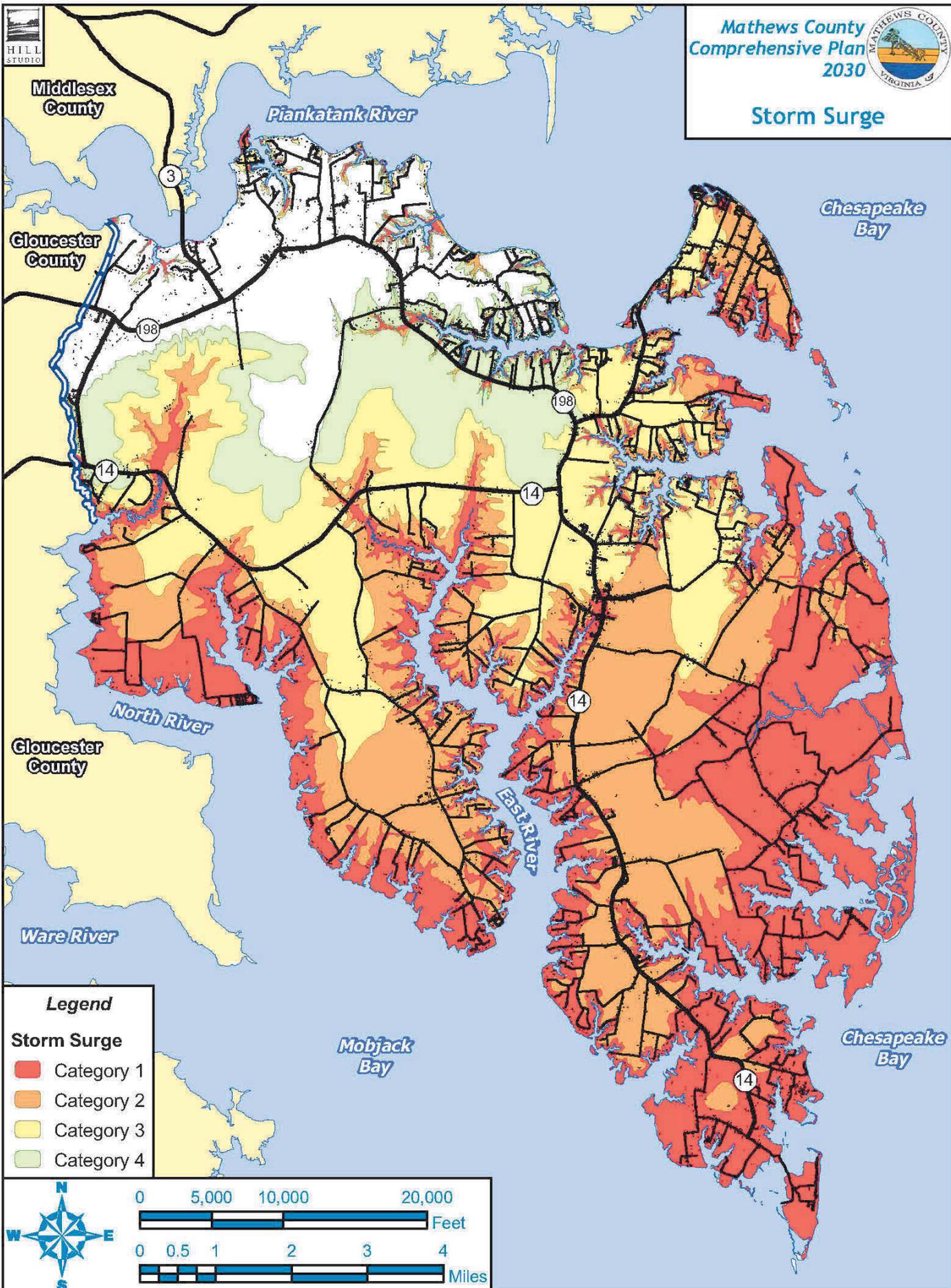
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## HAZARD MITIGATION

The County is a participating partner in the *Middle Peninsula Regional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan*, which was adopted in 2005. This plan was initially developed in conjunction with the Federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 which required local governments to develop mitigation plans to reduce risk from natural hazards. The 2016 All Hazards Mitigation Plan was reviewed and accepted by FEMA and VDEM early in the year and adopted by Mathews County on July 26, 2016. The update of the plan identifies that the most critical risks to the Middle Peninsula were from hurricanes, winter storms (ice), summer storms, lightning, and coastal flooding. In Mathews County, the risks were associated with:

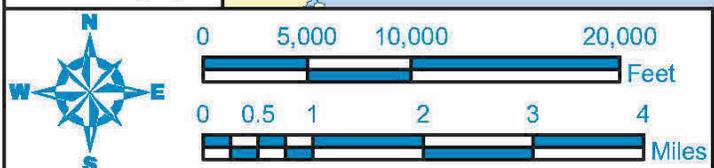
- **Hurricanes and Coastal Storms** –The waterfront position of Mathews County and low-lying lands are particularly susceptible to damage from storms and hurricanes. Flooding from storm surges, wind, and heavy rains have the potential to block transportation routes and inundate properties. The Storm Surge Map on the following page indicates that approximately 50% of the County has the potential to be damaged by a Category 2 hurricane and about 80% by a Category 4. Mathews County participates in the National Flood Insurance Program.
- **Shrink-Swell Soils** – The northeastern portion of Mathews County and waterfront lands adjacent to rivers and streams contain soils that have a high potential for shrink-swell (expands with moisture content). Most of these soils are within lands included within the lands managed under the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (CBPA).
- **Wildfires** - The region is at some risk for wildfires because of the widespread forests. According to the Hazard Mitigation Plan, of the approximately 65,500 forested acres in Mathews County, over 75% was identified by the Virginia Department of Forestry as being at medium to high risk for wildfires.
- **Drought** – According to the Hazard Mitigation Plan, there have been five major droughts in Virginia since 1900. The last severe drought in Tidewater was in 2001-02. In Mathews, a significant drought can result in significant water supply issues because of the aquifer limitations, the number of shallow private wells, and the lack of a public water supply.

The County has an assigned Emergency Services Coordinator position which is responsible for coordinating and updating the hazard mitigation plan every five years. A High-Speed Emergency Notification System (Code Red) for the County and improved digital mapping at a 100 or 200-foot scale (then at 400-foot scale) has been implemented. Residents can register for notification of emergency events, such as hurricanes or flooding, by having a recorded message sent to their home phone, cell phone or by e-mail.



**Legend**

- Storm Surge**
- Category 1
  - Category 2
  - Category 3
  - Category 4





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Education, Health & Public Services

County Schools and Continued Education

Mathews County has three public schools that provide educational services to residents: Lee-Jackson Elementary School (Kindergarten to Grade 4, constructed 1996); Thomas Hunter Middle School (Grades 5-8, constructed 1954); and Mathews High School (Grades 9-12, constructed 1939, recent addition 2000). These facilities are in Central Mathews and are fully accredited by the State of Virginia and meet the established Standards of Learning. In 2015-16 the enrollment is 1,101 students (368 elementary, 327 middle, and 406 high school). Programs offered by the schools include: special education, gifted education (SAIL, Scholastically Abled Identified Learners), alternative career and technical training, advanced placement, dual enrollment, and extracurricular sports and other activities. The County schools partner with Rappahannock Community College in Glens (Gloucester County) for a variety of courses. Also, the County is a participant in the Chesapeake Bay Governor’s School for Marine and Environmental Science.



The school system has a Strategic Plan for educational programs, facilities, personnel, and communication. Some of the important strategies from the 2014-15 Focus Plan include:

- Developing a capital improvement plan for short and long-term needs (by department and school).
- Recruiting and retaining quality personnel through mentorship, professional training opportunities, recognition of outstanding employees, and competitive salaries and benefits.
- Increasing student achievement and enhancing learning opportunities.
- Involving parents in the child’s learning process through increased communication, events, and volunteer opportunities.
- Prepare students for life after high school through emphasis on college awareness career and technical education awareness, especially career exploration and planning.



Rappahannock Community College offers associate degrees in arts and sciences, business management, nursing, protective services, and general engineering technology. In addition, the college includes a Workforce and Community Development Center that provides a GED program



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(Middle College), careers certificate program, and specialized workforce training.

The Bay School for the Arts, operated by a non-profit organization, is a community arts education facility in downtown Mathews. The school hosts educational workshops and training in the visual arts, heritage crafts and performing arts. The Bay School Cultural Arts Center offers life-long, continued learning opportunities for both adults and children. In addition, they host special events and operate an art gallery and art supply store.

#### **County Administration**

Mathews County is governed by a five-member Board of Supervisors (elected at large). A County Administrator handles day-to-day operations. County administrative facilities are in downtown Mathews on the historic Mathews Court House Green. In 2005, a new courts facility was built on Route 14/198 near the entrance to downtown Mathews. The existing County Administration offices (built circa 1950) underwent minor renovations in 2009 to house the County's Registrar.

#### **Library**

Mathews Memorial Library is in downtown Mathews in a renovated building on Main Street. A library expansion project was completed in 2013. The Library offers on-line catalog services and free Wi-Fi within the library. Also, there is public meeting space that can accommodate approximately 50 persons (John Warren Cooke Conference Center). In addition to library and reference services, the Mathews Memorial Library sponsors programs for adults such as book clubs, author forums, computer training, literacy training, employment search and music appreciation programs. The Library also hosts programs for children including story time, after school activities, special events, and various educational and homework resources.



#### **Health and Human Services**

Many of the public services related to health care and human needs are provided by the County Department of Social Services and the Mathews County Health Department (State of Virginia). Riverside Walter Reed Hospital in Gloucester (67 beds) is the closest full service hospital; it offers the following services: emergency care, adult and pediatric critical care, general surgical, orthopedic, obstetrics/gynecology, internal, gastrointestinal, pulmonary, cardiac, and family practice. The Riverside Convalescence Care Center in downtown Mathews provides approximately 60 beds for comprehensive nursing and rehabilitative care.



### *IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow: Conditions, Opportunities, Policies, and Strategies*

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The Mathews County Health Department is part of the Three Rivers Health District and provides health care services, family planning, and other related services. The health department is involved in many children's health programs, screenings, and preventative public health matters, including well and septic permits and food service sanitation. The Health Department hosts a Free Medical Clinic monthly in conjunction with the Gloucester-Mathews Free Clinic. The clinic is staffed by trained medical volunteers and services are provided to residents who are uninsured and meet certain poverty guidelines.

The Mathews County Department of Social Services provides protective services for children and adults; operates the County foster care program; manages the Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare (VIEW); and offers a variety of assistance programs including Medicaid, food stamps, temporary assistance for needy families (TANF), and other assistance for needy or disadvantaged persons. The Department works very closely with the Virginia Department of Social Services.

Various other community organizations and agencies provide a wide diversity of services to youth, elderly, mentally/physically-challenged, and other residents in need. These include: Mathews YMCA, Mathews Boys and Girls Club, Mathews County 4H, Bay School, Bay Agency on Aging, Meals on Wheels, Hands Across Mathews, Habitat for Humanity, and Middle Peninsula-Northern Neck Community Services Board.

The Middle Peninsula Safety Net Coalition assists the region in coordinating health care and human services. Members of the coalition include: Gloucester-Mathews Free Clinic, Peninsula Institute for Community Health, Three Rivers Health District, Middle Peninsula-Northern Neck Community Services Board, Mathews Community Foundation, Mathews Department of Social Services, Mathews YMCA, Bay Aging, and the Northern Neck Middle Peninsula Tele-Health Consortium. In 2008, the Coalition developed and published a resource directory for Mathews' residents of the various health care and related services.



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**Public Facilities and Services Opportunities and Challenges 2030**

***Water and Sewer***

One of the challenges for Mathews County in the future will be to provide safe water and sanitary sewage systems. Expansion of the sanitary sewer transmission force main from historic Mathews Court House to Gloucester may assist development opportunities in Mathews Court House and in the commercial nodes along the corridor (e.g., Ward’s Corner, Hudgins, Cobbs Creek and Dixie); however, with limited capacity of the force main to convey sanitary sewage, there should be taken into consideration of any large-scale subdivision, commercial, or industrial development. Any future connections to the transmission force main will be in accordance with adopted recommendations from the County Board of Supervisors; however, preference should be given to serving the existing Mathews Court House Sanitary District and business or mixed-use development at primary commercial nodes, as opposed to residential development.

Since most the County is served by private on-site septic and alternative sewage system systems, it will be important to maintain a good monitoring and septic tank pump-out program. Citizen education and close collaboration and communication with the Virginia Department of Health will be invaluable to the County in protecting water supplies and public health. Especially with respect to alternative sewage facilities, it will be important to keep open communication with property owners and the health department to ensure proper maintenance and operation.

Water supply for the entire region is a significant issue in the long-term; the regional water supply plans, currently being scheduled for an update, will provide more information and guidance with respect to public policies and recommended actions. This plan should be incorporated into this Comprehensive Plan by amendment. In Mathews County, the locations of some wells are unknown. In the Main Street – Historic Courthouse area, this limits approval for new businesses that require water for restrooms, kitchens and other uses. Maintenance of some wells is not possible, and there is increased risk of damage from fires without hydrants or fire sprinkler systems to protect older buildings.

***Telecommunications***

Expanding opportunities for broadband service in the County and other emerging telecommunication technologies would benefit residents and businesses. With increasing opportunities for home-based occupations, telecommuting and distance learning, the County has a unique ability to draw, or employ, residents for small business development. Expanded services and close attention to integrating cutting-edge communication technology can enhance telecommunication opportunities and positively influence the community’s economy and quality of life.



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***Transportation***

Except for a few intersections where improvements may be warranted because of the traffic movements (e.g., Route 14 and 198 and Route 3 and 198), the transportation corridors in Mathews County serve the County well. Maintenance of stormwater ditches should be improved; however, this will require a collaborative effort between VDOT, the County and private property owners to effectively improve stormwater management along County roads.

There should be a discussion with VDOT to identify the feasibility of an alternative route to bypass Route 14 to the east of the Courthouse area. In an emergency event, such as a hurricane, if Route 14 (Main Street) is blocked due to flooding, there is no primary access route to evacuate residents in the southern and eastern portions of the County. A potential alternative route could be a north/south road east of the Courthouse area connecting Tabernacle Road to Buckley Hall Road. In addition, since there is only one bridge to Gwynn's Island, alternative means for evacuating residents of the Island in the event of a hurricane should be identified. In addition to improvements identified in the Six-Year Plan, the County completed streetscape and drainage improvements funded through a Transportation Enhancement Grant to Main Street (Rt. 14) in the Courthouse Area in 2017.

The 2035 Regional Transportation Plan should be adopted as an amendment to this Comprehensive Plan.

***Recreation***

Recreation opportunities are very promising for Mathews County in the future. Increased public access to shorelines and waterfront facilities can provide citizens and visitors with wonderful experiences and resources that have been so highly valued by residents for generations. The 2003 *Statewaters Access Plan for Mathews County* provides an extensive inventory of public facilities and makes recommendations for potential improvements. This plan is scheduled to be updated with respect to recommendations for improvements and priority facilities. The East River Boat Yard property in West Mathews offers great potential for additional public access.

In addition, there are increased opportunities for use of existing bicycle routes and blueways, which can promote the County as a seasonal destination. In general, these compatible recreation activities are sensitive to the environment and beneficial to the local economy.

At present, the County does not have an adopted Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This type of planning document would be very beneficial in assessing the existing facilities and programs in the County. The document could be developed in coordination with the YMCA and other recreational programming agencies and could provide a more detailed and directed plan for



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public needs and future recreational opportunities within the County. The County has reaffirmed its interest in creating a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in promoting the tourism aspect of its economy. The County may work with MPPDC who has transportation funds through the Rural Transportation Work Program to provide technical assistance on bicycle and pedestrian plan creation. Additional funding sources may be available through the Transportation Alternative Program.

#### ***Emergency Services***

Public emergency systems and public response for hazards are important future issues that will need to be carefully monitored on an annual basis. While the existing volunteer emergency/fire system is working well in Mathews, there should be an annual review of emergency events, response times/coverage, facilities, and equipment, etc. to ensure that the public's health, welfare, and safety needs are met. At present, the County is supplementing volunteer services at primary facilities during peak weekdays and weekends; additional funding and staffing may be required in the future.

Storm surges and flooding from coastal storms will continue to be a challenge, especially in those areas of the County that have higher potential for flooding and only have one primary access road. With possible climate changes and rising sea levels, coastal living and public safety issues will require careful attention to land use management and public education.

#### ***Education***

Continuing education and workforce training will be most beneficial for residents and businesses. With the aging population, declining numbers of school children, and the increasing trend for youth to move to more populated, employable areas, it will be especially important to promote technical training and continued education for residents. Educational opportunities should be for both technical and cultural purposes and can be made available by both public and private entities. These opportunities can be enhanced with and expanded broadband communication system and increased collaboration among educational providers.

#### ***Human Services***

County officials have recognized the growing citizen interest in suitable residential options for seniors to allow residents to age and remain within their home county. At present, there is only one senior care facility in the County, thereby limiting options for those who may want or need alternative housing or assisted care.



*IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow:  
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**Planning/Development Policies, Action Strategies for Public Facilities & Services 2030**

<b>Planning / Development Policies and Strategies for Public Facilities &amp; Services</b>	
<b>PFS 1</b>	<b>A safe water supply for Mathews County is critical for public safety and community well-being. Existing and new development in the County should protect water quality and quantity.</b>
	1. In considering expansion of existing development or new development, there should be an assessment of water demand for the proposed use and potential effects on water quality and quantity. Suitable provisions should be employed for water conservation and for adequate treatment of sewage, including regular monitoring and maintenance of systems.
	2. Consider adopting groundwater protection measures such as a wellhead protection program to better protect water supplies.
	3. When the Regional Water Supply Plan update is completed and approved, the County should adopt it as an amendment to this Comprehensive Plan. Important recommendations should be incorporated into this plan's strategies for Public Facilities and Services. Consider developing a Master Utility Plan for the County.
	4. Recognize that development of a public water system for the Mathews Court House area is inevitable in the long-term to satisfy public health, fire suppression and economic development needs. Explore possible federal, state and local funding sources for the development of a public water system.
	5. Amend the subdivision regulations to require approved community water systems for residential subdivisions of fifteen lots or more. Work with Virginia Department of Health and include appropriate design requirements for water systems and provisions for maintenance.
<b>PFS 2</b>	<b>Land development along County entrance corridors and adjacent to the Mathews Sanitary Sewer Transmission Force Main line must be carefully planned. New development should be well-designed to enhance the corridor and to minimize effects on public services along the corridor.</b>



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Planning / Development Policies and Strategies for Public Facilities & Services	
	1. Consider adopting a Corridor Overlay District along John Clayton Memorial Highway and Buckley Hall Road from the County border to historic Mathews Court House. Establish design standards for setbacks, landscaping, signage, access, and general building and site design.
	2. Encourage business development in designated commercial centers along the Sanitary Sewer Transmission Force Main. Include provisions for evaluating service requirements along the line to ensure available capacities and appropriate land uses.
PFS 3	<b>The availability of a state-of-the-art telecommunications network in Mathews County is important to economic development, education and the overall quality of life. Broadband services must be expanded in the County to bridge the digital divide. The County should seek funding and lobby for inclusion in initiatives to expand the network.</b>
	1. Work with relevant local and state agencies to expand broadband opportunities within the County. Consider grant and funding opportunities that can assist in implementing and expanding the network. Utilize planned improvements to existing utility systems (private and public) to co-locate and incorporate the most current broadband technology.
	2. Establish a working telecommunications committee to advise County officials on important advances in telecommunication methodologies.
PFS 4	<b>The Transportation Systems of Mathews County should reflect the rural character of the County while providing safe facilities for residents and businesses. New facilities and planned improvements should include sensitive environmental designs, effective traffic management measures, stormwater management measures, and alternative transportation features.</b>
	1. Work with the regional agencies to develop an updated transportation plan that accurately reflects the desired transportation systems improvements for Mathews County.



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Planning / Development Policies and Strategies for Public Facilities & Services	
	2. In developing new roads within the County, pursue alternative methods and best management practices for managing the velocity and quality of stormwater runoff. Consider stormwater practices such as low-impact design (LID) alternatives, stream buffers, reduced pavement, trees and landscaping, etc. Inform developers and property owners of the requirement to obtain a Virginia Stormwater Management Permit from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) for land disturbance activities of one acre-or more in area.
	3. Explore all alternatives to pay for routine maintenance of existing outfall drainage ditches. Continue to take requests from property owners for ditch cleaning and address problem with inmate labor force or mechanized cleaning by a contractor.
	4. Work with VDOT to determine the feasibility of constructing an alternative north/south route east of Route 14 (Main Street) connecting Buckley Hall Road with Tabernacle Road.
	5. Work with VDOT to maintain roadside vegetation within the public right of way to preserve or enhance scenic viewsheds and site lines throughout the County.
<b>PFS 5</b>	<b>Alternative modes of transportation, such as bicycle routes, sidewalks, and bus services, are important County facilities that benefit both residents and visitors. The County should pursue pedestrian and bicycle improvements in community commercial centers, near schools, and central public facilities.</b>
	1. Apply for Transportation Enhancement Funds and other alternative transportation funding sources to assist in making improvements. Establish a priority list for bicycle routes to target funding for design, engineering and construction.
	2. Revise zoning and subdivision regulations to require pedestrian provisions and improvements for business development in community commercial centers.
	3. Designate and sign bicycle routes; develop a bicycle route guide.



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Planning / Development Policies and Strategies for Public Facilities & Services	
PFS 6	<p><b>Parks and public recreation areas are important community amenities that directly influence the community’s quality of life and economic well-being. A well-thought out master plan is an effective tool for meeting community recreation needs and phasing capital improvements.</b></p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a Parks Master Plan that provides an inventory of public recreational facilities and programs and identifies needed improvements for the short and long-term.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Improve directional signage to existing public beaches and water access points.</li> </ol>
PFS 7	<p><b>Mathews County is recognized for its natural environment and inherent recreational amenities. Public access to the water and shores enhances residents’ quality of life and is fundamental to the eco-tourism segment of the County economy. The County should continue to promote public access and appropriate facilities along its waterways and shorelines.</b></p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Update the adopted 2003 Mathews County Statewaters Access Plan to assess public needs, priorities, and recommended improvements for water access. Change the name of the plan to the Mathews County Public Waters Access Plan.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Pursue site planning and recommended improvements to the East River Boatyard property for public recreation and access, if economically feasible. Consider grant funding for planning and construction (e.g., Virginia Department of Conservation &amp; Recreation, Virginia Game &amp; Inland Fisheries, U.S. Fish &amp; Wildlife, EPA Brownfields, and private foundations whose goals include increased public water access).</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Monitor maintenance needs at existing County-owned public access sites and consider improvements such as expanded dockage, parking, and shoreline protection, where possible.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Continue to work with VIMS and other partners to plan, map, and promote the Mathews County Maritime Heritage Trail.</li> </ol>



*IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow: Conditions, Opportunities, Policies, and Strategies*

Planning / Development Policies and Strategies for Public Facilities & Services	
	5. Continue to support and collaborate with the Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority to provide more recreational public access opportunities for residents and tourists of Mathews County.
PFS 8	<b>Effective public safety and emergency services are essential to the health and welfare of residents and visitors. Volunteer services are highly valued in Mathews County. Collaboration and regular communication with County officials and residents are essential to ensuring adequate emergency response and services.</b>
	1. Continue to monitor annually emergency facility and response information and to identify community needs and challenges.
	2. Support public-outreach efforts to recruit volunteers and raise revenue for the purchase and maintenance of emergency equipment.
PFS 9	<b>Hazard Mitigation and Response Planning is important to community safety. Mathews County has special challenges with respect to coastal storms and flooding. Both public and private interests should be diligent in providing advance information and appropriate procedures for dealing with potential hazards.</b>
	1. Reach out to seasonal non-residents and new residents regarding potential hazards and emergency preparedness and procedures; make information readily available at rental properties, local businesses, and civic areas.
	2. Develop a hazard mitigation strategy for addressing drought conditions and protecting water supplies. Identify specific strategies for addressing drought under “watch” conditions, “warning” conditions, and “emergency” conditions. Specify conservation procedures and adopt corresponding ordinances to manage water use.
	3. Adopt the goals, objectives and strategies that specifically benefit Mathews County from the updated Regional All Hazards Mitigation Plan, approved by FEMA.
PFS 10	<b>Continuing education and life-long learning are important to community well-being and prosperity. There should be a variety of educational opportunities available for all ages.</b>



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Planning / Development Policies and Strategies for Public Facilities & Services	
	1. Partner with area educational facilities to host special events, courses and training during evening hours or weekends to meet the needs of the community.
	2. Encourage collaboration among County civic organizations and educational facilities; share adopted work plans and programs; consider a community calendar, joint newsletter, web links, etc.
	3. Provide continuing support for educational programs and facilities that promote quality education for County schools. Encourage youth involvement in public decision-making and encourage excellence in communication among youth, school and governmental officials.
PFS 11	<b>The senior citizens of Mathews County are important to community well-being and the local economy. Senior housing alternatives and support facilities are important in maintaining this population segment’s continued vitality and contributions to the community.</b>
PFS 12	<b>County facilities must be maintained and accessible to the public. Some County buildings require substantial renovation. It is important to retain these historic buildings and rehabilitate them in a sensitive manner, while also meeting the public’s needs for services and accessibility.</b>
	1. Renovate the County Administration Building and other buildings located on the Historic Courthouse Green.
	2. Consider an energy audit for county-owned buildings to identify potential cost savings.



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**Public Facilities & Services: Special Action Projects**

Public facilities and services provide the supporting infrastructure for many important governmental activities that citizens and visitors need. The following paragraphs discuss some initial projects that can assist the County in progressing toward the established goals and strategies for Public Facilities and Services.

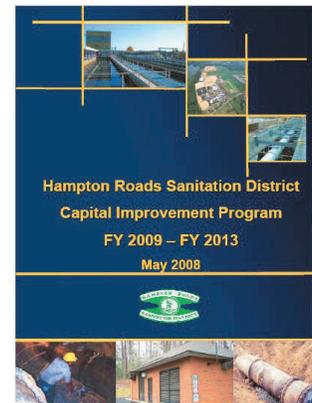
**Telecommunications and Broadband**

High-speed broadband and cutting-edge telecommunication technology are important to businesses and citizens. The broadband initiative is a County priority with many governmental and private partners involved in expanding services. Continued improvements in telecommunications and broadband should be promoted.



**Water and Sanitary Sewer Improvements**

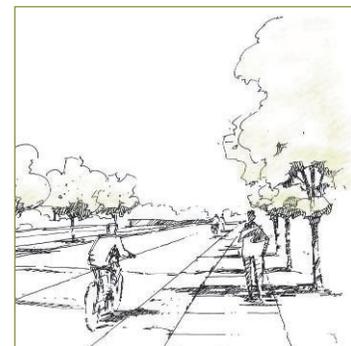
Implementation of Phase 1 of the Mathews Sanitary Sewer Transmission Force Main is complete and has provided better wastewater management in Mathews Court House. Except for the new YMCA facility, no expansion is currently planned for the Hudgins and Cobbs Creek/Dixie communities. In addition, implementation will provide expanded opportunities for managing additional development along the project corridor. Options should be pursued for including conduit for broadband within the corridor, as well as considering bicycle or pedestrian trails within the right-of-way corridor. Both options provide public benefits and can be incorporated easily into the project.



Another public facility investment for the County could be a public water system to serve Mathews Court House. This project has been under consideration for several years. Other water supply projects that could be initiated may include: more stringent County standards for community water systems, well-protection measures, and increased septic system pump-out programs.

**Bike Route Planning**

Signage of significant bike routes may be one means of increasing public awareness of bicyclists and identifying designated biking corridors within the County. Funds are available through VDOT to assist in this signing effort.





## Mathews County Comprehensive Plan 2030

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## **Environment**

The environment of Mathews County is the major contributor to the overall quality of life and general economy of the County. The area's natural resources – waterways, shorelines, wetlands, forests, fields, flora and fauna provide sustenance and quality recreation for County residents, businesses and visitors. The County is fortunate to be adjacent to the Chesapeake Bay. Yet, this exceptional resource requires careful and meticulous planning and oversight to maintain its environmental features and sensitive ecosystem.



The public responsibility for protecting environmental quality and maintaining the delicate balance between nature and development lies with many local, state and federal agencies who must work collaboratively. Citizens and businesses also have an important responsibility to protect and maintain the quality of the environment in the County. Often, that recognition for environmental stewardship and pursuit of the common good falls secondary to personal interests; consequently, public education and regulatory controls are the tools most used to achieve established goals and benchmarks.

Mathews County should be and can be a model community for environmental stewardship and protection; its proud maritime heritage and prosperity has provided a stable foundation for generations and should continue fostering future generations. The quality of life that Mathews' residents enjoy today, and have enjoyed for generations, depends on strong environmental leadership.



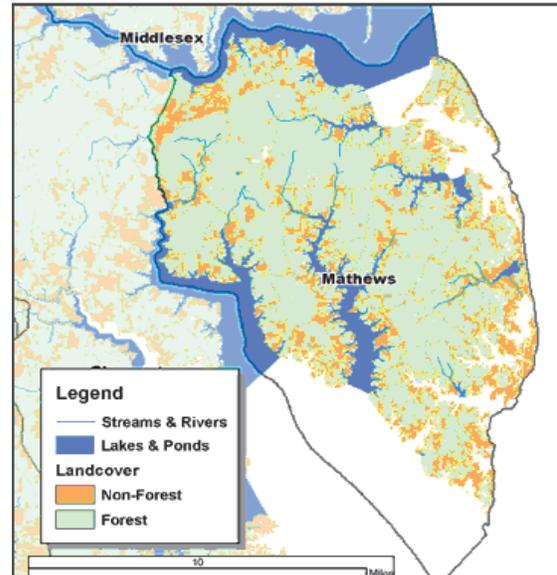


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**Forests and Agriculture**

Based on information available from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Virginia Tech Department of Forestry, approximately 62% of the land cover in Mathews County is forest. These forests are privately owned. Forests are comprised of four different types: loblolly-shortleaf pine; oak-pine; oak-hickory; and oak-gum-cypress. The top ten species are loblolly pine, American holly, sweetgum, red maple, swamp tupelo, sourwood, blackgum, black cherry, hornbeam, and sassafras.

Over the past several decades there has been increased harvesting of these forests for lumber to meet market demands. In addition, changes in the water table and natural vegetative succession have affected forested lands, diminishing County resources.



Source: Virginia Department of Forestry 2003.

Of importance worthy of greater conservation efforts are the maritime forests of Mathews County. These forests are important coastal habitats that are now challenged by rising sea levels, erosion and land subsidence. They are important because of their ability to tolerate salinity, stabilize soils, withstand coastal storms, and provide refuge habitat. The documented maritime forests in Mathews County are shown on the map on the following page.

In addition to forests, much of the soils in the County are valued as important to agriculture. Unfortunately, poor drainage has diminished the value of some of these areas. The most productive soils are located near the shorelines of the County. These prime agricultural soils are shown on the map following the Maritime Forests map. “Prime farmland” has the best physical and chemical characteristics for producing crops.

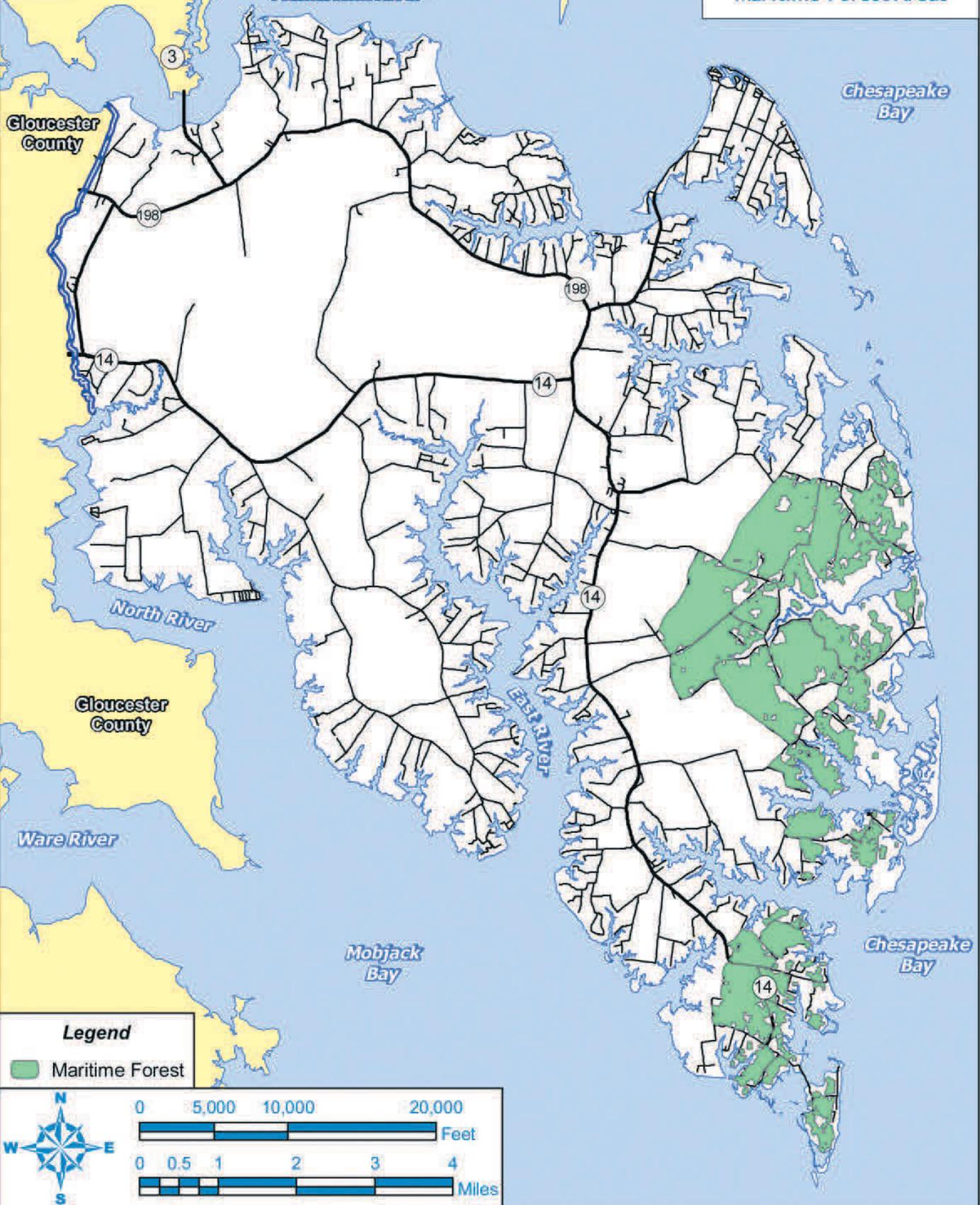


Middlesex County

Mathews County  
Comprehensive Plan  
2030



Maritime Forest Areas



**Legend**

Maritime Forest



0 5,000 10,000 20,000

Feet

0 0.5 1 2 3 4

Miles



Middlesex County

Mathews County  
Comprehensive Plan  
2030



Prime Farmland

Plankatank River

Chesapeake Bay

Gloucester County

Gloucester County

Ware River

Mobjack Bay

Chesapeake Bay

North River

EDGE RIVER

**Legend**

 Prime Farmland

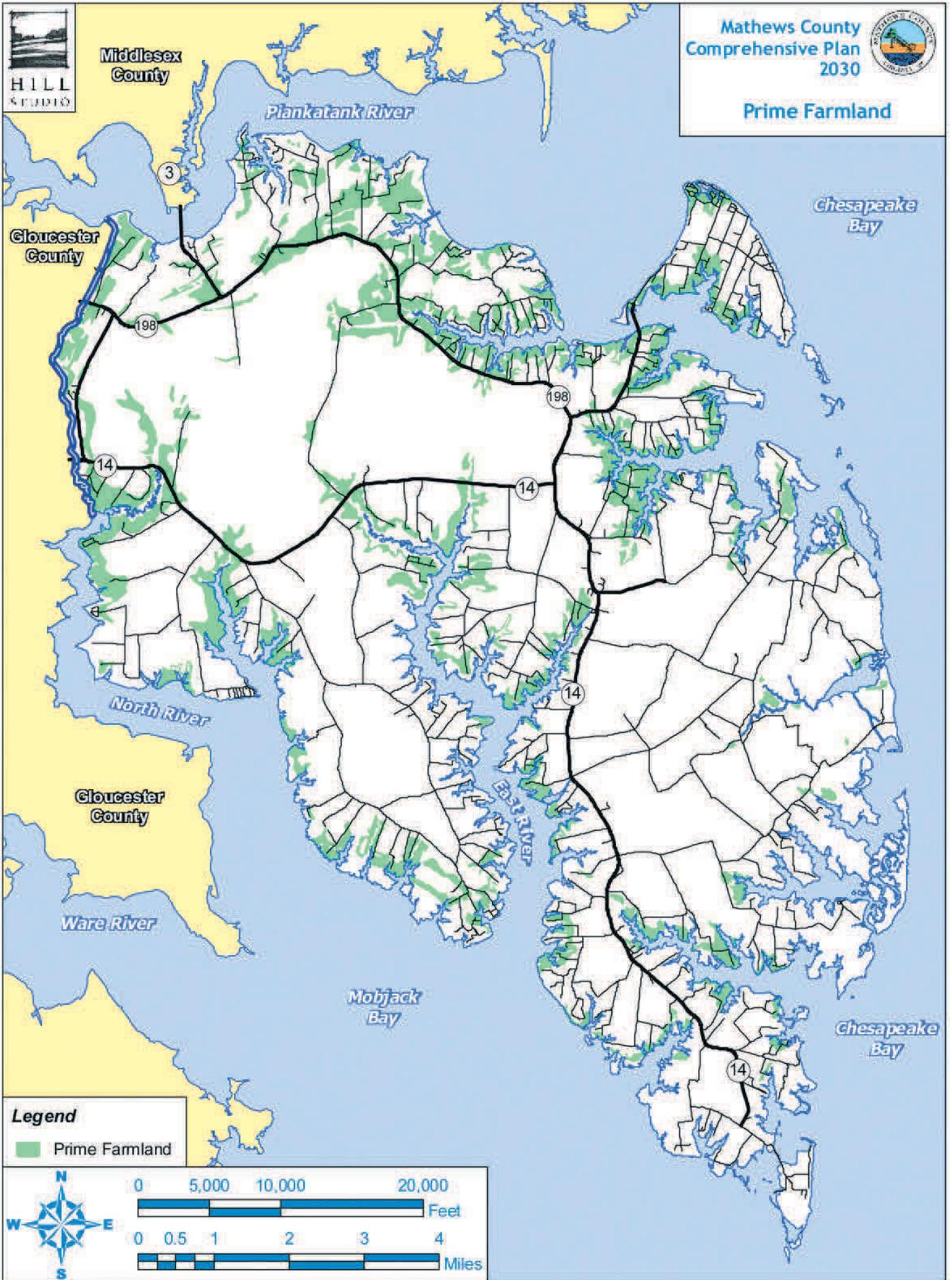


0 5,000 10,000 20,000

 Feet

0 0.5 1 2 3 4

 Miles





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**Coastal Resource Management**

Coastal ecosystems reside at the interface between the land and water, and are naturally very complex. They perform a vast array of functions by way of shoreline stabilization, improved water quality, and habitat for marine organisms; from which humans derive direct and indirect benefits.

The science behind coastal ecosystem resource management has revealed that traditional resource management practices limit the ability of the coastal ecosystem to perform many of these essential functions. The loss of these services has already been noted throughout coastal communities in Virginia because of development in coastal zone areas coupled with common erosion control practices. Beaches and dunes are diminishing due to a reduction in a natural sediment supply. Wetlands are drowning in place as sea levels rise and barriers to inland migration have been created by construction of bulkheads and rip-rap revetments. There is great concern on the part of the Commonwealth that the continued armoring of shorelines and construction within the coastal area will threaten the long-term viability of coastal ecosystems under current and projected sea level rise.

In the 1980s, interest arose in the use of planted wetlands to provide natural shoreline erosion control. Today, a full spectrum of living shoreline design options is available to address the various energy settings and erosion problems found. Depending on the site characteristics, they range from marsh plantings to the use of rock sills in combination with beach nourishment. Research continues to support that these approaches combat shoreline erosion, minimize impacts to the natural coastal ecosystem and reinforce the principle that an integrated approach for managing tidal shorelines enhances the probability that the resources will be sustained. Therefore, adoption of new guidance and shoreline best management practices for coastal communities is now necessary to ensure that functions performed by coastal ecosystems will be preserved and the benefits derived by humans from coastal ecosystems will be maintained into the future.

In 2011, the Virginia Assembly passed legislation to amend §28.2-1100 and §28.2-104.1 of the Code of Virginia and added section §15.2-2223.2, to codify a new directive for shoreline management in Tidewater Virginia. In accordance with section §15.2-2223.2, all local governments shall include in the next revision of their comprehensive plan beginning in 2013, guidance prepared by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) regarding coastal resource management and, more specifically, guidance for the appropriate selection of living shoreline management practices. The legislation establishes the policy that “living shorelines” are the preferred alternative for stabilizing eroding shorelines. This guidance, known as Comprehensive Coastal Resource Management Guidance, is being prepared by VIMS for localities within the Tidewater region of Virginia and shared through their Comprehensive Coastal Resources



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Management Portal (CCRMP). It explicitly outlines where and what new shoreline best management practices should be considered where coastal modifications are necessary to reduce shoreline erosion and protect our fragile coastal ecosystems. This guidance will include a full spectrum of appropriate management options which can be used by local governments for site-specific application and consideration of cumulative shoreline impacts. The guidance applies a decision-tree method using a based resource mapping database that will be updated from time to time, and a digital geographic information system model created by VIMS.

The Center for Coastal Resources Management (CCRM) has developed a portal for Mathews County and the guidance information, including Comprehensive Plan guidance, is available through a link to the County's website ([www.co.mathews.va.us](http://www.co.mathews.va.us)) and is found on the Department of Planning, Zoning and Wetlands page. The link to the portal is <http://ccrm.vims.edu/ccrmp/mathews/index.html>.

Several recommendations for adoption identified in the CCRMP for a Comprehensive Plan are:

- Utilize VIMS' CCRMP Shoreline Best Management Practices for management recommendations for all tidal shorelines in the County.
- Consider a policy where the above Shoreline Best Management Practices become the recommended adaptation strategy for erosion control, and where a departure from these recommendations by an applicant wishing to alter the shoreline must be justified at a hearing of the Mathews County Wetlands Board.
- Encourage staff training on decision making tools developed by CCRM at VIMS.
- Follow the development of the state-wide General Permit being developed by VMRC.
- Seek public outreach opportunities to educate citizens and stakeholders on new shoreline management strategies including living shorelines.
- Consider preserving available open space adjacent to marsh lands to allow for inland retreat of the marshes under rising sea levels.
- Evaluate and consider cost-share opportunities for construction of living shorelines.

#### **Natural Heritage Resources**

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) identifies and protects natural heritage resources, maintaining a comprehensive database of documented occurrences. The database includes conservation sites that contain known populations of natural heritage resources and adjacent habitat vital for their protection and stewardship.

The DCR database is useful for aiding local and regional planning; screening development projects for potential impacts on natural heritage resources; identifying targets for acquisition and easements and guiding property restoration activities.



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There are several areas in Mathews County designated for conservation areas including Bethel Beach Natural Area Preserve, New Point Comfort Preserve, and most of the eastern shoreline of the County toward Milford Haven and Piankatank River.

Bethel Beach Conservation Site has a significant biodiversity ranking and features a long sandy beach, low dunes and extensive salt marsh. The Beach is essential habitat for several rare species, including the federally threatened northeastern beach tiger beetle (*Cicindela dorsalis*), which spends its entire two-year life cycle on the beach. Other species of special concern are the least tern (*Sterna antillarum*) and the sea-beach knotweed (*Polygonum glaucum*). Behind Bethel Beach is an extensive saltmarsh. This marsh is one of the few places in Virginia documented as a nesting site for the Northern Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), a hawk that usually nests in more northern regions.

As development of natural areas and forest lands increases in Mathews County, natural heritage resources may be threatened. Forest fragmentation, introduction of invasive flora and fauna, and alteration of the local hydrology through land disturbance and/or sea level rise may change or eliminate habitat.

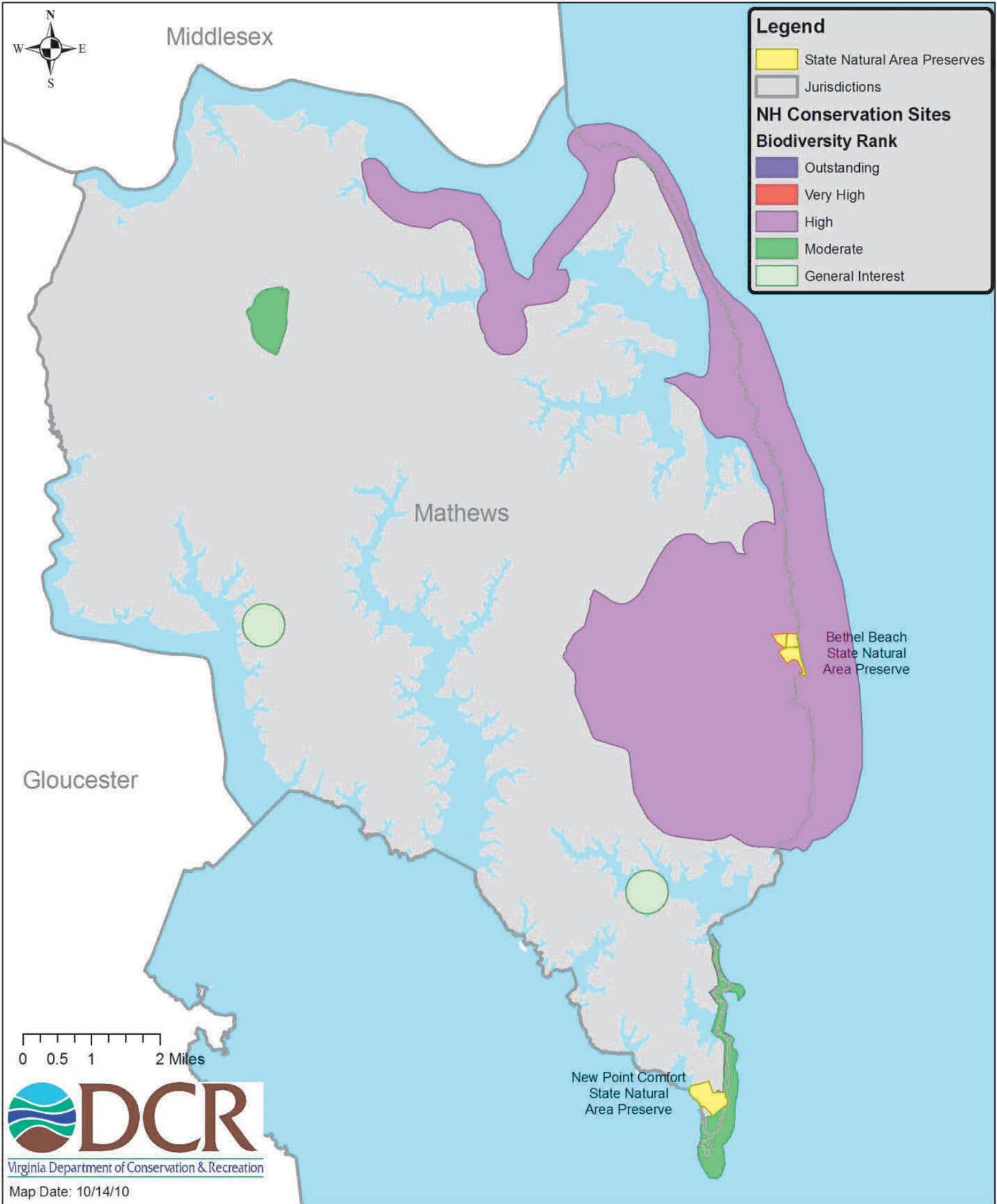
#### **Useful DCR References and Resources:**

**Bethel Beach Natural Area Preserve Fact Sheet. Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Natural Heritage Program.**

[http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural\\_heritage/documents/pgbethel.pdf](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/documents/pgbethel.pdf)

**Definitions of Abbreviations used on Natural Heritage Resource Lists**

[http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural\\_heritage/help.shtml](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/help.shtml)





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**Scenic Rivers**

Several waterways contribute to the region’s natural beauty and economy by supporting the tourism and maritime industries. Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation’s Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOP) identifies scenic rivers and bodies of water throughout the Commonwealth as part of the Virginia Scenic River Program. Virginia Scenic Rivers Program’s intent is to identify, designate and help protect rivers and streams that possess outstanding scenic, recreational, historic and natural characteristics of statewide significance for future generations. VOP states that as of 2013, there are no designated scenic rivers in the Middle Peninsula Planning District though several rivers are being evaluated for consideration. The Piankatank River is considered “qualifying” as a scenic river from Route 17 in Middlesex, Gloucester and Mathews Counties to the Chesapeake Bay. The Virginia Outdoors Plan also recommends several other waterways in Mathews County as scenic resources, including Hills Bay, Mobjack Bay, Chesapeake Bay and New Point Comfort.

**Important Bird Areas**

The Virginia Audubon Society has identified Important Bird Areas in Mathews County. Conservation lands in the county include Bethel Beach and New Point Comfort Natural Area Preserves. Extensive low marsh areas within these lands support significant populations of Clapper Rail, Seaside Sparrows, and Marsh Wrens, while tide pools support a large diversity of breeding species as well as migrant shorebirds. Large high marsh areas provide habitat for breeding populations of Sedge Wrens, Northern Harriers, Prairie Warblers, and Eastern Meadowlarks. Least Terns and American Oystercatchers are found on sandy berms and barriers while scattered pine hummocks and adjacent maritime forests support significant populations of Brown-headed Nuthatches and Chuck-will’s-widows. Isolated marsh islands support breeding American Black Ducks and American Oystercatchers. A map showing the Mathews Loop of the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail is on the Recreation Facilities Map.

**Threatened and Endangered Species**

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Virginia Outdoors Plan (2013) indicates that there is one Federal Threatened Species, the Northeastern Beach Tiger Beetle, in Mathews County.

A status review by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) in February 2009 recommended that the Tiger Beetle be reclassified from threatened to endangered. Since the last comprehensive survey conducted by the USFWS in 2008, total beetle numbers have declined 70% throughout their range along the western shoreline of the Chesapeake Bay in Virginia.

In addition to the Tiger Beetle there are various State species that are considered threatened, endangered or of special concern. These species are listed in the table on the following page and include amphibians, birds, beetles and plants.



## Mathews County Comprehensive Plan 2030

### IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow: Conditions, Opportunities, Policies, and Strategies

Threatened and Endangered Species of Mathews County							
Scientific Name	Common Name	Global Rank	State Rank	Federal Status	State Status	Last Year Observed	Site Name
<b>Amphibians</b>							
<i>Ambystoma mabeei</i>	Mabee's Salamander	G4	S1S2		LT	2000	Blakes Ponds
<i>Ambystoma tigrinum</i>	Tiger Salamander	G5	S1		LE	1988	
<i>Hyla gratiosa</i>	Barking Treefrog	G5	S1		LT	1984	
<b>Birds</b>							
<i>Ammodramus caudacutus</i>	Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow	G4	S2B,S3N		SC	1985	
<i>Asio flammeus</i>	Short-eared Owl	G5	S1B,S3N			1988	
<i>Cistithorus platensis</i>	Sedge Wren	G5	S1B,S1S2N		SC	1992	New Pt Comfort
<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Northern Harrier	G5	S1S2B,S3N		SC	1994	Bethel Beach
<i>Sterna antillarum</i>	Least Tern	G4	S2B		SC	2007	Bethel Beach
<b>Communities</b>							
	Coastal Plain Depression Wetland	G3	SNR			1988	Blakes Ponds
<b>Invertebrates</b>							
<i>Cicindela dorsalis</i>	Northeastern Beach Tiger Beetle	G3G4T2	S2	LT	LT		New Point Comfort, Bethel Beach
<b>Vascular Plants</b>							
<i>Chelone obliqua</i>	Red Turtlehead	G4	S1			1979	
<i>Mitreola petiolata</i>	Lax Hornpod	G5	S1			1979	
<i>Polygonum glaucum</i>	Sea-beach Knotweed	G3	S2			2007	Bethel Beach
<b>Natural Area Preserves</b>							
Bethel Beach							
New Point Comfort							
<b>State Ranking:</b> S1-Extremely rare; S2-Very rare; S3-Rare to uncommon; S#B-Breeding; S#N-Non-breeding <b>Global Ranking:</b> G1-Extremely rare; G2-Very rare; G3-Rare to uncommon; G4-Common; G5-Very common <b>Federal Status:</b> LE= Listed Endangered; LT= Listed Threatened <b>State Status:</b> LE= Listed Endangered; LT=Listed Threatened; SC= Special Concern							

Source: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, 2010.



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Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program

Mathews County is included in the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program(CZM). This program was established in 1986 (and reauthorized in 2006) to protect and manage Virginia’s coastal areas. It is part of a national coastal zone management program coordinated by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) which provides funding for programs. The goals of the program are to protect and restore coastal resources, habitats, and species; restore and maintain the water quality of coastal waters; protect air quality; reduce and prevent losses of coastal habitat, life and property; provide for viable fisheries and aquaculture; promote ecotourism and increase public access to coastal waters; promote renewable energy production; ensure appropriate development on coastal lands; minimize coastal resource land use conflicts; and promote education. In Virginia, it is administered through a network of participating state agencies including: Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (lead agency), Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Virginia Marine Resources Commission, Virginia Department of Health, and the Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Department; assisting agencies include the Virginia Departments of Historic Resources, Forestry, Agriculture and Consumer Services, and Transportation, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Virginia Economic Development Partnership, and the Coastal Planning District Commissions.

Over the past several years, the CZM program has played a significant role in Mathews County’s efforts to address environmental needs and issues by providing funding for various projects. MPPDC acquired funding through the CZM program to administer various shoreline erosion projects in the Middle Peninsula region. More specifically, the CZM program has made it possible for MPPDC and Mathews County to explore and formulate possible solutions to issues such as ditch maintenance, sea level rise and development impacts associated with recurrent flooding.

Localities subject to the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act



Source: VA Dept. Conservation and Recreation



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**Chesapeake Bay Act**

In 1988, the State of Virginia adopted the *Chesapeake Bay Act* which established the foundation for public policy and planning for the Chesapeake Bay, the largest estuary in the United States, and adjacent lands. In 2000, Virginia signed *Chesapeake 2000*, a partnership agreement with Maryland, Pennsylvania, the District of Columbia, and the Environmental Protection Agency, that committed the Commonwealth to a shared vision for a restored ecosystem and goals for the future related to living resources, habitat protection, water quality, land use and stewardship.

***Introductory Paragraph - 1988 Virginia Chesapeake Bay Act***

*“Healthy state and local economies and a healthy Chesapeake Bay are integrally related; balanced economic development and water quality protection are not mutually exclusive. The protection of the public interest in the Chesapeake Bay, its tributaries, and other state waters and the promotion of the general welfare of the people of the Commonwealth require that: (i) the counties, cities, and towns of Tidewater Virginia incorporate general water quality protection measures into their comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, and subdivision ordinances; (ii) the counties, cities, and towns of Tidewater Virginia establish programs, in accordance with criteria established by the Commonwealth, that define and protect certain lands, hereinafter called Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas, which if improperly developed may result in substantial damage to the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries; (iii) the Commonwealth make its resources available to local governing bodies by providing financial and technical assistance, policy guidance, and oversight when requested or otherwise required to carry out and enforce the provisions of this chapter; and (iv) all agencies of the Commonwealth exercise their delegated authority in a manner consistent with water quality protection provisions of local comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, and subdivision ordinances when it has been determined that they comply with the provisions of this chapter.”*

The Chesapeake Bay Act requires local governments to incorporate water quality protection measures into adopted plans and regulations; to define certain lands important to the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay; and authorized the Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Board (CBLAB) to administer the program. The promulgated regulations developed by the Board required that local governments develop local programs to comply with the Chesapeake Bay Act and to promote high water quality, prevent pollution, and encourage water resource conservation. Every local program must incorporate the Chesapeake Bay Act provisions into the comprehensive plan, define important areas, and include measures to protect water quality in zoning, subdivision and erosion control ordinances. Planning tools governing development in the permitted land uses and development in sensitive areas should be consistent with the regulations and requirements set forth in the Chesapeake Bay Act.

Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas are defined in the Act as Resource Protection Areas and Resource Management Areas. These areas have specific elements defined to protect, as well as general performance criteria that must be met for any new or expanded land development.



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- **Resource Protection Areas (RPA)** include: tidal wetlands; non-tidal wetlands connected by surface flow and contiguous to tidal wetlands or water bodies with perennial flow; tidal shores; and other lands considered by the local government that have intrinsic water quality value due to ecological and biological processes they perform or that are sensitive to impacts. In addition, there is a required buffer of not less than 100 feet adjacent to these lands.
- **Resource Management Areas (RMA)** include: floodplains; highly erodible soils, including steep slopes; highly permeable soils; non-tidal wetlands not included in the RPA; land areas less than five acres surrounded by such land types; and a minimum area 150 feet in width landward of the RPA on lands where none of the RMA listed land types exist; and other lands considered by the local government to be necessary in protecting water quality. The RMA should be large enough to provide significant water quality protection in accordance with adopted land use and development performance criteria to reduce non-point source pollution.

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality's Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Program provides local program training, public education, technical assistance, and works with local governments to ensure that their programs follow the adopted regulations. Regional planning district commissions also act as liaisons in aiding local governments. Implementation of the program for localities was scheduled in three phases:

- Phase I – designate and map Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas, amend local ordinances to incorporate performance criteria, and establish a development review process;
- Phase II – review and revise the local comprehensive plan to include information on certain land use and development factors affecting water quality (e.g., identification of Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas, physical constraints to development, character and location of commercial and recreational fisheries and other aquatic resources, water supply and protection, shoreline and soil erosion, existing and future land use, public and private waterfront access, and sources of water pollution). In addition, the comprehensive plan is to provide public policy statements relative to protecting water quality and implementation methods.
- Phase III – review and revise local development ordinances (zoning, subdivision, erosion and sediment control, etc.) to include specific notations on plats and development plans, and to incorporate provisions for minimizing land disturbance, preserving indigenous vegetation, and minimizing impervious cover.

Compliance reviews for consistency with Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act regulations should be done every five years, when feasible, in conjunction with the community's update of the comprehensive plan. As of 2008, an Annual Implementation Report is required which describes



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the community's development activity, history of exceptions, best management practices utilized, septic pump-out data, mapping of the RPA, and any violations.

To date, Mathews County has complied with Phases I and II of the program; County ordinances and designation of areas were found consistent, as was the 2001 Comprehensive Plan. For the benefit of consistency, the *Water Quality Improvement Plan* section of the 2001 Plan is included as an appendix to this document for the purposes of reference and the Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Board approved compliance to date. The updated Comprehensive Plan 2030 builds upon this previous document, updates information and expands development policies as they apply to protecting water quality and sensitive environmental areas. In addition, future land use categories have been expanded to encourage land conservation and best management practices for development (see Future Land Use Section for details).

In 2016, MPPDC requested and received funding from the Department of Environmental Quality to assist Mathews County with Phase III Performance Standards implementation which coincides with the Comprehensive plan update and subdivision and zoning ordinance review. A part of the review process is to address deficiencies found during the Advisory Review conducted by DEQ. The County has adopted a Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area Overlay District as a part of the zoning ordinance that establishes Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area boundaries and buffers, land use and development performance criteria, water quality and environmental impact assessment requirements, and development plan review process. The ordinance is administered by the Mathews County Zoning Administrator and the Wetlands Zoning Board (tidal wetlands), which is served by staff of the Department of Planning and Zoning.

A Compliance Review & Analysis of the County's land use ordinances and policies was conducted by the Berkley Group as a consultant to the MPPDC. Their scope of work was to assess Mathews County's conformance with the Phase III requirements. The Berkley Group completed their analysis in August, 2016 and provided a report to the County. The findings of the report determined that the County's zoning and subdivision ordinances complied as follows:

- The Zoning Ordinance effectively minimizes land disturbances through provisions for preserving open space, clustering, and clearing and grading requirements.
- The Zoning Ordinance effectively preserves indigenous vegetation through provisions to preserve and maintain vegetation within buffer areas, inclusion of provisions in the landscape plan to protect existing trees and other vegetation during clearing and grading, and requirements for environmental site assessments through a Water Quality Impact Assessment (WQIA).
- The Zoning Ordinance includes several provisions to ensure impervious cover is minimized. Such provisions include minimization of parking space size, alternative



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surfacing, shared parking, minimum parking lot aisle widths, shared driveways, and single-travel aisles in parking areas.

- County Code effectively protects water quality through the requirement to develop erosion and sediment control and stormwater management plans for land-disturbing activities exceeding 2,500 square feet in area
- Resource Protection Area land categories are effectively preserved.
- Resource Management Area land categories are compatible with requirements of the CBPA.

The Berkley Group's report also included the following recommended next steps:

- Require riparian vegetated buffers adjacent to non-perennial water bodies or wetlands that are not classified as RPAs.
- Require the preservation of indigenous vegetation in open spaces of cluster development.
- Encourage the use of vegetated best management practices (BMPs) or additional vegetation as part of traditional BMPs to enhance pollutant removal
- Include standards to promote replanting of cleared areas to protect and improve water quality.

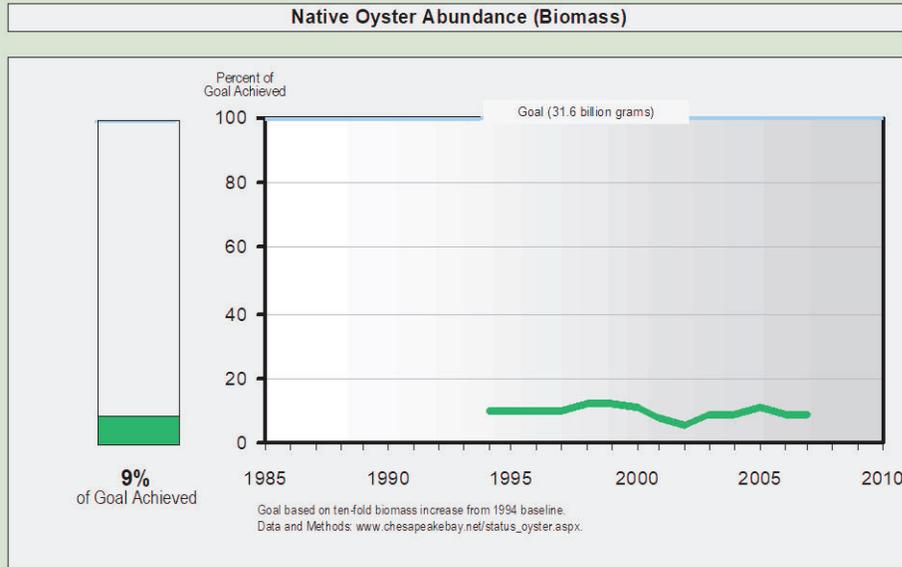
In a 2008 report to Congress, EPA advised that "Despite substantial effort and progress by the full spectrum of partners, the Bay's health remains degraded. Restoration efforts are being overtaken by current trends. For example, population in the watershed has grown nearly 17 million bringing more roads, homes, industrial and business parks, and other impervious surfaces which harden the landscape. Development has drastically altered the natural hydrology and thereby the natural filtering systems for nutrient and sediment pollution."

A 2014 report by the Chesapeake Bay Program confirms that the Bay's condition, while improved, remains poor. Scientists monitoring important habitats, fish and shellfish and water quality measures, report that Bay's habitat lower food web remains far below what is needed to support thriving populations of underwater life.



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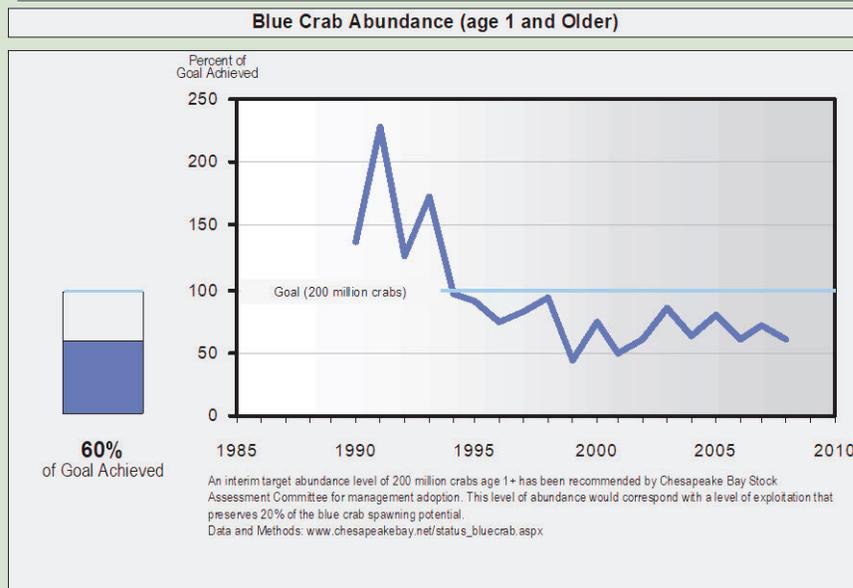
Native Oyster Abundance (Biomass)



Chesapeake Bay Health and Restoration Assessment: Ecosystem Health March 17, 2009

1

Blue Crab Abundance



Chesapeake Bay Health and Restoration Assessment: Ecosystem Health March 17, 2009

1

Source: Chesapeake Bay Program, [www.chesapeakebay.net](http://www.chesapeakebay.net)



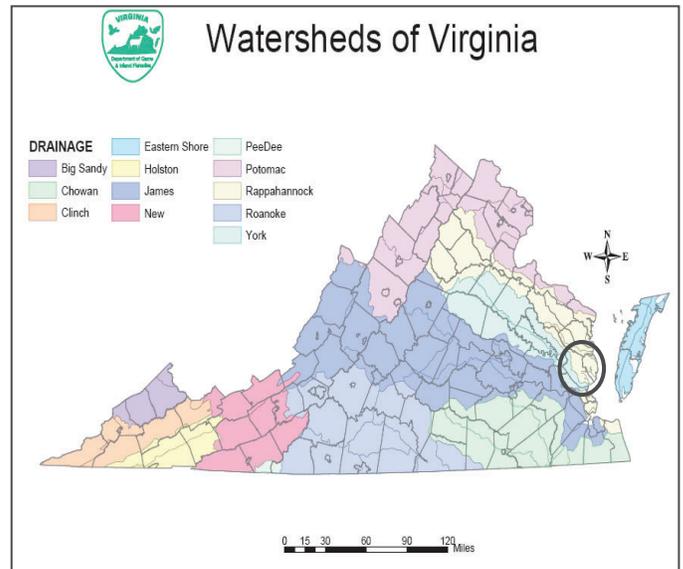
IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow: Conditions, Opportunities, Policies, and Strategies

Virginia’s goal is to reduce phosphorus and nitrogen loads through loan and grant funds for improvements to wastewater systems, land conservation, and BMPs for agriculture, septic systems, stormwater management and erosion and sediment control. At the federal level, an Executive Order for Chesapeake Bay Protection and Restoration (signed May 12, 2009) established a Federal Leadership Committee to oversee coordination of programs and activities involved with Bay restoration; to strengthen accountability of federal agencies; to collaborate with the various state governments; and to publish an annual Chesapeake Bay Action Plan (with recommended funding) and Progress Report for Bay restoration.

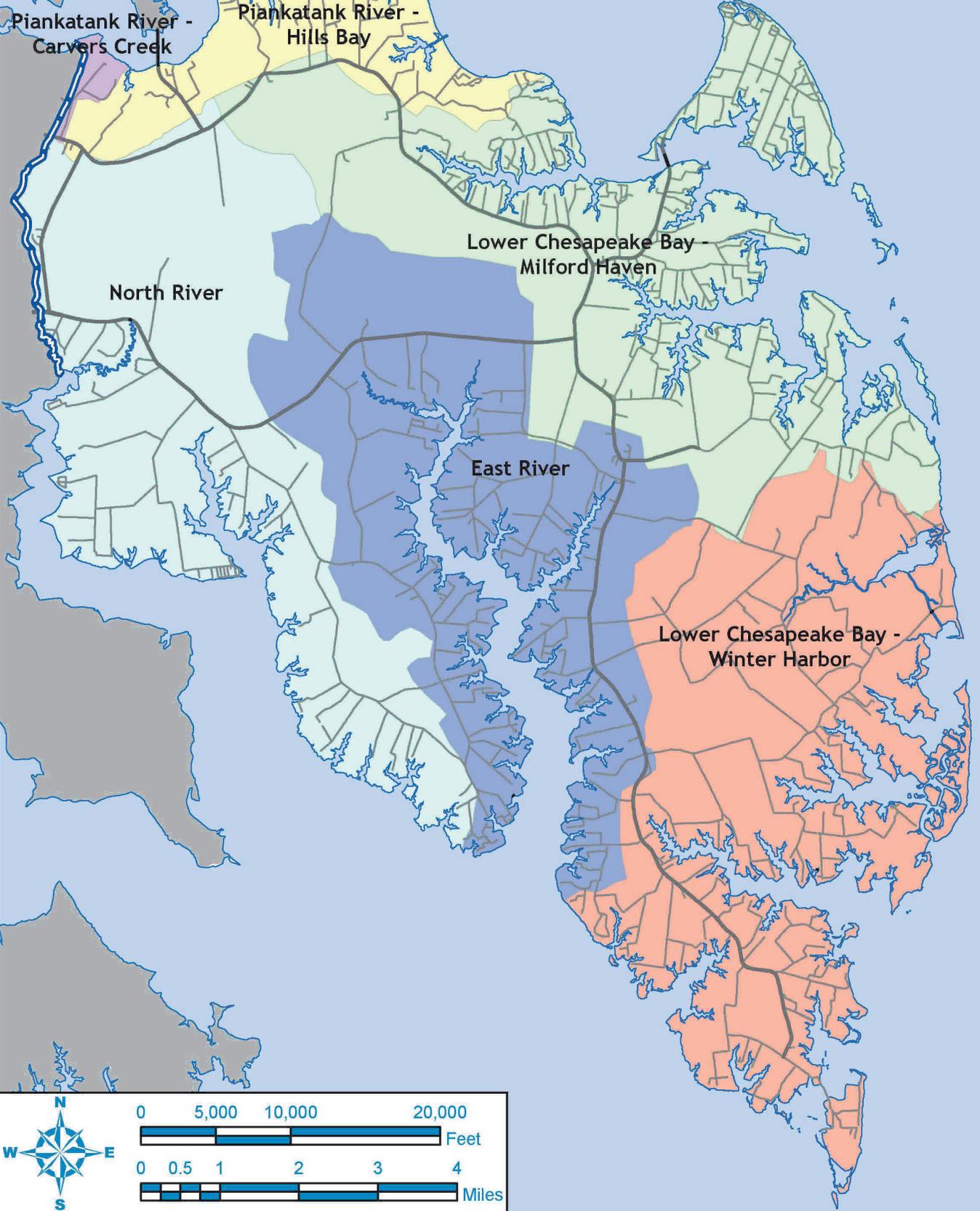
The following sections provide more detailed background information and recommendations for the purposes of updating information and meeting the Comprehensive Plan requirements for the Chesapeake Bay Act.

**Watersheds and Existing Water Quality**

A general map showing the watersheds of Virginia is shown to the right. Mathews County lies entirely within the Great Wicomico-Piankatank sub-basin. This sub-basin is divided into two watersheds, the Lower Chesapeake Bay – Piankatank River, and the Lower Chesapeake Bay – Mobjack Bay. These watersheds are divided into three subwatersheds each: Piankatank River–Carvers Creek, Piankatank River–Hills Bay, Lower Chesapeake Bay–Milford Haven in the Piankatank River watershed, Lower Chesapeake Bay–Winter Harbor, East River, and North River in the Mobjack Bay watershed. These subwatersheds are illustrated on the map on the following page.



Source: Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.





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In accordance with the Clean Water Act, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality assess water quality and classify waters using five defined categories. These categories are shown and defined in the table to the right. A Draft 2014 *Water Quality Assessment 305(b) and 303(d) Integrated Report* provides a summary of the water quality conditions in Virginia from January 1, 2007, through December 31, 2012.

A summary of water quality conditions for various waters in Mathews County (2012) is described in the table on the following page. In general, most of the coastal watersheds in the County are impaired waters and classified as Category 4 or 5. Most impairment is due to fecal coliform levels which pose threats to shellfish harvesting. The sources of pollution in the watersheds were listed as either non-point source or unknown.

Water Quality Assessment Categories	Definition
Category 1	Water fully supports all designated uses.
Category 2	Water fully supports all designated uses that data are available for, but there is either insufficient or no information regarding uses that there is no data for.
Category 3	There is insufficient information to determine if any designated uses are being met.
Category 4	Waters are impaired or threatened but do not need a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL).
Category 5	Waters are impaired and do need a TMDL.

In June, 2013, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) in cooperation with stakeholders of Mathews, Middlesex and Gloucester Counties, developed a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Implementation Plan to address impairments to waterways and impacts on shellfish due to elevated levels of coliform bacteria and to develop actions to reduce bacteria sources. In Mathews, the waters that were identified as having unacceptable levels of coliform bacteria are the Gwynn’s Island and Milford Haven watersheds which include:

- Edwards Creek
- Queens Creek
- Stutts Creek
- Morris Creek
- Billups Creek
- Lanes Creek
- Hudgins Creek
- Barn Creek
- The Lower Piankatank River watershed which includes Cobbs Creek.



*IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow:  
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## Recommendations

Based upon stakeholder input from public meetings, the TMDL Implementation Plan recommends various actions to address impairments to shellfish waters:

- Develop and implement residential education programs focused on septic system maintenance, pet waste management and nuisance wildlife management
- Exclude livestock from waterways
- Establish and maintain vegetated buffers and wetlands
- Promote oyster aquaculture as a method to improve water quality
- Maintain roadside and outfall ditches to reduce the potential for coliform bacteria contamination of waterways when stormwater backs up and overflows into wooded wildlife areas where additional fecal coliform from wildlife waste could reach streams.

**A map of closed and condemned shellfish waters as of July 2010 follows the table. Because these conditions change, the most up-to-date information should be obtained from Division of Shellfish Sanitation, Virginia Department of Health, Richmond, VA 23219, [www.vdh.virginia.gov/shellfish](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/shellfish).**



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Watershed	Supports Uses Cat. 1 & 2	Insufficient Information Cat. 3	Impaired Cat. 4 & 5	Impairment Notes (2009) (For specific information and location, see report)
Barn Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Billups Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Blackwater Creek /Greenmansion Cove			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Burke Mill Stream			X	Recreation - E coli Aquatic Life - Dissolved Oxygen
Chesapeake Bay & Tidal Tributary Segments (various)			X	Aquatic Life - Dissolved Oxygen Aquatic Life - Macrophytes Fish Consumption - PCB Fish Tissue
Cobbs Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Davis Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Doctors Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Dyer Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
East River			X	Shellfishing, Fecal Coliform
Edwards Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Horn Harbor			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Hudgins Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Lanes Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Miles Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Milford Haven			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform Recreation - Enterococcus
Mobjack Bay			X	Aquatic Life - Macrophytes Aquatic Life - Dissolved Oxygen
Morris Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
North River			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Oakland Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Pepper Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Piankatank River			X	Aquatic Life - Bioassessment Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Put In Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Queens Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Raines Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Sloop Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Stutts Creek/Morris Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Tabbs Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Thomas Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Weston Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Whites Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Winder Creek			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform
Winter Harbor			X	Shellfishing - Fecal Coliform

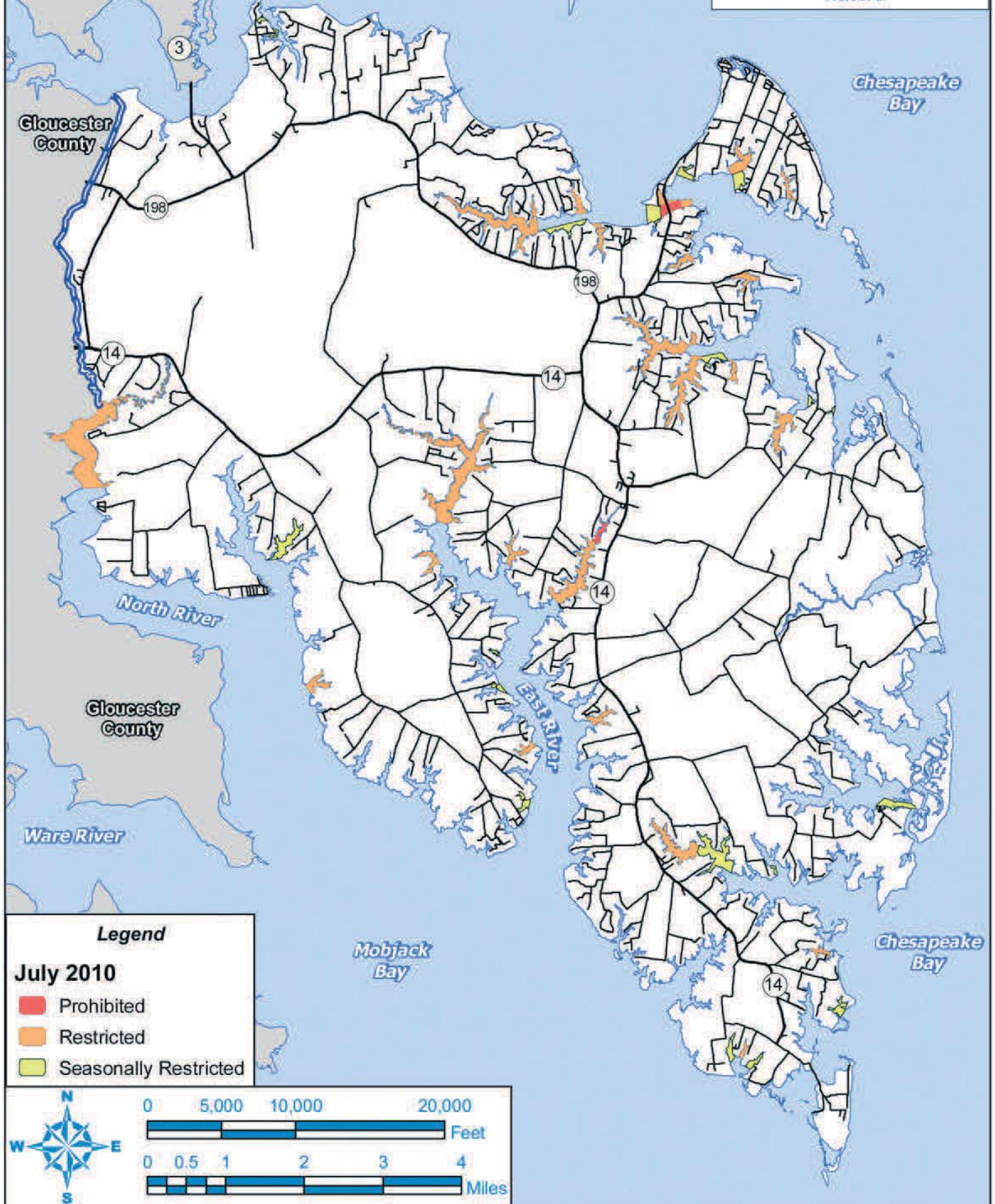


Middlesex County

Mathews County  
Comprehensive Plan  
2030



Impaired Shellfish  
Waters





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#### **Aquatic Resources, Commercial and Recreational Fisheries**

Mathews County is known for its diversity of aquatic resources – natural shorelines, expansive wetlands, and productive environmental habitats. In 2004, VIMS prepared a “Blue Infrastructure” inventory of Virginia’s Coastal Zone<sup>12</sup> that identifies important economic and ecologic aquatic species and resources. These resources included: aquaculture sites, Baylor grounds, anadromous fish streams, oyster reefs, submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV), natural preserves, tidal mudflats and threatened/endangered waters, among others. A map of the blue infrastructure for Mathews County is on the following page. More detailed mapping is available from VIMS at <http://ccrm.vims.edu>. A more current copy of the inventory report is unavailable.

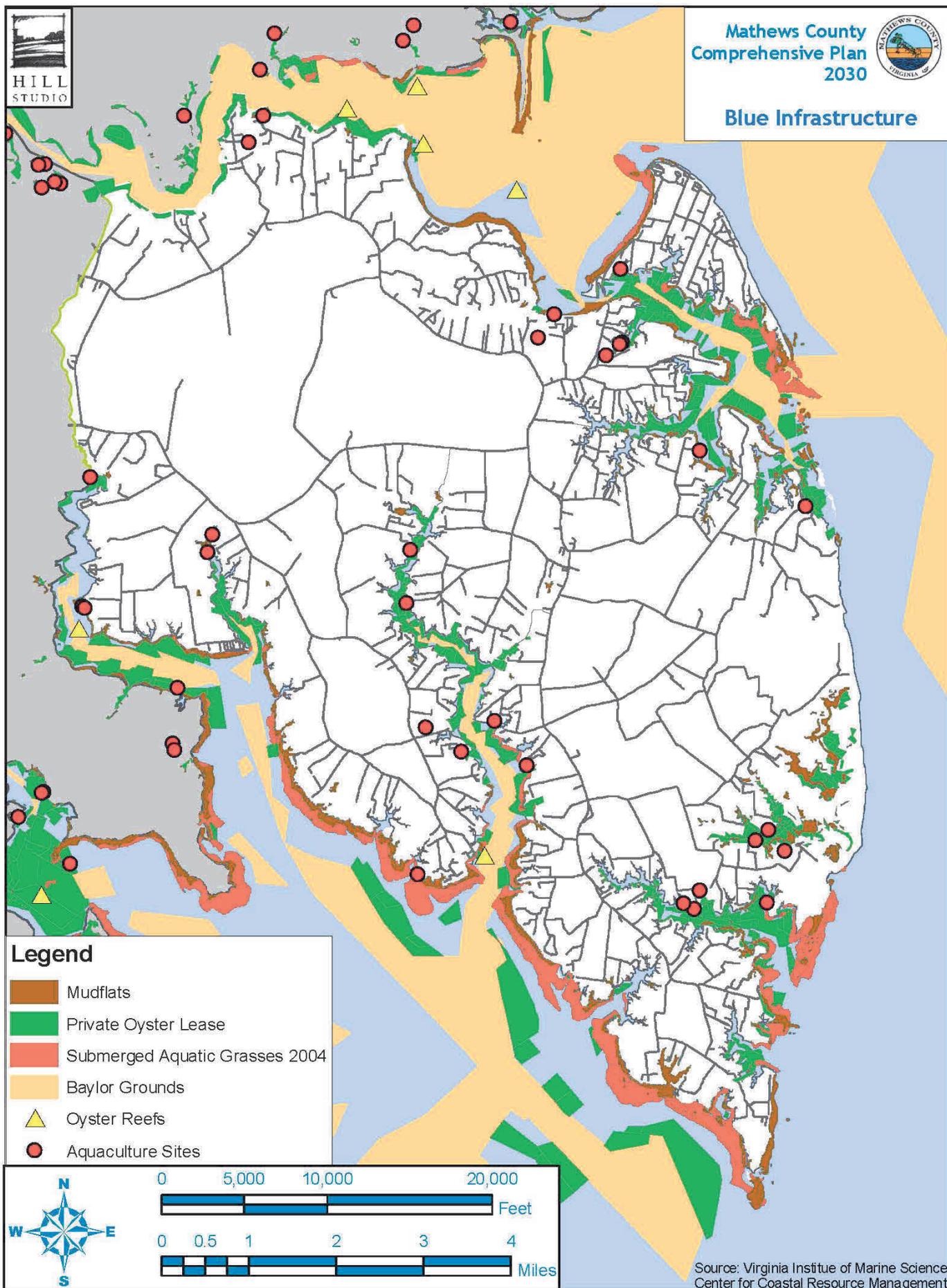
The County continues to work with regional agencies to promote and protect the area’s aquatic resources and commercial fisheries. In 2016, four regional Planning District Commissions (Accomack-Northampton, Hampton Roads, Middle Peninsula, and Northern Neck) produced a Virginia Working Waterfronts Master Plan that identifies working waterfronts across the state and details their contribution to the state’s economy. The report also identifies threats that these coastal economic hubs face, and provides suggested policies for all levels of government to protect these sites. Mathews and the Middle Peninsula PDC have already implemented several of these, including the creation of a regional public access authority and the specific designation of a waterfront business zoning district. A copy of this plan can be viewed at [http://www.mppdc.com/articles/reports/FINAL\\_MPPDC\\_WWF\\_PLAN-RED.pdf](http://www.mppdc.com/articles/reports/FINAL_MPPDC_WWF_PLAN-RED.pdf).

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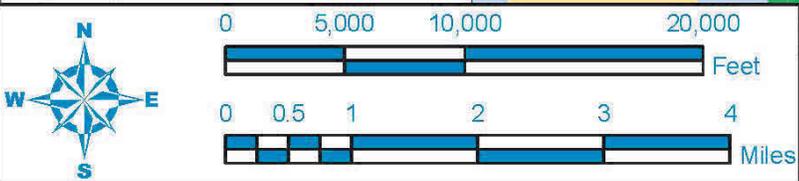
<sup>12</sup> Virginia Institute of Marine Science - Berman, Hershner, and Schatt, Center for Coastal Resources Management. October 2004. *Blue Infrastructure Final Project Report and Deliverables. Blue Infrastructure Criteria and Map.*



Blue Infrastructure



- Legend**
- Mudflats
  - Private Oyster Lease
  - Submerged Aquatic Grasses 2004
  - Baylor Grounds
  - Oyster Reefs
  - Aquaculture Sites



Source: Virginia Institute of Marine Science  
Center for Coastal Resource Management

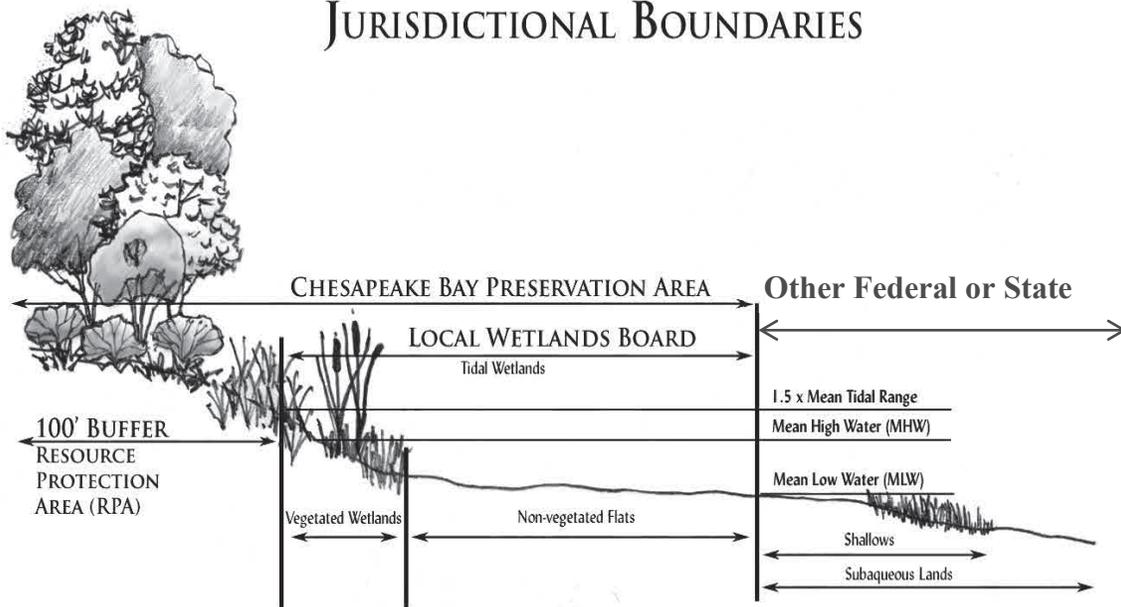


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Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas

A map showing the Chesapeake Bay Resource Protection Area (RPA) and Resource Management Areas (RMA) in Mathews County, as defined by the Chesapeake Bay Act, is depicted on the following page. These areas are regulated by the Mathews County Zoning Ordinance as set forth in the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area Overlay District. The district regulations include required performance criteria for development or redevelopment of land within these areas (e.g., minimal land disturbance, preservation of indigenous vegetation, best management practices, minimal impervious cover, control of stormwater runoff, etc.) and establish procedures for developing property. Development activities in a tidal wetland, such as a dock, shore stabilization, removal of vegetation, etc., must be approved by the County Wetlands Board. In addition, other federal and state agencies (e.g., Army Corps of Engineers, Virginia Marine Resources Commission, etc.) may be involved in development approvals. The graphic below provides a summary of the varied interests involved in reviewing activities in tidal areas.

JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES



Source: VA Department of Conservation and Recreation, Division of Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance

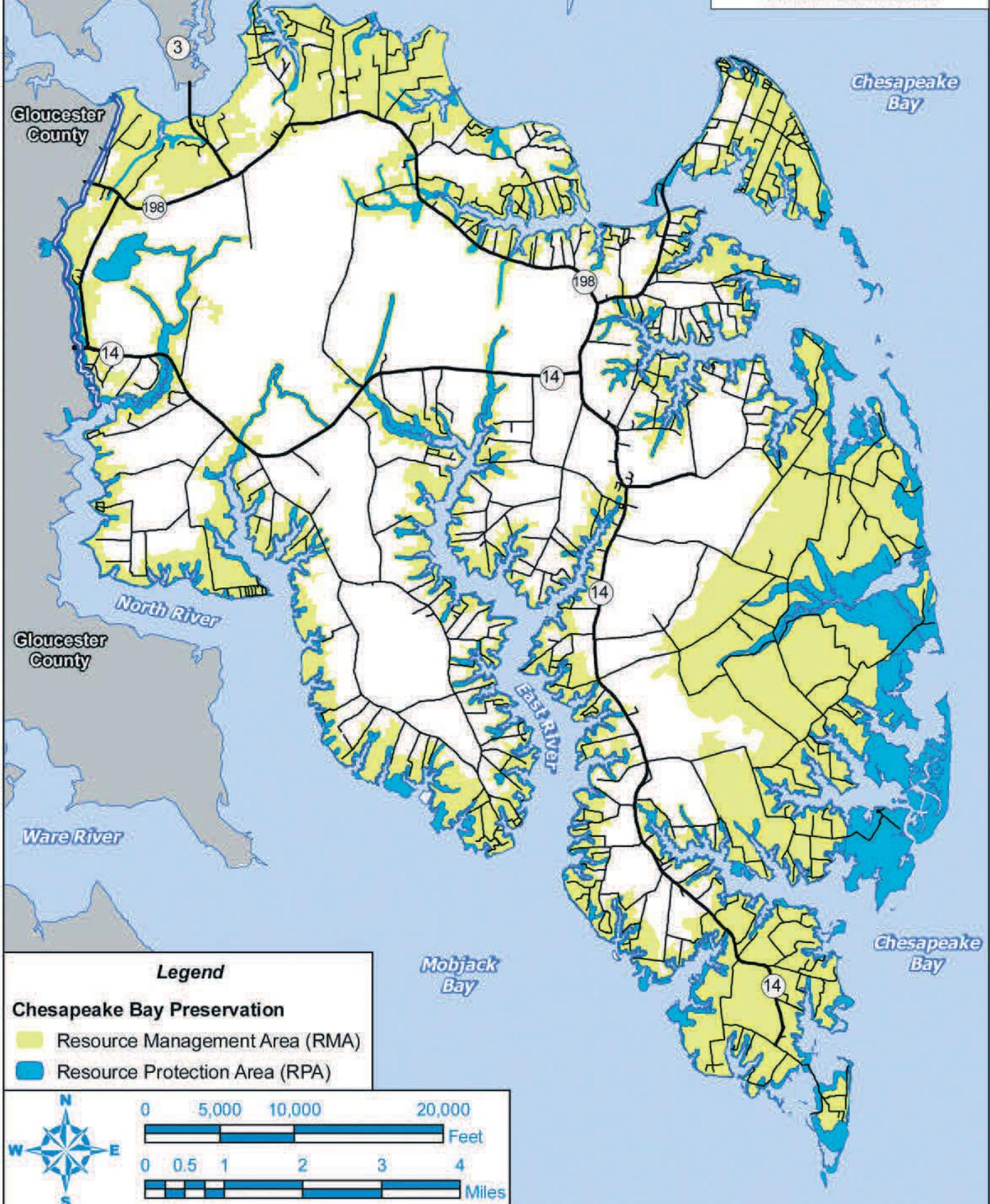


Middlesex County

Mathews County  
Comprehensive Plan  
2030



Chesapeake Bay  
Preservation Areas



**Legend**

**Chesapeake Bay Preservation**

- Resource Management Area (RMA)
- Resource Protection Area (RPA)



0 5,000 10,000 20,000  
Feet

0 0.5 1 2 3 4  
Miles



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**Physical Constraints to Development**

Housing, Population and Demographics information provided in previous sections show a consistent pattern of decline in population growth, housing growth and development activity in the Mathews County. Various environmental factors also contribute to the strain on growth and development in the County. One factor to consider is that much of the County's low elevation above sea level and includes many miles of shoreline. Thus, much of the land is subject to flooding and tidal inundation. Also, much of the County contains wetlands that are "transition zones" between land and water which provide important habitat for plants and animals, serve as significant processors for pollutants, and assist in stabilizing soils and protecting the land. These features are environmental attributes, but they are also considered natural physical constraints to development. The maps on the following pages illustrate the land elevation, 100-year floodplain, and wetlands (tidal and non-tidal) of the County.

When these constraints are considered, there is little land available for new development that does not encounter challenges. As shown in the Composite Constraints map, most of the areas that can appropriately accommodate development are in the northern part of the County.

Recurrent flooding and inundation of land has been an issue within Mathews County. In depth discussions on the causes and possible solutions continues to be an ongoing occurrence within the Mathews community. The County has utilized professional resources inside and outside the region to help circumstances surrounding recurrent flooding and to explore options for mitigating the impacts.

The Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission and the Mathews County Planning Commission have partnered to acquire funding and explore options to address the impacts and local options to address recurrent flooding due to relative sea level rise. A current effort being funded through Virginia's Coastal Zone Management, looks at planning, financial and regulatory options available to rural coastal local governments in the Middle Peninsula to assist with mitigating the impacts of flooding and sea level rise in coastal communities. The project seeks to identify and explore planning and development techniques that may be implemented at the local level to encourage and steer development to properties located outside of high risk flood hazard areas. The final report will include recommendations to the Planning Commission on various measures that are specific to addressing the issues and concerns of Mathews County.

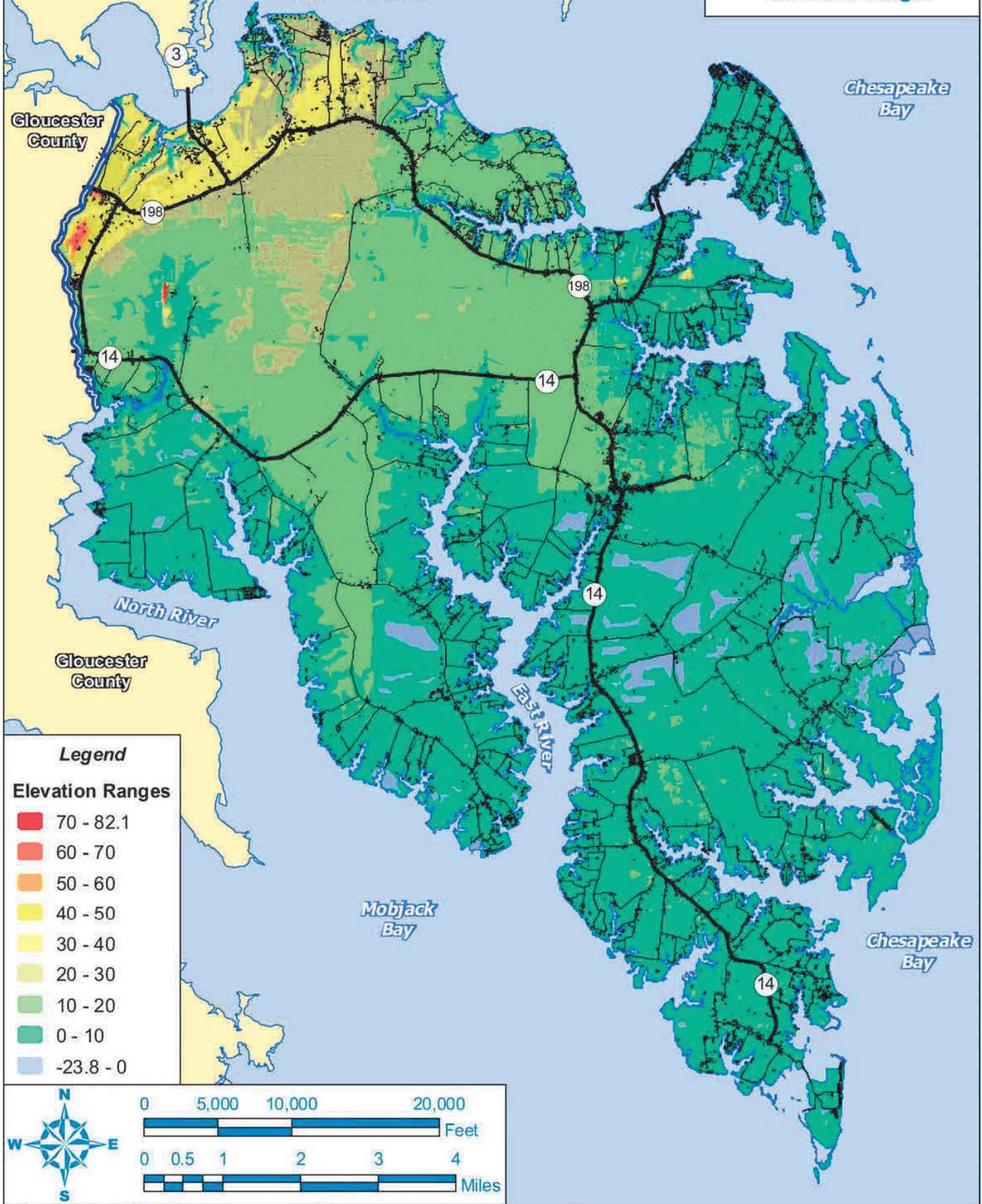


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### Elevation Ranges



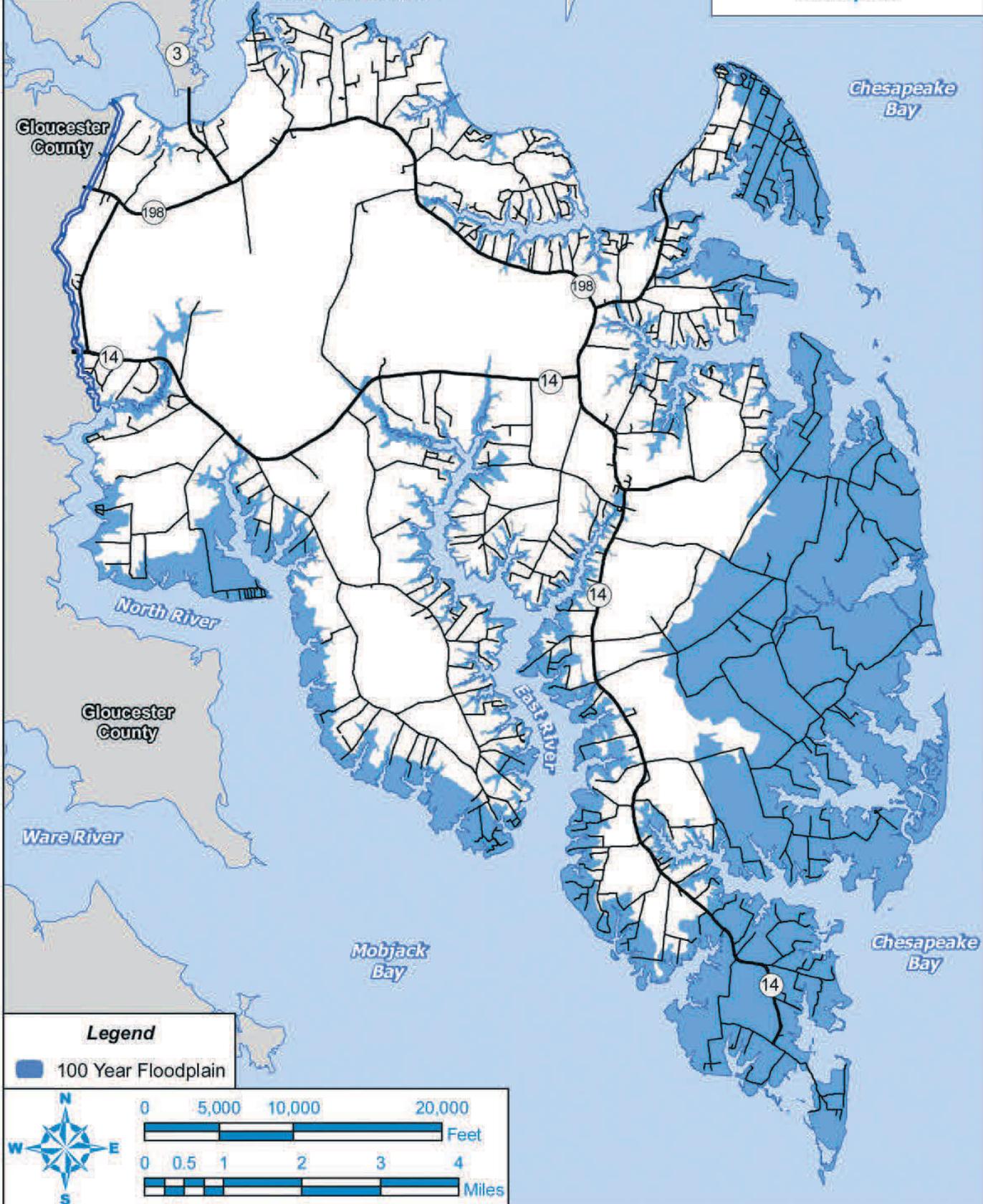


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### Floodplain



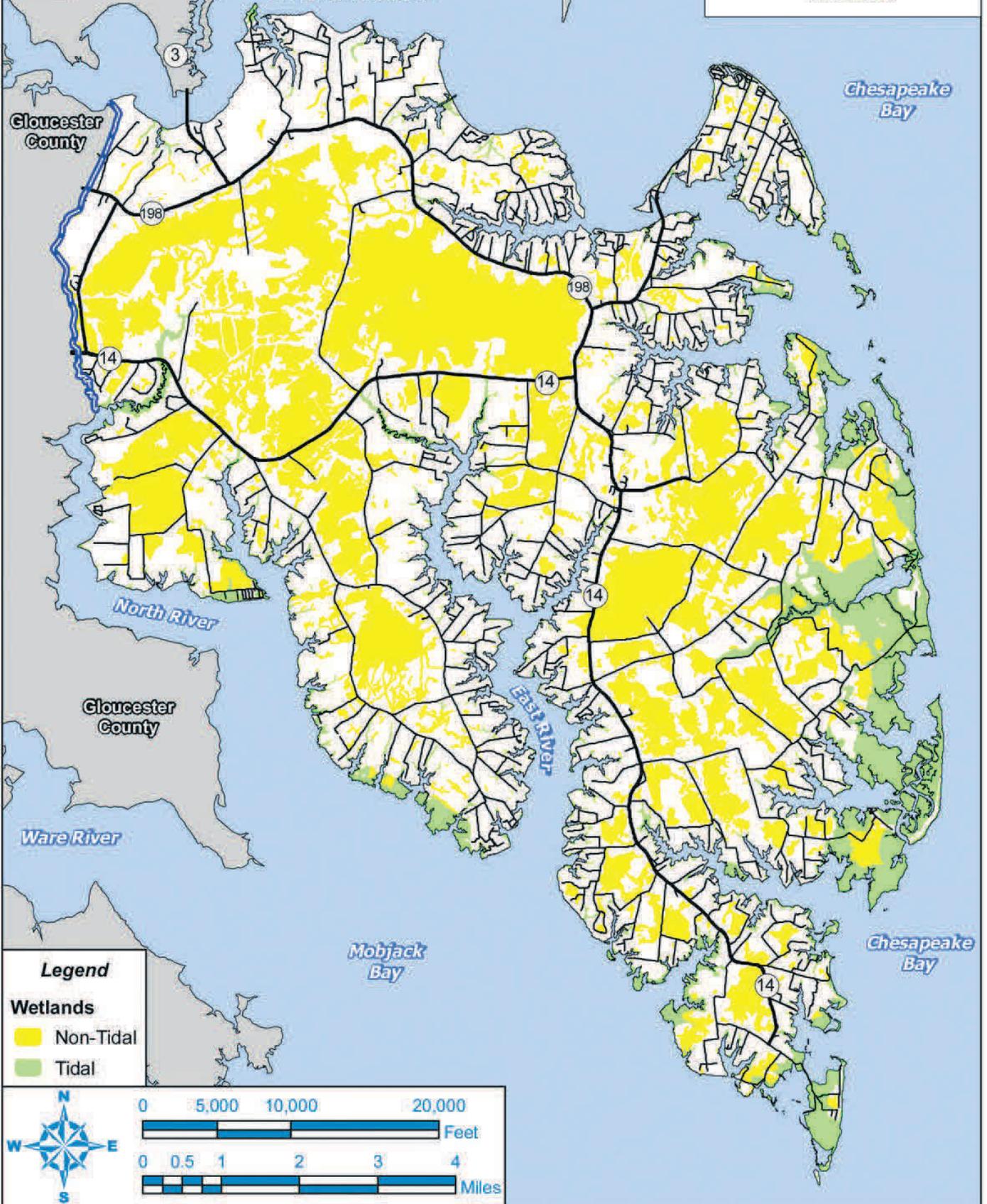


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Wetlands



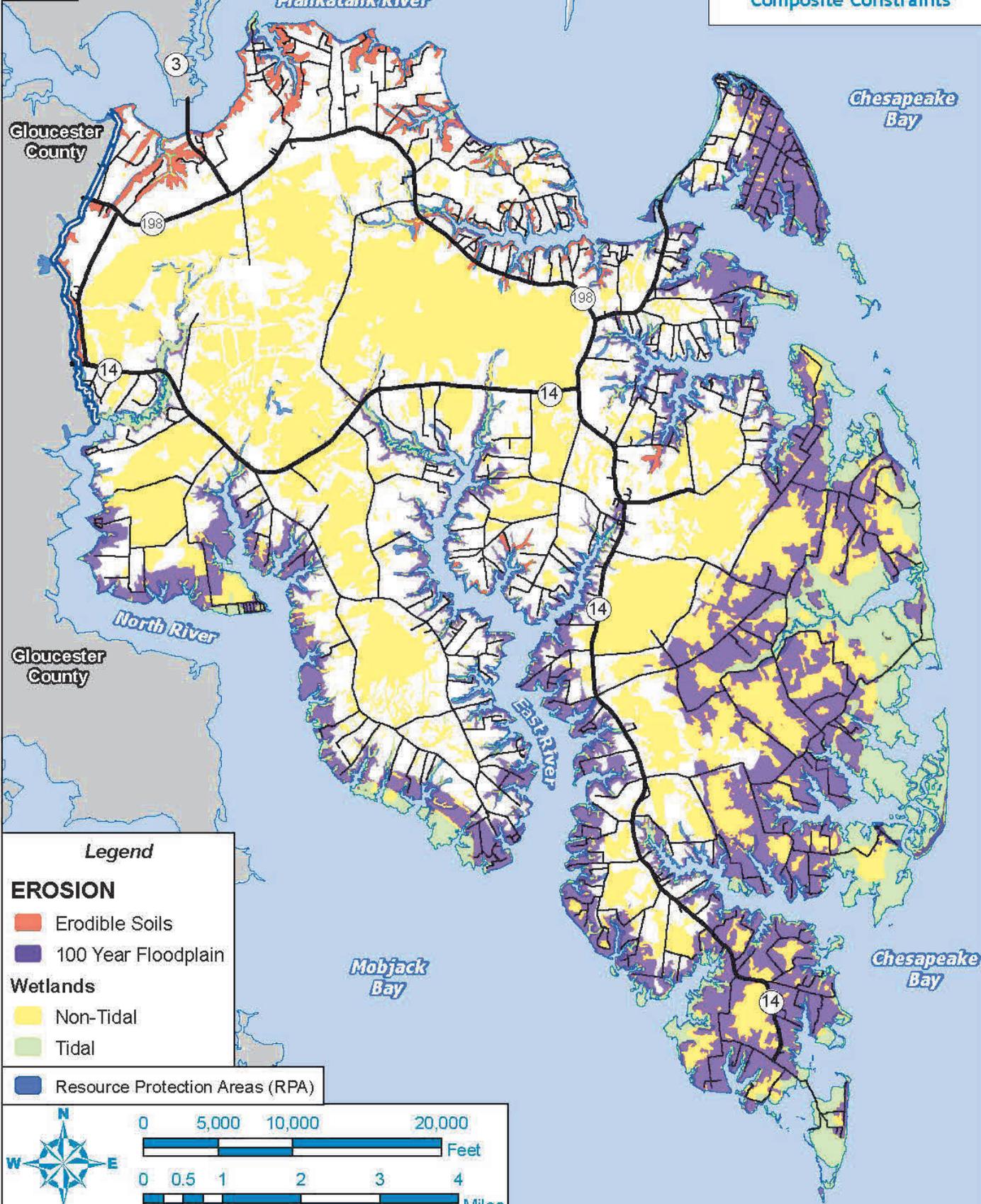


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Composite Constraints



*Legend*

**EROSION**

- Erodible Soils
- 100 Year Floodplain

**Wetlands**

- Non-Tidal
- Tidal

- Resource Protection Areas (RPA)



0 5,000 10,000 20,000



Feet

0 0.5 1 2 3 4



Miles



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**Soils and Protection of Shorelines and Streambanks**

The soils of Mathews County are shown on the map on the following page. Much of the soil in the County is of the Fallsington fine sandy loam series. The next most common soil type is the Dragston fine sandy loam which is found along most of the County shorelines. The following table summarizes the soil units in the County and provides insight into their acreages. A more detailed description of each of the soil categories is included in the Appendix.

Mathews County, Virginia (VA115)			
Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Acre in AOI	Percent of AOI
Be	Bertie very fine sandy loam	78.4	0.1%
Cb	Coastal beach	249.5	0.3%
Dr	Dragston fine sandy loam, shallow	5,554.8	6.1%
Ek	Elkton silt loam	127.2	0.1%
Fa	Fallsington fine sandy loam	33,006.6	36.0%
GP	Gravel Pit	82.1	0.1%
KeA	Kempsville fine sandy loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes	1,414.6	1.5%
KeB	Kempsville fine sandy loam, 2 to 5 percent slopes	300.2	0.3%
KtA	Kempsville loamy fine sand, thick surface, 0 to 2 percent slopes	3,298.8	3.6%
KyA	Keyport silt loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes	109.7	0.1%
KyD2	Keyport silt loam, 8 to 12 percent slopes, eroded	131.3	0.1%
Ma	Mixed alluvial land	164.7	0.2%
SaA	Sassafras fine sandy loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes	251.3	0.3%
SaB2	Sassafras fine sandy loam, 2 to 5 percent slopes, eroded	163.2	0.2%
SdA	Sassafras loamy fine sand, 0 to 2 percent slopes	218.4	0.2%
SsD	Sloping sandy land	428.5	0.5%
StE	Steep sandy land	358.7	0.4%
Th	Tidal marsh, high	640.9	0.7%
To	Tidal marsh, low	2,728.7	3.0%
W	Water	37,402.4	40.8%
Wo	Woodstown fine sandy loam	4,883.4	5.3%
<b>Totals for Area of Interest</b>		<b>91,593.4</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. April, 2009.

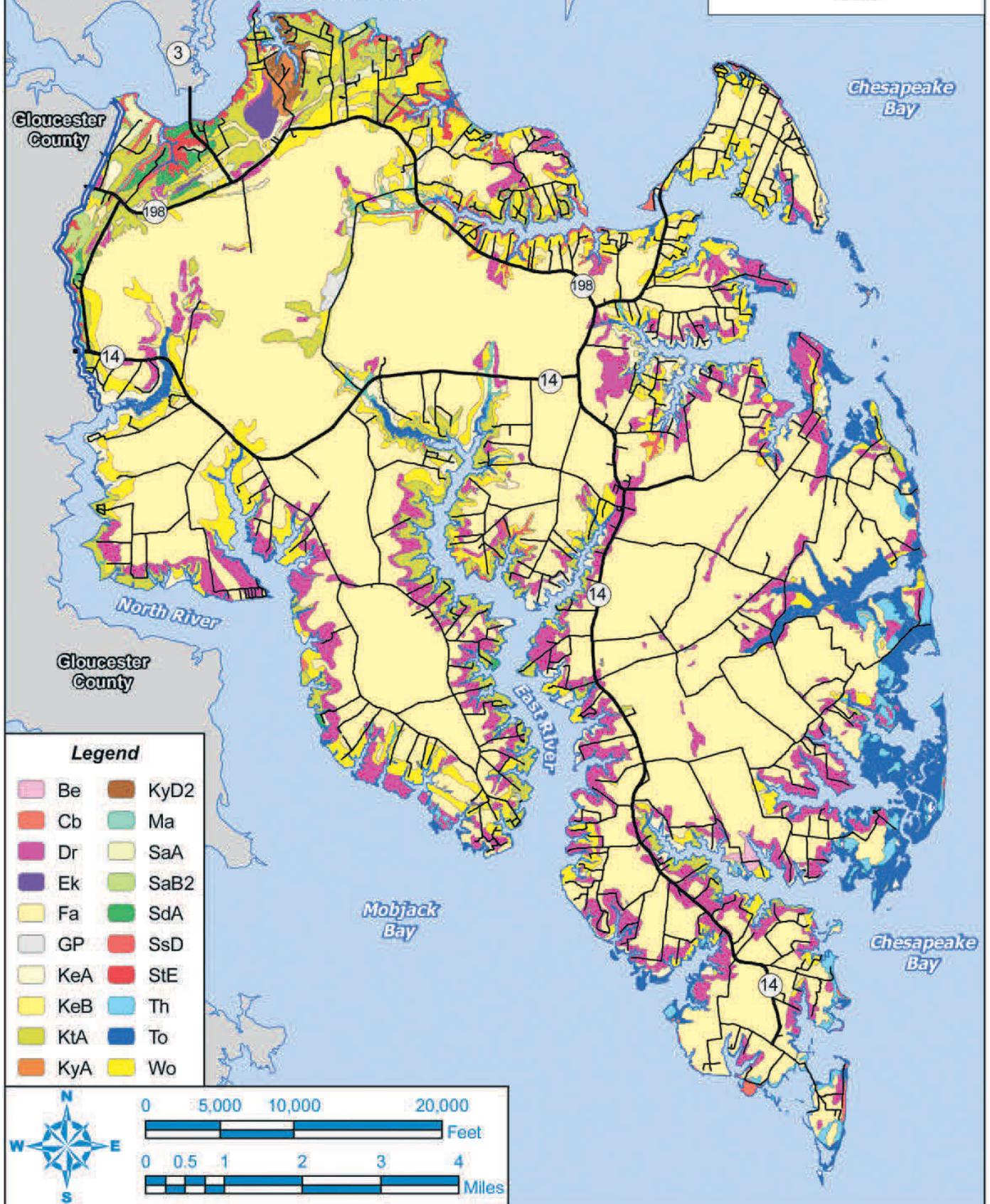


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Soils





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The most erodible soils are those of the Keyport silt loam and Sloping and Steep Sandy Loam series. These soils are found along the streambanks of the Piankatank River and Queens Creek in the northern part of the County. A map showing the locations of these erodible soils is on the following page.

In 2008, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science updated the *Shoreline Assessment and Inventory of Mathews County*. A final report completed in 2010 provides detailed information on the shoreline vegetation, existing stabilization structures, and erosion conditions;<sup>13</sup> It is used as a tool to understand the shoreline conditions of the County, particularly with respect to making better decisions on shoreline management. A map of the shoreline inventory that illustrates shoreline erosion conditions follows the erodible soils map in the preceding pages. This map was prepared based on information provided by VIMS related to the shoreline inventory study. The Shoreline Inventory Report should be referenced for more specific information on a site basis for such elements as riparian land use, streambank conditions and shoreline features, including structures. This informative report and detailed maps are available on line at <http://ccrm.vims.edu>.

A companion initiative beneficial in assisting shoreline management is *Living Shorelines for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed*, prepared by the Center for Coastal Resource Management at VIMS. This collaborative project provides extensive information on natural methods for protecting tidal shorelines using native wetland plants, grasses, shrubs and trees. The benefits of choosing living shoreline techniques include: reduced costs for shoreline stabilization, enhanced water quality, increased wildlife habitat and access, and reduced wave energy. The report is an excellent guide for property owners in understanding and managing their shorelines. The living shoreline report and the shoreline inventory report is useful to property owners, contractors, and the County Wetlands Board in helping to assess the best environmental practices for shoreline stabilization.

#### **Siting of Docks, Piers, and Structures**

In accordance with the Chesapeake Bay Act, the local government must manage the placement of docks, piers and shoreline structures. In Mathews County, this is done through the Wetlands Board and various federal and state permitting agencies. The most comprehensive assessment of shoreline structures for Mathews County is that compiled by VIMS as part of the *Shoreline Assessment and Inventory of Mathews County*. Detailed maps of shoreline structures are available on line at [http://ccrm.vims.edu/gis\\_data\\_maps/shoreline\\_inventories/virginia/mathews](http://ccrm.vims.edu/gis_data_maps/shoreline_inventories/virginia/mathews). Property owners and interested parties should consult this mapping tool and other resources to determine the best management practices and appropriate locations for shoreline structures.

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<sup>13</sup> Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Center for Coastal Resources Management. May 2009, Draft. *Mathews County, Virginia Shoreline Inventory Report Methods and Guidelines*.

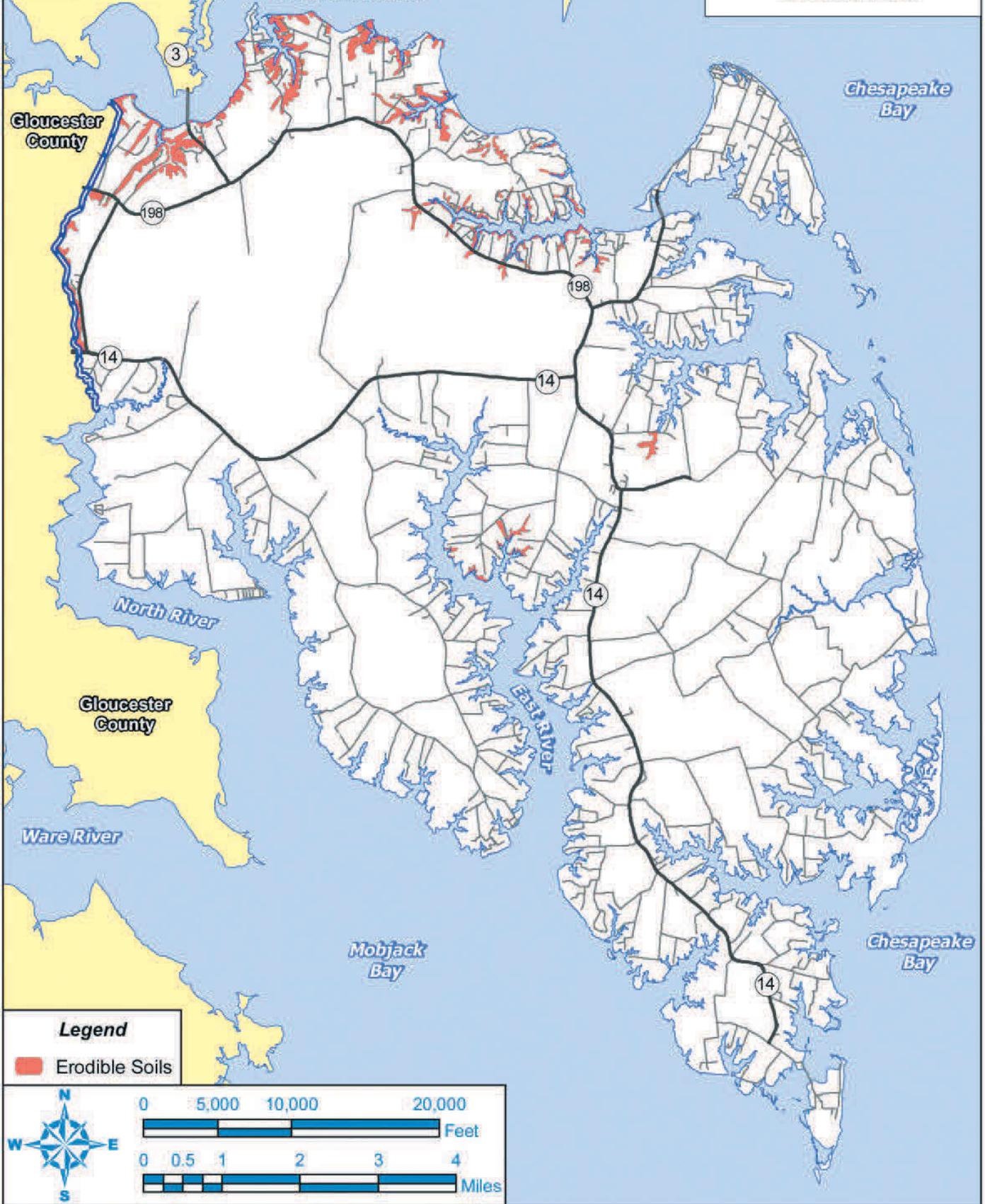


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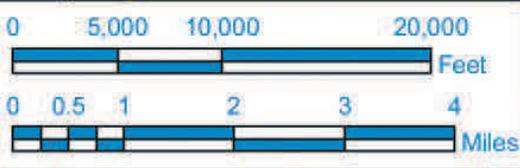


Erodible Soils



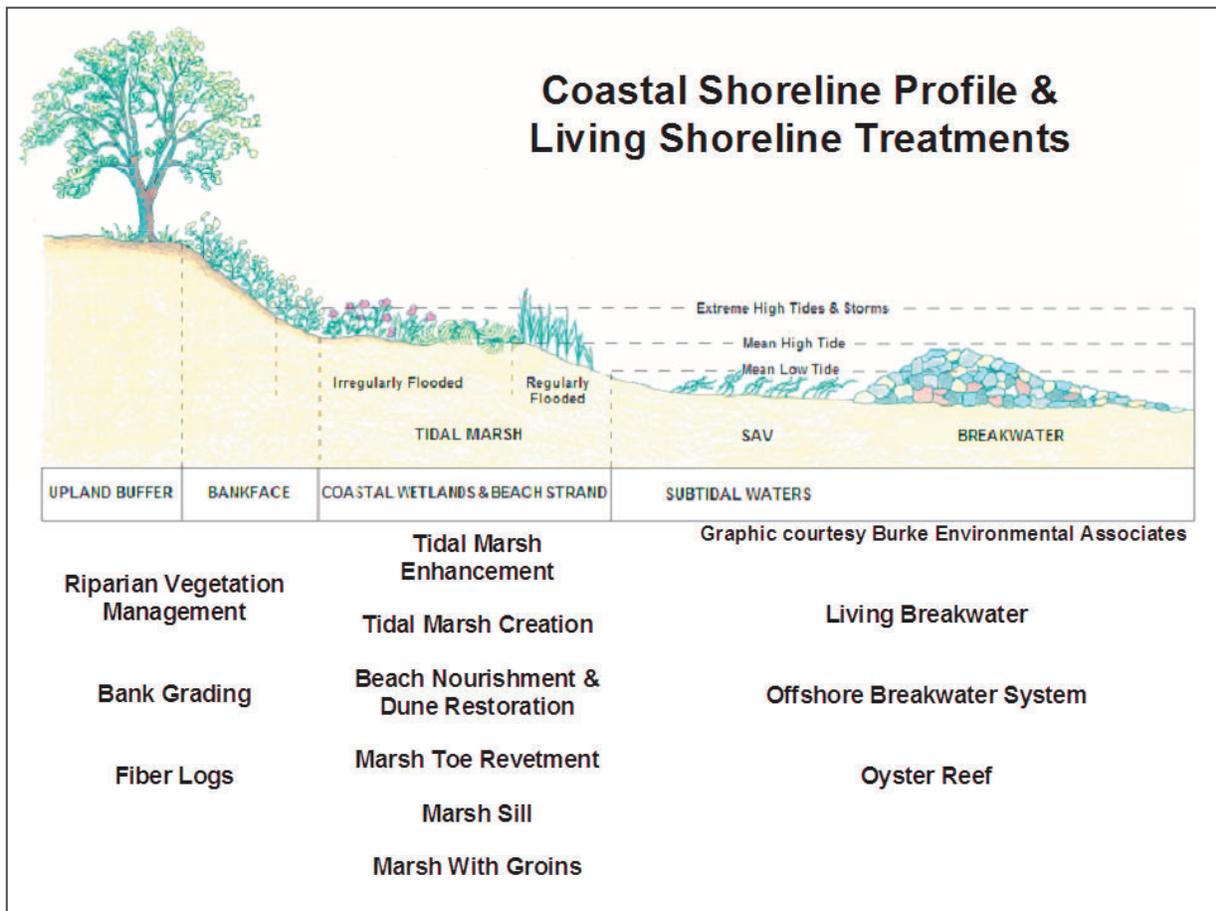
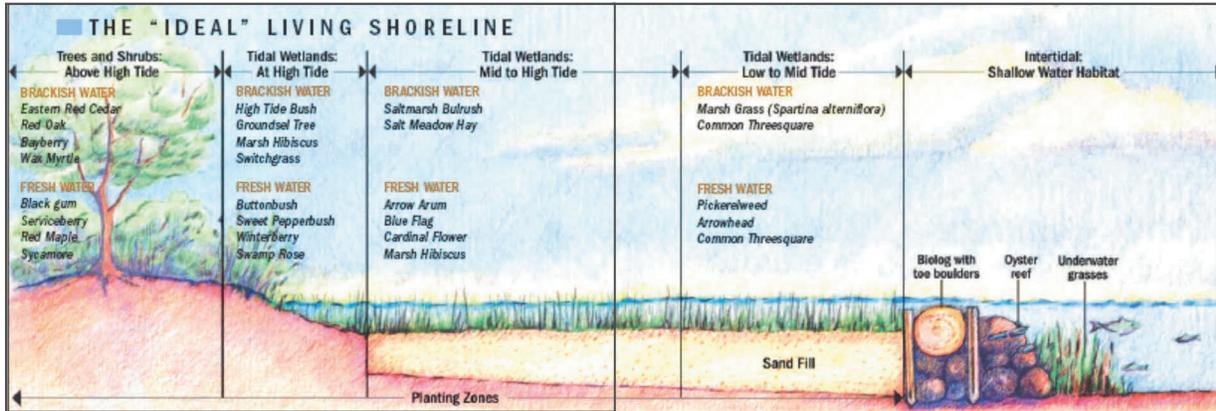
**Legend**

 Erodible Soils





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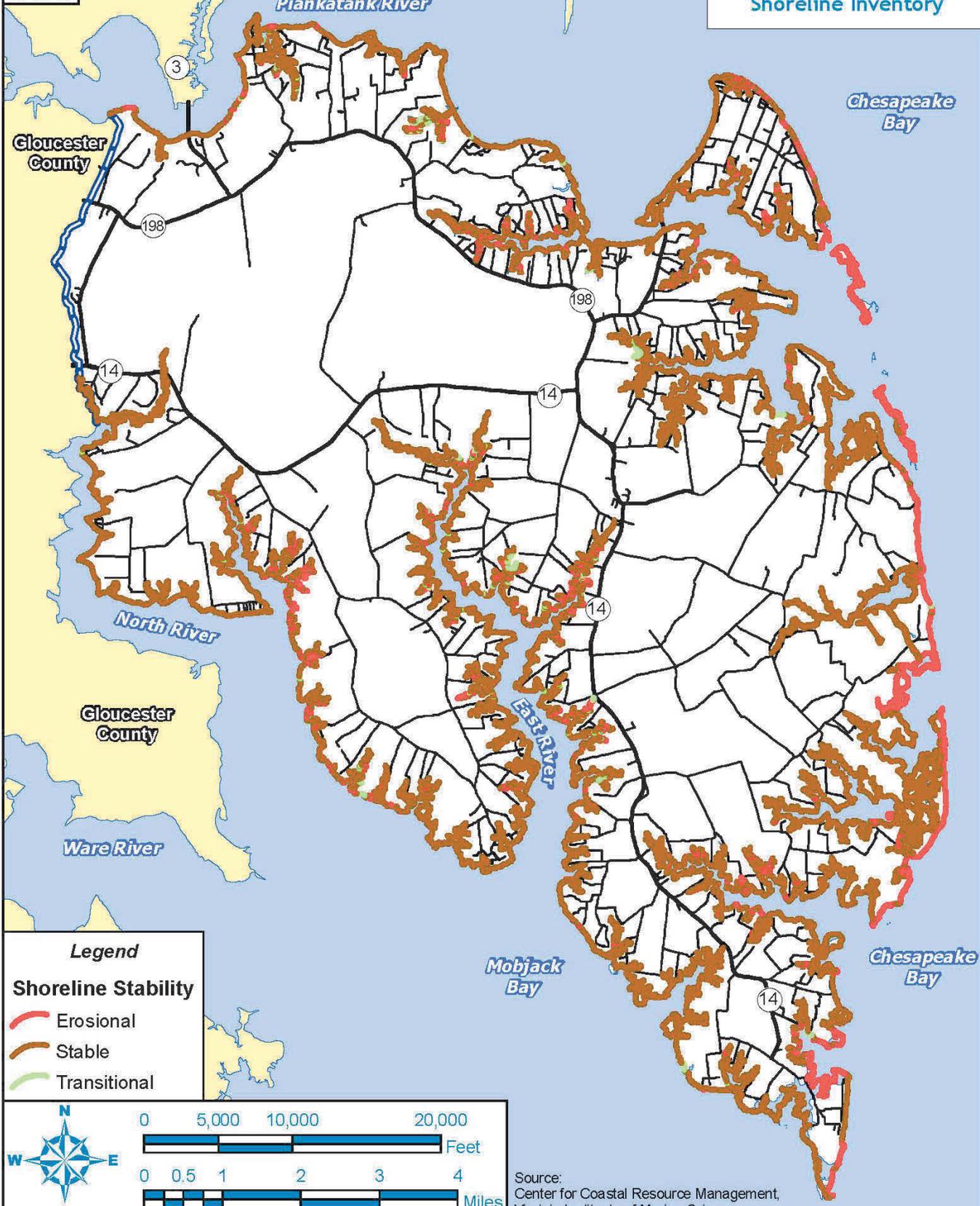


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Shoreline Inventory



**Legend**

**Shoreline Stability**

- Erosional
- Stable
- Transitional



0 5,000 10,000 20,000

Feet

0 0.5 1 2 3 4

Miles

Source:  
Center for Coastal Resource Management,  
Virginia Institute of Marine Science



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**Protection of Potable Water Supply**

Because the water table in Mathews County is located very near the surface, there is considerable potential for contamination of groundwater and potable water supplies.

One of the principal sources for contamination is from septic systems. Unsaturated soil is essential for treating wastewater. In particular, the permeability of the soil to allow the flow of water through it over a sufficient period of time to filter contaminants is especially important. The permeability of the soils in Mathews County is very limited. A map illustrating the permeability is found on the following page. As indicated, soil permeability is between 0.6 and 6.0 inches per hour for most areas of the county; this absorption capacity is a challenge for septic systems (as shown in the additional map). The northern part of the County and a limited amount of inner shoreline on the East River provide the better opportunities for handling septic systems.

The Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission administers a septic pump out program that provides financial support to low-to-moderate income residents in Middle Peninsula localities. The program, funded through the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, seeks to promote water quality of the Chesapeake Bay by subsidizing the cost of septic pump out of local residents who may be overly burdened by the cost. The program has received limited funding from DEQ in 2015 and 2016 with no guarantees for future funding.

The MPPDC also administers a septic repair program for Middle Peninsula residents in the way of grants and reduced rate loans. While loan funds are still available, grant funds have been depleted. No new grant funds are immediately available or anticipated.

Since the 2000 Comprehensive Plan, there have been public facility improvements that have reduced the potential for contamination of the potable water supply. The County landfill has been closed and the Virginia Peninsula Public Service Authority continues to monitor the landfill in accordance with the regulations of the Virginia Department of Waste Management. The central wastewater treatment plant in the Mathews Courthouse area has been eliminated and replaced with a sanitary sewer transmission force main.

In 2010, The Hampton Roads Sanitation District began construction on a new sanitary sewer transmission force main from Mathews Court House along Route 198 and Route 3 to Gloucester County. (Additional information on this initiative is found in the Public Facilities and Services (Utilities) section of this plan. While this initiative should help to reduce contamination impacts on potable groundwater, the County will need to provide careful oversight in the future to ensure a safe and ample water supply. This will involve very close coordination with the Virginia Department of Health, and public education on the maintenance of septic and alternative waste systems.



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Other sources of potential water contamination are underground storage tanks (USTs), agricultural runoff, animal wastes and discharges from boats. While many agricultural operations may utilize best management practices, there is an opportunity to increase public communication with citizens and businesses to promote improved agricultural practices that will enhance water quality. Proper maintenance, installation, or removal of USTs is guided by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality; information on best management practices can be found at <http://www.deq.state.va.us/tanks/usts.html>.

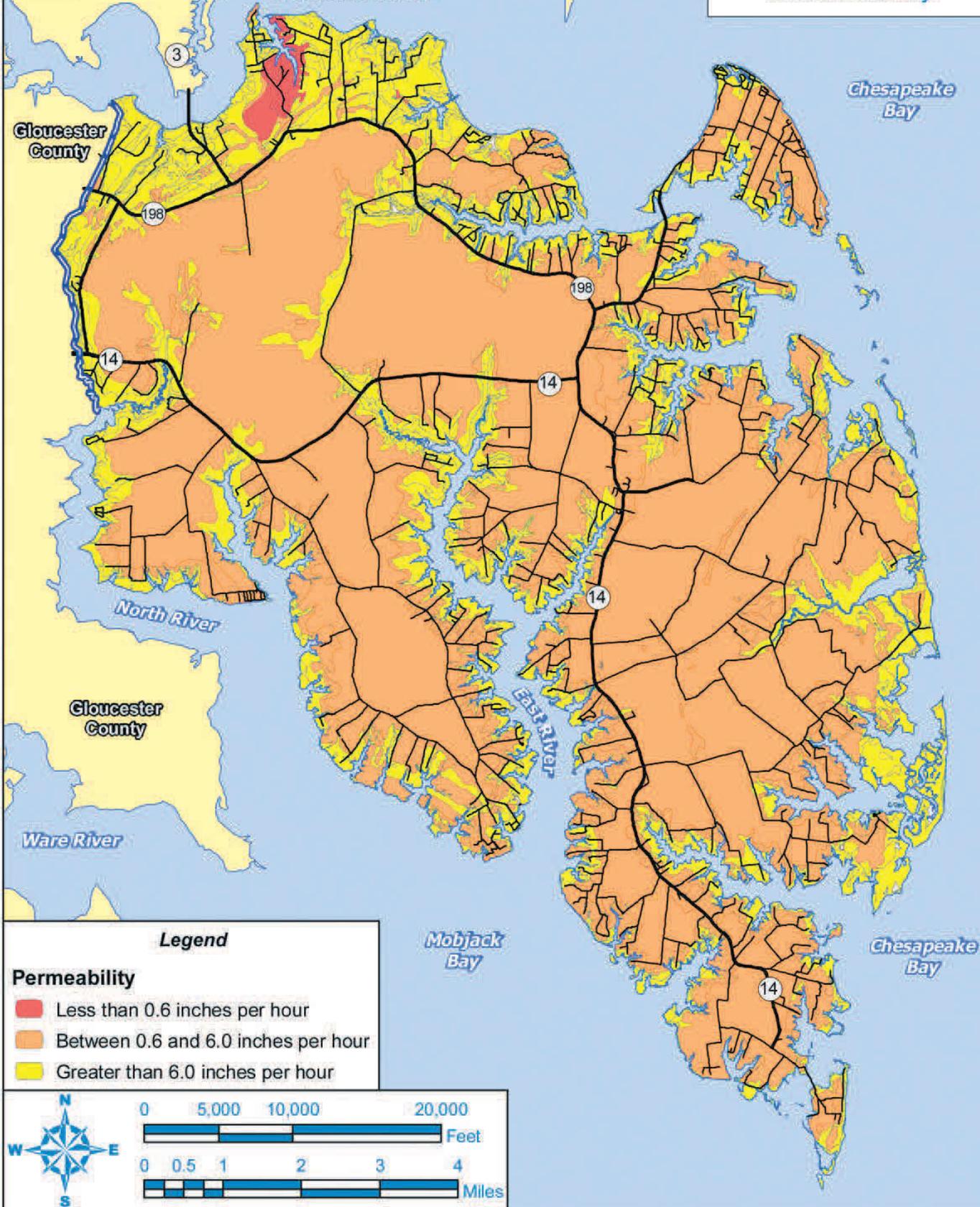


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Soil Permeability



Legend

Permeability

- Less than 0.6 inches per hour
- Between 0.6 and 6.0 inches per hour
- Greater than 6.0 inches per hour



0 5,000 10,000 20,000

Feet

0 0.5 1 2 3 4

Miles

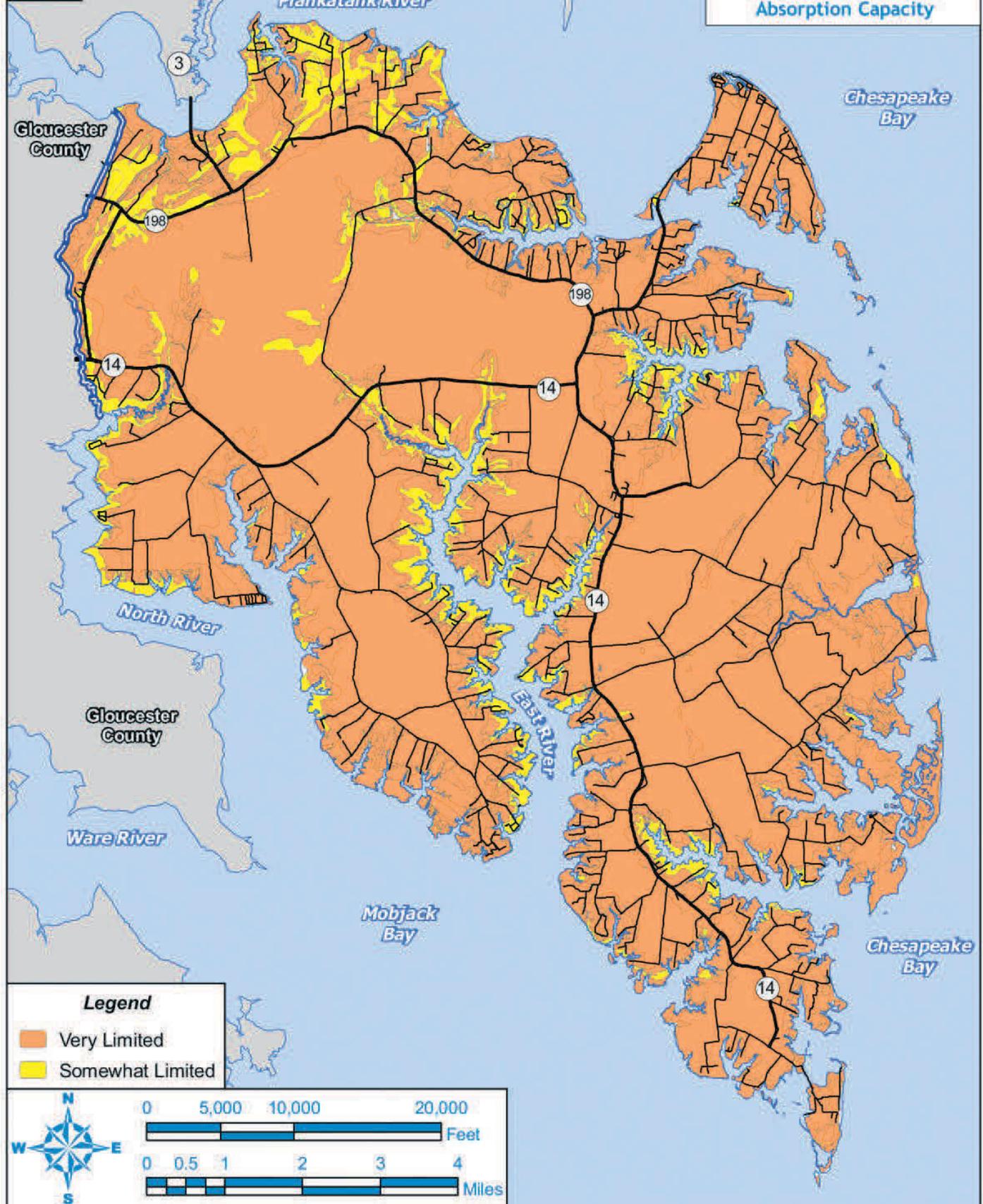


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Septic System  
Absorption Capacity





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#### **Access to the Waterfront**

Mathews County is extremely fortunate to have approximately 350 miles of shoreline. This tremendous asset is highly valued by residents and County officials because of its contribution to the area's quality of life, recreation, and local economy. In 2003, the County adopted a *Statewaters Access Management Plan* that provided information on all public access areas and marinas throughout the County. The plan also includes specific recommendations and priorities for improving public facilities. More detailed information on this waters access plan is found in the preceding section, Public Facilities and Services (Recreation).

The Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority (PAA) was created by the General Assembly in 2002 in an effort to increase public access to the Chesapeake Bay. The PAA Altruistic Giving Program has acquired hundreds of acres of privately donated waterfront property in localities throughout the Middle Peninsula including Mathews County. Property acquired by the PAA is used for public waterfront access and recreation which helps to improve the quality of life of local residents while supporting the tourism sector of the County's economy. Waterfront properties donated to the PAA are also conserved and generally restricted for development thereby serving as a natural buffer and filtration system. The PAA works with local governments including Mathews County to ensure that donated lands are used in compliance with local codes as well as in keeping with the natural environment of the communities. The PAA, the County, and citizens groups are working to formulate and implement a plan for the use of Mathews Heritage Park, a public waterfront access site donated to the PAA and located in the Moon area.

#### **Access to Navigable Waterways**

Many waterways in Mathews County are experiencing severe shoaling due to wind and wave driven sediment accumulation. Under the authority of the River & Harbor Act, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has standing responsibility to dredge five waterways: Davis Creek, Horn Harbor, Milford Haven, Queen's Creek, and Winter Harbor. In the early 2000's, the Federal government severely curtailed funding allocations to these shallow draft channels, and as a result, many of these channels have shoaled significantly without regular maintenance dredging. This shoaling prompted the U.S. Coast Guard to alter or remove aids to navigation on several of these waterways. The lack of aids to navigation combined with the shallowness of these channels creates a hazard to the boating community, affecting commercial users, recreational users, and the search and rescue mission of the Coast Guard.

As part of the cooperative agreement between the Corps of Engineers and Mathews County for dredging the five waterways listed above, the County is required to provide dredge material placement sites to the Corps. The model currently used in the County is a 50-year easement on privately-held property. Using publicly-held properties for placement should be a priority



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wherever possible. Depending on the type of sediment being dredged, this placement site may be on a beach (sandy material) or on uplands (silty material). Obtaining easements for and maintaining these sites is a major priority for the County so that in the event limited funding for shallow draft dredging comes available, each channel has an approved placement site.

For waterways other than the five channels authorized in the River & Harbor Act, the County can pursue dredging opportunities through the Corps' Continuing Authorities Program, where localities can cost share with the Corps to study, design, and construct various water-related infrastructure projects, including dredging, beach nourishment, barrier island restoration for flood damage prevention, ecosystem rehabilitation, and shoreline protection. The County should identify needs that fall under one or more of the standing authorities of the Continuing Authorities Program and work with the Corps to develop a competitive proposal for project funding. Potential projects might include dredging the channel known as the "Hole-in-the-Wall", beneficially reusing the dredged spoils from the County's five federal project channels, and addressing breaches in barrier beach and dune features along the county shoreline fronting the Chesapeake Bay. The County should also pursue lobbying efforts for the establishment of a state shallow draft dredge fund that can be used to supplement federal and local sources of funding.

#### **Climate Change**

In recent years, there has been continued discussion about climate changes that are being experienced around the world. While there are varied opinions on causes and ultimate effects, it is recognized that changing weather patterns may contribute to rising sea levels which could significantly affect both inland and coastal communities. Regardless of the causes of climate change, as well as the pace and magnitude of such changes, it is essential that communities appropriately plan for changing trends and adjust their development patterns to minimize potential adverse impacts.

Sea level rise in conjunction with shoreline erosion and coastal subsidence (or sinking) is a concern for coastal Virginia. This is especially important for populated areas in terms of property damage and safety concerns as well as in terms of potential impacts on natural communities responding to changes in vegetative patterns, wildlife populations, and chemical responses due to temperature variation, runoff, varied rainfall, etc.

Intense development patterns, rising sea levels, along with the potential for stronger storms pose increasing threats to coastal communities, infrastructure, beaches, wetlands, and sensitive ecosystems. With respect to the mid-Atlantic region, rising water levels, erosion and coastal subsidence are already affecting low-lying lands, eroding beaches, converting wetlands to open water, and exacerbating coastal flooding. Consequently, the County should consider additional approaches for adapting to a changing coastline. Short-term structural solutions (e.g., rip-rap revetments, breakwaters, bulkheads, elevating structures, etc.) will not sufficiently address all anticipated changes. Shifts are needed in federal, state and local policies with respect to more



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long-term land-use planning and environmental protection and preservation. County efforts, such as the recurrent flooding study project, currently underway with the MPPDC, is an example of an approach to addressing the flooding and sea level rise impacts through local policy changes. A combination of local land use tools, financial incentive programs and/or acquisition and conservation programs are being deployed by coastal jurisdictions to manage the impacts of flooding due to sea level rise. The ultimate decision moving forward on the issue will be determined by the County's objectives in balancing the economy, respecting private property rights, and protecting local infrastructure while preserving the environment.

#### **Land Use, Development and Redevelopment of Resource and Management Areas**

Given development constraints and the potential long-term effects of climate change, future land development and redevelopment in Mathews County must be carefully planned and coordinated with environmental features. This includes not only new buildings and the rehabilitation of existing structures, but also the development of supporting public infrastructure. The next section on Land Use provides a more detailed analysis of existing land use and development patterns and presents recommendations for addressing outstanding issues and amending land development patterns to meet the goals of the future.

#### **Environmental Challenges and Opportunities 2030**

The environmental resources of Mathews County provide for the economic and social well-being of residents and businesses. Careful planning and management of the environment, and in particular water quality, must be a priority in order to support the quality of life that is cherished by citizens and visitors. These environmental resources also include complex ecosystems that are sensitive to such things as stormwater and agricultural runoff, inadequate wastewater treatment, soil erosion, and changes in temperature, rainfall and overall climate. All of these challenges are intended to be monitored and managed in conjunction with Chesapeake Bay and Clean Water regulations, among others; however, it takes many partners, extensive public education, and diligent communication to successfully achieve desired environmental goals and outcomes. Ultimately, clean water is essential to community health, safety and welfare. It will be important to pursue and emphasize effective means of monitoring and treating point and non-point source pollutants to achieve the water quality desired for Mathews County and the surrounding region. Traditionally, planning in Mathews County has focused only on land area within the County boundaries; changing the paradigm to expand planning beyond the land and over the water (still within County territorial boundaries) could significantly help to manage future water quality and minimize land use conflicts.

One of the most difficult challenges for Mathews County will be appropriately balancing the increasing conflicts regarding use of and access to the waterfront. Understandably, waterfront residents have personal interests for using and protecting their properties, while waterfront businesses have need for water access and the ability to engage in aquatic trades. In addition, citizens of the County have rights to the waterfront for access and recreation. Yet, underlying all



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of these interests are the sensitive environmental systems that must be recognized and protected in order to preserve the quality of life desired by all.

The potential rise in sea level should be one of the factors considered in future development patterns. Over time, it is probable that there will be changes in vegetation, the landscape, and flooding patterns. The projected degree of impact is widely discussed and varies among experts and designated study panels. Thus, to be most effective it is best to be conservative when selecting sites for public facilities or permitting development in areas that may be susceptible to possible rising sea levels. Due to its unique location within the Chesapeake Impact Crater, the County should further explore how the specific geology of the crater influences sea level rise, land subsidence, and aquifer recharge in comparison to the rest of the region. In addition, because the expansive wetlands of Mathews County are important to the physical and ecological attributes of the region, it will be important to ensure that these beneficial communities are not depleted, but rather protected and allowed to transition naturally.

Like many communities, Mathews County residents are interested in maintaining the natural environmental character and reducing unnecessary lighting at night. The adoption of a “dark sky” ordinance can assist the County in reducing spillover lighting and maintaining natural conditions that are enjoyed by residents and important for the environment. New development could be required to provide “shielded” lighting fixtures and appropriate lighting standards could be established to ensure safety, yet control maximum illumination.



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**Planning/Development Policies, Action Strategies for Environment 2030**

The following planning and development policies and action strategies are established to achieve the desired vision for preserving a quality environment in Mathews County:

Development Policies and Strategies for Environment	
EN1	<p><b>Environmental resources are the natural and the economic foundation of the quality of life in Mathews County. Protection of natural resources and maintenance of excellent water quality and clean air are essential to the safety and prosperity of businesses and residents. For new development and redevelopment, there should be no net increase in environmental loss or pollution.</b></p>
	1. When considering new development or redevelopment, evaluate potential impacts on environmental features and water quality, particularly with respect to runoff, pollutants and waste management.
	2. Amend the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances to incorporate the most up to date performance criteria for improving water quality in order to comply with Chesapeake Bay Act Phase III Regulations. Consider implementing the recommendations identified in the CBPA Land Use Ordinance Compliance Review and Analysis Report prepared by the Berkley Group consultants.
	2. Strengthen development standards and identify types of land uses permitted in the flood hazard and storm induced wave zones (e.g., A/AE, V/VE, and Coastal A or LiMWA zones). Seek funding from the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program through FEMA to reduce hazards and losses.
	3. Encourage new development or redevelopment that is designed to meet “green building” standards such as LEED. (This can reduce impervious surfaces, reduce water and energy consumption, minimize site disturbance, and reduce pollutants.)
	4. Promote water conservation for public health, safety and welfare by encouraging the use of high efficiency water fixtures, showerheads and toilets in all new residential and business development. Encourage appropriate residential and business development that will not have large demands on the potable water supply. Promote water conservation and wise water consumption through public education.
	5. Consider the development of a wellhead protection program that establishes



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Development Policies and Strategies for Environment	
	<p>minimum requirements for locations of wells and adjacent development. Amend County regulations to implement development standards and well protection measures for potable water supplies.</p>
	<p>6. Sponsor, coordinate and promote regular septic tank pump-out programs throughout the County. Identify existing pit privies and seek better alternative solutions for managing waste. Seek grants and financial programs that can assist the County in these priority efforts.</p>
	<p>6. Promote increased public education regarding water quality impacts of non-point source pollutants. In particular, encourage proper disposal by boaters of bilge water (contains contaminants) and improved management of livestock near surface waters. Implement the recommendations in the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Implementation Plan to address impairments to shellfish waters as a result of coliform bacteria contamination in selected waters of the County.</p>
	<p>7. Amend the County subdivision ordinance to establish better standards and requirements for development of community water and wastewater systems in order to improve and protect water quality and provide a safe water supply for users. Requirements should exceed the minimum standards required by the health department.</p>
	<p>8. Develop and adopt ordinance language that will require shielded lighting for new building development and establish appropriate lighting standards for inland and waterfront properties.</p>
EN2	<p><b>Mathews County has a strong community heritage in agriculture, aquaculture and forestry. These natural resource trades remain important economic sectors and should be encouraged and supported in order to maintain community character and prosperity.</b></p>
	<p>1. Protect the environment by continuing to promote and encourage the use of best management practices and riparian buffers prescribed by the Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District and the Virginia Department of Forestry for agricultural and forestal activities. Promote environmental stewardship among landowners and operators by actively working with them in educational efforts and incentive or recognition programs. Encourage landowners to consider conservation easements for their properties.</p>



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Development Policies and Strategies for Environment	
EN3	<b>The wetlands of Mathews County are critical environmental features that are of substantial benefit to the health of natural systems and to coastal living. Protection and preservation of County wetlands should be a priority in order to retain environmental quality, public health and safety, and the valued character of the community.</b>
	1. Encourage vegetative approaches and “living shoreline” techniques where appropriate for stabilizing coastal property waterfronts. Develop public education materials and programs that will promote use of these techniques.
	2. Offer “living shoreline” training for wetland board members, contractors and others who are involved in coastal property management. Provide continued leadership in this effort by helping to establish a “certification” program for wetland board members and contractors that can be a model for other communities.
	3. Support annual inventories of County wetlands and other natural resources. Encourage regular reporting and sharing of information among agencies, governmental officials, and citizens.
	4. Utilize VIMS’ Comprehensive Coastal Resource Management Portal Shoreline Best Management Practices in evaluating existing conditions and proposed plans for development. Consider adopting a policy for the Wetlands Board where “living shorelines” become the preferred adaptation strategy for shoreline erosion control. Integrate into governmental permitting, Wetlands Board decisions, and planning recommendations.
	5. Utilize VIM’s Decision Tree for onsite review and subsequent selection of appropriate erosion control/shoreline BMPs.
	6. Follow development of the integrated shoreline guidance and the statewide General Permit developed through the Virginia Marine Resources Commission. Ensure that local policies are consistent with the provisions of the permit.
	7. Encourage the installation of “living shorelines” through state and local financial incentive programs.
	8. Explore methods of controlling non-native <i>Phragmites Australis</i> , and where



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Development Policies and Strategies for Environment	
	removal occurs, encourage replanting with appropriate native species.
<b>EN4</b>	<b>The waterfront of Mathews County is a valuable ecological, recreational and scenic asset that should be available to all citizens. Use of waterfront lands should be balanced to provide reasonable access points for the public and protection of the environment, while recognizing the rights of private residential and business property owners.</b>
	1. Review and update the County Statewaters Access Plan at least every five years to ensure that public access and recreational needs are met. Update the 2003 Plan with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
	2. Site any new waterfront community facilities or marinas in accordance with the checklist and criteria established by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission for Marinas and Community Facilities for Boat Mooring (1988, <a href="http://www.mrc.state.va.us">www.mrc.state.va.us</a> ). Coordinate locations with aquaculture and blue infrastructure resources to minimize land use conflicts and ensure protection of water quality.
	3. Identify desirable waterfront and off-shore locations for pursuing aquaculture. Develop a strategy for improving water quality, managing land use, and reducing development and pollution conflicts.
	4. Consider amending the zoning ordinance to define “floating home/structure” as a use and identify zoning districts in which this use may be permitted or is specifically prohibited.
<b>EN5</b>	<b>Sea level rise, shoreline erosion and coastal subsidence over the next several decades are projected to have effects on coastal areas and natural communities. To adequately prepare for possible changes in rising sea levels and weather patterns, development should be carefully reviewed and managed to take into account the potential impacts. Where possible, conservation measures should be employed to protect natural communities and prevent investment losses in the future.</b>
	1. Promote conservation in the eastern and southern coastal areas of Mathews County that may be most affected by possible rising sea levels and flooding. Amend the County zoning ordinance to address possible sea level changes and develop appropriate use regulations and development standards. Consider amending the zoning ordinance to include language regarding horizontal as well as vertical shoreline setback requirements. Consider



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Development Policies and Strategies for Environment	
	preserving additional open spaces adjacent to tidal wetlands beyond the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act Resource Protection Area to allow for inland retreat of marshes potentially affected by rising water levels.
	2. Plan, site and develop new public buildings and facilities so that they take into account possible rising sea levels. Require evaluation of impact as part of the governmental contract for services. Locate facilities in the most appropriate areas.
	3. Protect existing facilities from possible sea level rise through advanced planning and implementation of environmentally acceptable protection methods.
	4. Consider adopting land use policies using appropriate recurrent flooding mitigation tools for Mathews County. Identify financial incentives along with planning and regulatory tools as approaches to address this potential problem.



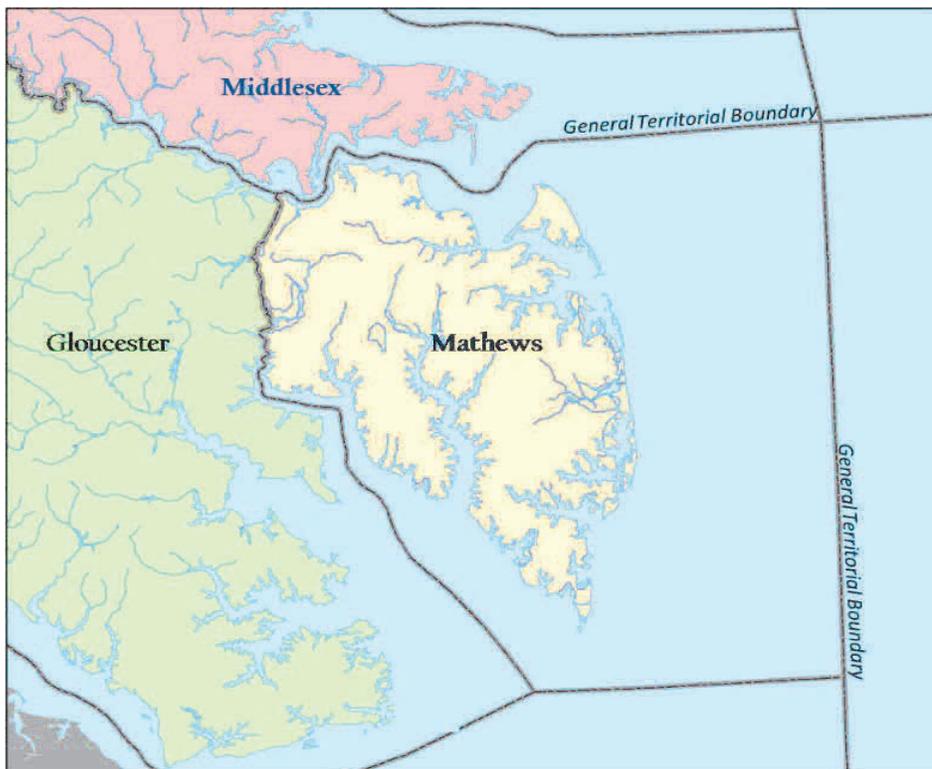
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**Environment: Special Action Projects**

Preserving the environment of Mathews County will provide the greatest benefits to citizens and businesses for the future. The following paragraphs discuss some initial projects that can assist the County in progressing toward the established goals and strategies for protecting and enhancing the environment.

**Planning for Land and Water within County Territorial Boundaries**

To effectively plan for continued safety and well-being in the County, there could be expanded controls and management of the territorial waters surrounding the County. This will require developing new tools and working regionally with other local governments and environmental agencies to model specific legislation and methods to improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and better manage land/water use conflicts (particularly with respect to aquaculture and “floating homes”). Public education and communication are essential to the success of the efforts and possible adopted programs.



Source: Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission.  
Aquaculture Steering Committee 2009.



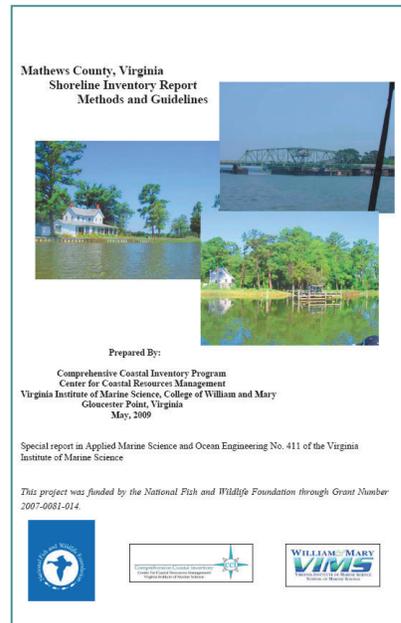
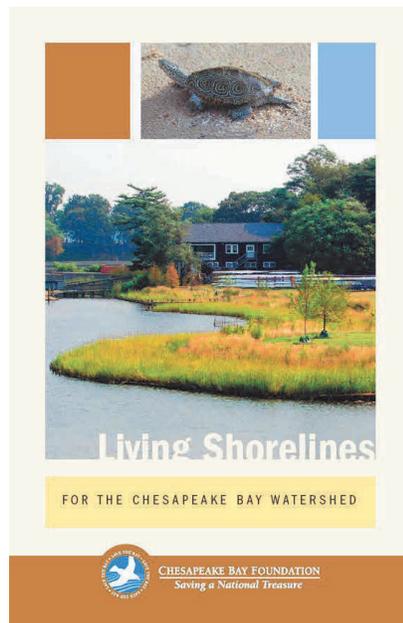
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Model Certification & Training Program - Wetlands Board

Enhanced environmental conditions in Mathews County can significantly assist in addressing many challenges for the future – water quality, economic investment, rising sea levels, and community character and quality of life.

In recent years, considerable research and mapping has been completed for Mathews that provides extensive insight into the physical and environmental conditions. Research reports include the Shoreline Assessment and Inventory for Mathews County (VIMS) and the Living Shoreline (Chesapeake Bay Foundation). Both of these reports provide excellent guidance for property owners, contractors, and reviewing officials in understanding shoreline conditions and in making recommendations for stabilization and ecological and vegetative improvements.

One simple way to encourage use of these documents and methods is to integrate them into the County review process for development permit applications. Initially, this could be done by encouraging training of County staff, wetlands board members and contractors. A “certification” and training program could be developed which then could serve as a model for other communities. The reference documents could be posted as links on the County webpage and copies made available at the library or other public offices.





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**Land Use and Development**

One of the main functions of a comprehensive plan is to recommend appropriate land use and development patterns that will implement a community’s vision and establish goals for the future. Existing land use and development patterns need to be respected; however, in many instances there needs to be change in future land development patterns to address development constraints and long-term planning issues. For Mathews County, there are many land development challenges that must be considered for the future – environmental constraints, limited availability of potable water, poor absorption capacities for wastewater, and coastal challenges to name a few. The following paragraphs provide an overview of the existing land use and development patterns and recommendations for future land use patterns given the County’s land use development constraints.

**Existing Land Use**

A map of the existing land use in the County is provided on the next page. Based on the GIS information provided, the land use acreage of the County consists of the following:

Summary of Existing Land Use Mathews County 2009		
	Acreage*	Percentage
Rural Agriculture/Residential	10,500	19%
Residential, Single Family	21,500	39%
Residential, Multi-family	40	<1 %
Commercial	700	1%
Industrial	600	1%
Public/Semi-public	3,100	5%
Conservation/Parks	2,000	3%
Cemeteries	50	<1 %
Other		
Right of Ways	200	<1 %
Commercial Utilities	10	<1 %
Open Land (not developed)	17,000	30%
Total	55,700	100%
*Note: This does not account for large lot sizes; for example, a large lot of five acres will be calculated as a specific land use, even if that land use constitutes only a portion of the parcel.		



Middlesex County

Mathews County  
Comprehensive Plan  
2030



Existing Land Use

Gloucester County

Piankatank River

Chesapeake Bay

Gloucester County

North River

East River

Mobjack Bay

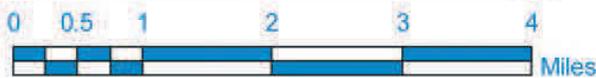
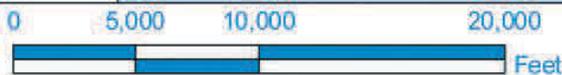
Chesapeake Bay

Legend

Existing Land Use

Class

- Rural Residential/Agriculture
- Single Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Public/Semi-Public
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Conservation/Parks
- Cemetery





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**Future Land Use**

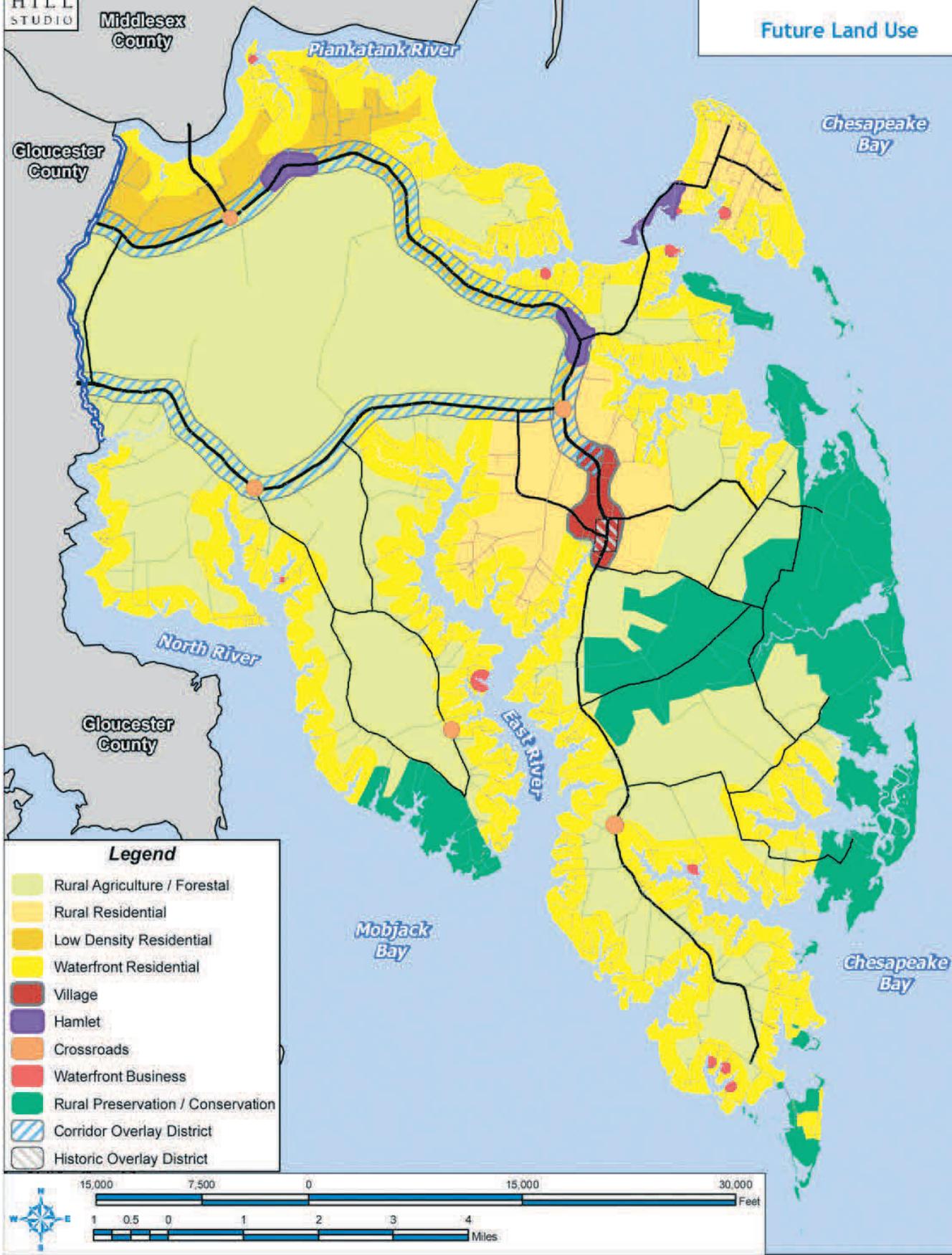
Given development constraints and environmental factors affecting Mathews County, land development patterns in the future should be more conservative than what exists today. Greater land use guidance and controls are needed in order to achieve the future vision set forth by Mathews' citizens and government officials. In addition, changing climate and sensitive environmental conditions present challenges for the future in order to protect properties, public health and overall community safety.

A future land use map is presented on the following page. This map was developed based on various factors including Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas, wetlands, land elevations, proximity to the proposed sanitary sewer transmission force main, and potential coastal changes from rising sea levels. While the future land use map recognizes the need to respect existing land uses and property rights, consideration must be given to shifting development patterns in the future to the best suited areas to address future challenges. More detailed discussion of the future land use categories is on the following pages.

In addition, Mathews County supports preservation of land through conservation or open-space easements. The preservation of open space is viewed as desirable and compatible with the land management recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan, even in areas where the Future Land Use Map may recommend a different or more intensive land use.



Future Land Use





### *IV. Mathews County Today and Tomorrow: Conditions, Opportunities, Policies, and Strategies*

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The following paragraphs provide a brief overview of the proposed land use categories and development criteria. These descriptions provide guidance for amending land use regulations in the future and for encouraging the type of land development desired for Mathews County in 2030. Of special note is that these land use descriptions are not parcel specific and are not intended to identify specific zoning districts.

#### **Rural Agriculture/Forestal**

This land use category is proposed to include much of the County that is oriented to large-tract agriculture and forests. The recommended density is one dwelling unit per five acres. These low-density development recommendations are proposed to maintain the rural nature of the county, preserve important agricultural areas and forests, and respect the varied constraints for development. Land uses included within this category would include agriculture, forestry, and accompanying very low-density residential uses.

#### **Rural Residential**

This land use category is proposed to include areas of the county that are still rural in character and exhibit very low-density residential uses. The recommended density is one dwelling unit per 2.5 acres. This category would provide for small-tract, low-intensity agriculture and residential uses with larger lots. Also, building heights should be of an appropriate scale to maintain community character.

#### **Waterfront Residential**

Much of the residential development that exists today in Mathews is on the waterfront. Although these areas are highly cherished for their waterfront amenities, there are many environmental challenges associated with expanding development in these areas. Consequently, new development along the waterfront in the future should be more conservative in terms of dwelling-unit densities, building types and locations, and shoreline and water access. In addition, new or expanded development on existing lots must recognize constraints relative to providing and maintaining safe wastewater treatment and water supply, as well as protecting water quality. Finally, planning for possible sea level rise can protect property investments and assist in using environmental assets for the purposes of accommodating natural succession of wetlands.

Building heights should be limited to an appropriate scale to ensure an appropriate fit and relationship with existing development patterns. Land uses should be limited to primarily single-family residential development at a density of one dwelling unit per acre, well-managed agriculture or open space. Larger lots or small grouped development should be encouraged where environmental factors will accommodate development; large residential subdivisions should be discouraged.



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**Low Density Residential**

This land use category is proposed for sections of the County where elevations are highest and where there is potential access to public sewer and safe water supply. The land uses within this category could include single family and duplex residential uses at a density of one dwelling unit per acre depending on environmental constraints and access to public utilities. Building heights should be limited to an appropriate scale to maintain community character. Business uses should be permitted only as accessory to a residence and restricted to home-based businesses that meet specific requirements for residential compatibility.

**Village**

This land use category includes the historic commercial center of the County, Mathews Court House. This compact development center consists of a core of mixed residential, commercial and community services that may include small businesses, upper-story residential, live/work units, and surrounding groupings of residential uses.

Within the village there are a variety of residential types and densities ranging from single-family homes to small groups of dwelling units (e.g., duplex, or townhouses) at a density of 4-8 dwelling units per acre. The village exhibits an interconnected street network and is pedestrian-oriented so that residential and business uses are within an easy walking distance of one-quarter mile (or five minute walk). The village area is well-landscaped, exhibits pedestrian-scale signage and lighting, and incorporates traffic-calming measures on the streets to ensure an inviting and safe experience. Buildings should be positioned close to the street with parking on the street or in small, shared lots located to the side or rear of buildings. Rehabilitation of existing buildings for alternative purposes should be encouraged; new buildings should respect the existing architectural context and building patterns.

**Planned Business**

This land use category provides an opportunity for larger scale business and limited industrial development in specially targeted areas to provide enhanced business employment opportunities and economic development for the County. Land uses could include corporate offices, light manufacturing or assembly, medical facilities, and other larger-scale business uses or warehouse/distribution uses. A planned business zone should be a minimum of 5-10 acres. Signage, access and building materials and placement should be carefully planned and coordinated to ensure a well-designed and complementary environment. Potential Planned Business areas may apply to Dixie and Cobbs Creek (existing business park area), or other areas that may be identified in the future as suitable planned business areas.



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**Hamlet**

This land use category is proposed for businesses serving local residents in several areas of the County. It would be applicable to the existing business areas of Hudgins, Gywnn's Island, and Cobbs Creek. A hamlet consists of a small-scale, compact settlement area that may include several business uses and community services.

Land uses may include a small convenience store, post office, fire station, church, professional office, neighborhood retail store or restaurant. These uses should be oriented to pedestrians, close to the street, and have small-scale signage and limited lighting (because of its proximity to nearby residences). Parking should be minimal and located to the side or at the edge of the street. Housing may be located adjacent to the hamlet or within the hamlet above ground floor commercial uses. Rehabilitation of existing buildings for alternative purposes should be encouraged; new buildings should complement the surrounding residential uses.

**Crossroads Community**

Several County primary or secondary road intersections have developed as small crossroad business centers. Examples of a crossroads community are: Dixie, Ward's Corner, Port Haywood, North and Bohannon. In addition to the central village and hamlets, these areas also serve local residents and provide small business opportunities or services at intersections of roads that frequently carry neighborhood traffic. Typical land uses could include a small convenience store, gas station, post office, café or small office. New buildings should respect the existing architectural character of nearby buildings. Rehabilitation of existing buildings for alternative purposes should be encouraged. Dixie and Ward's Corner may evolve into hamlets, since they may become more developed with the extension of the sanitary sewer transmission force main line.

**Waterfront Business**

The working waterfront, fisheries, and aquaculture businesses of Mathews County should be continued to the extent environmentally feasible. Appropriate business locations on the waterfront are important to the long-term economy of the County and should be carefully protected and utilized in a productive manner. In particular, preference should be given to promoting areas and sites for working waterfront operations, fishing, aquaculture, and habitat preservation that will support the economy, enhance the environment, and ensure quality production of fish and shellfish. There should be a careful assessment of new waterfront land uses with respect to their effects on important fishing and aquaculture resources. In addition, there should be careful assessment of existing waterfront land uses to ensure that they use best management practices to protect and enhance the environment. Of note is that it is important to recognize that with the pursuit and promotion of waterfront business development and aquaculture, there may be competing interests among other property owners for use of adjacent



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land and water. Quality fishing and aquaculture production require wise management of shorelines and off-shore waters with promoted understanding of aquaculture operations, processing, and access.

In addition to business uses, there may be appropriate residentially-oriented business uses that are suitable for the waterfront. These could include such uses as a small condominium complex, boutique hotel, bed & breakfast, or community campground. All of these uses must be carefully considered to ensure environmental compatibility and adequate and safe water and wastewater facilities. Like businesses, these types of uses must utilize best management practices to protect and enhance the environment.

**Rural Preservation/Conservation**

Rural Preservation/Conservation areas include public open space, natural preserves, and areas that should have carefully managed development or be conserved because of special ecosystems or natural conditions. These areas include dedicated conservation areas that are public set-asides for recreation and natural conservation. Other areas noted for preservation/conservation are areas that may be influenced by storm surge or possible rising sea levels over the next twenty years. Generally, further development in these areas should be carefully considered and limited to protect public and private investment and to minimize potential flood damages. Appropriate land uses would include open space, passive recreation, low-density residential development and carefully managed agriculture, forestry or aquaculture.

**Corridor Overlay District**

A Corridor Overlay District could extend from historic Mathews Court House, along Main Street, Buckley Hall Road (Route 198) and John Clayton Memorial Highway (Route 14) corridors to the Gloucester County line. This district would follow the major entrance corridors into the County and include the area served by the sanitary sewer transmission force main. It could provide development guidance for new development to enhance the entrances to the historic Mathews Court House.

**Historic Overlay District**

A Historic Overlay District is proposed for the historic Mathews Court House and surrounding Mathews village area. This district could provide design recommendations for exterior building improvements and new building construction, as well as establish a process for reviewing building demolition. Also, there is the opportunity to designate additional historic overlay districts.



## Mathews County Comprehensive Plan 2030

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Future Land Use, Mathews County 2030		
Category	Approx. Area (acres)	%
Rural Agriculture/Forestal	32,000	58 %
Rural Residential	3800	7 %
Low Density Residential	2600	5 %
Waterfront Residential	9000	16 %
Village	450	<1 %
Hamlet	380	<1 %
Crossroads	150	<1 %
Planned Business	20	<1 %
Waterfront Business	200	<1 %
Rural Preservation/Conservation	7100	13 %
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>55,700</b>	<b>100 %</b>



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**Planning/Development Policies, Action Strategies for Land Use 2030**

The following planning and development policies and action strategies are established to achieve the desired vision for land use in Mathews County:

Development Policies and Strategies for Land Use	
LU1	<p><b>The desired future land use for Mathews County should represent a land use pattern that enhances environmental quality while promoting high quality development. Improvements or changes in land development patterns and uses should incorporate sensitive environmental design and best management practices.</b></p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Amend the County zoning ordinance to integrate the land use categories and development standards recommended by this Comprehensive Plan. Revise permitted land uses to coincide with policies promoting preservation and improvement of the environment and water quality.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Consider additional amendments to improve overall water quality, protect sensitive environmental areas, and promote better management of land and natural resources.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Revise the County zoning map to reflect revised ordinance amendments.</li> </ol>
LU2	<p><b>The future viability of Mathews County requires planning and management of not only land uses, but also the use and treatment of the surface waters surrounding the County. The land and waters are linked; one affects the other. Future land use decisions should consider effects on both the land and the water.</b></p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. - Coordinate approaches and methods with state agencies and other regional governments. Develop agreed upon procedures for reviewing development and use requests that affect land and water. Adopt applicable regulations to effectively manage uses within County territorial boundaries.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Amend relevant regulations to protect water quality and appropriately manage aquaculture businesses/operations and surrounding land uses.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Consider adopting various tools identified in the Recurrent Flooding Study prepared by the MPPDC for the County.</li> </ol>



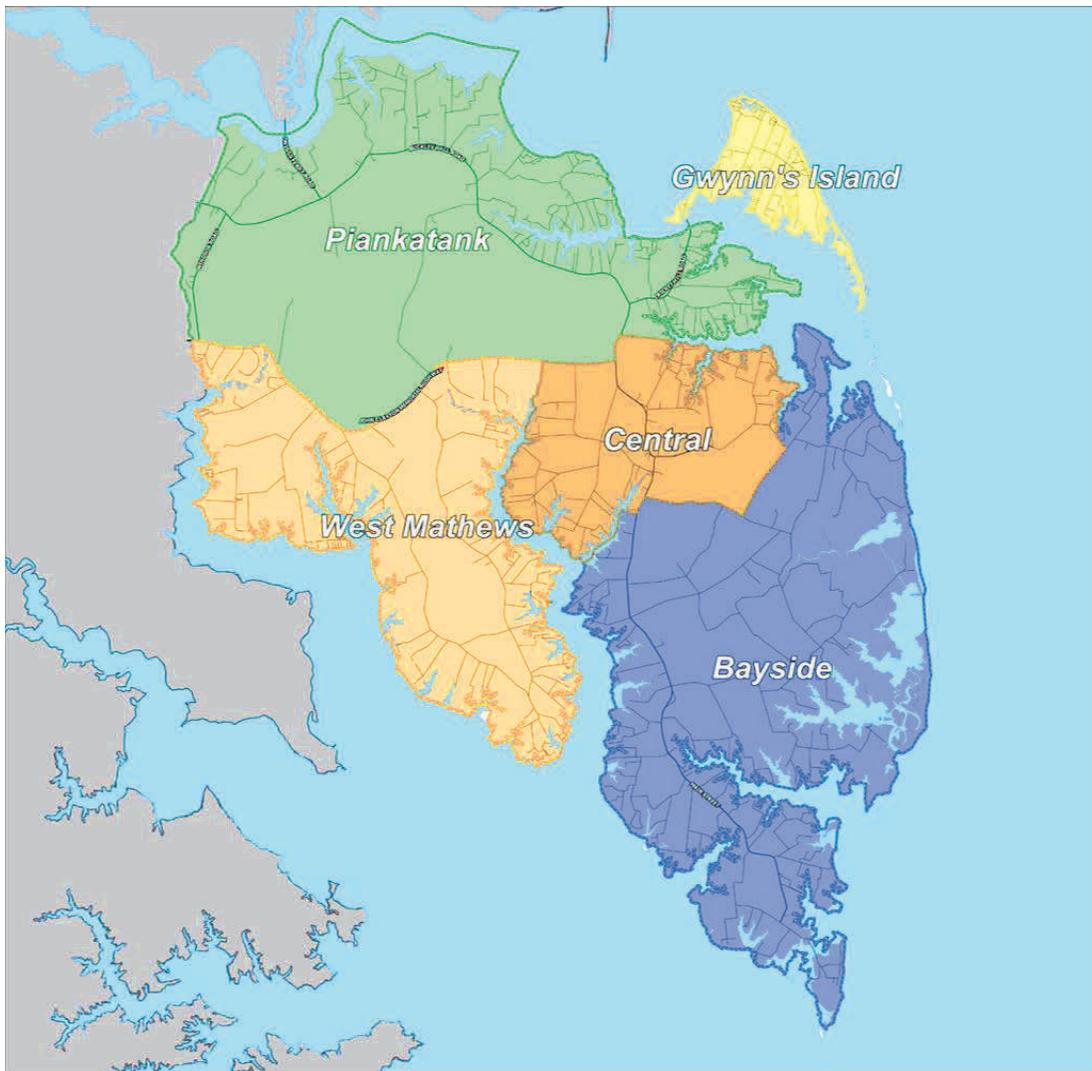
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**Planning Districts**

Mathews County consists of five planning areas:

- o Piankatank
- o Gwynn's Island
- o Central Mathews
- o West Mathews
- o Bayside

Each district should have distinct guidelines for uses and development that are based on the individual characteristics of the planning area. In order to manage growth and the type of uses permitted in each planning area, specific zoning and development regulations must be created for each of the five districts. Therefore, policies and recommendations on land use that are outlined in this plan are categorized specifically for each of the five areas.





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**Piankatank**

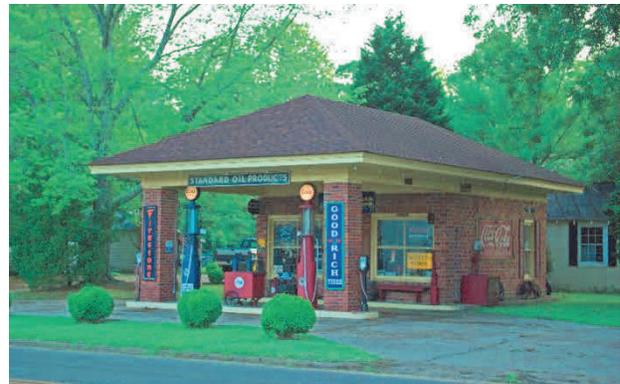
**Community Overview**

The Piankatank Planning Area is located in the northern portion of Mathews County and lies adjacent to Gloucester and Middlesex Counties. The Piankatank area extends north of Route 14, John Clayton Memorial Highway, to the Piankatank River and includes the small communities of Dixie, Dutton, Cobbs Creek, Hudgins, Blakes, Hallieford, and Redart. The area hosts the Piankatank River Landing that is frequently used by residents; in addition, Piankatank hosts three other public water access sites.

Much of Piankatank consists of open fields or forests and residential development, particularly along the Piankatank River, which provides waterfront access and vistas. Cobbs Creek and Hudgins exhibit the most business development; Cobbs Creek includes a small business park and Hudgins contains a cluster of village-type businesses.



*Cobbs Creek Business Park*



*Historic Hudgins Business*

*Piankatank River Residential*



*Queens Creek Residential*





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This planning area includes the highest elevations in the County, particularly north of Buckley Hall Road. As a result, the soils here are more diverse and permeable, allowing better drainage; however, the elevation makes them more erodible, particularly along the shoreline. The district's unique topographic features are attributable to the meteorite that impacted the region millions of years ago, creating what is known today at the "Chesapeake Impact Crater." The ridgelines of the crater can be seen along Buckley Hall Road and Ridge Road.

The Piankatank Planning Area also contains some of the most productive forests and agricultural lands in the County. Much of the district between Buckley Hall Road and John Clayton Memorial Highway lies undeveloped in large tracts of forests and open fields.



The Piankatank Area hosts facilities of the Piankatank Ruritan Club which are used by many Mathews County citizens. There is a large event facility and several ball fields. A new fire and rescue building has been constructed off Buckley Hall Road for the Cobbs Creek area.

The following maps provide a more detailed overview of the existing conditions and planned public infrastructure improvements in the Piankatank Planning Area:

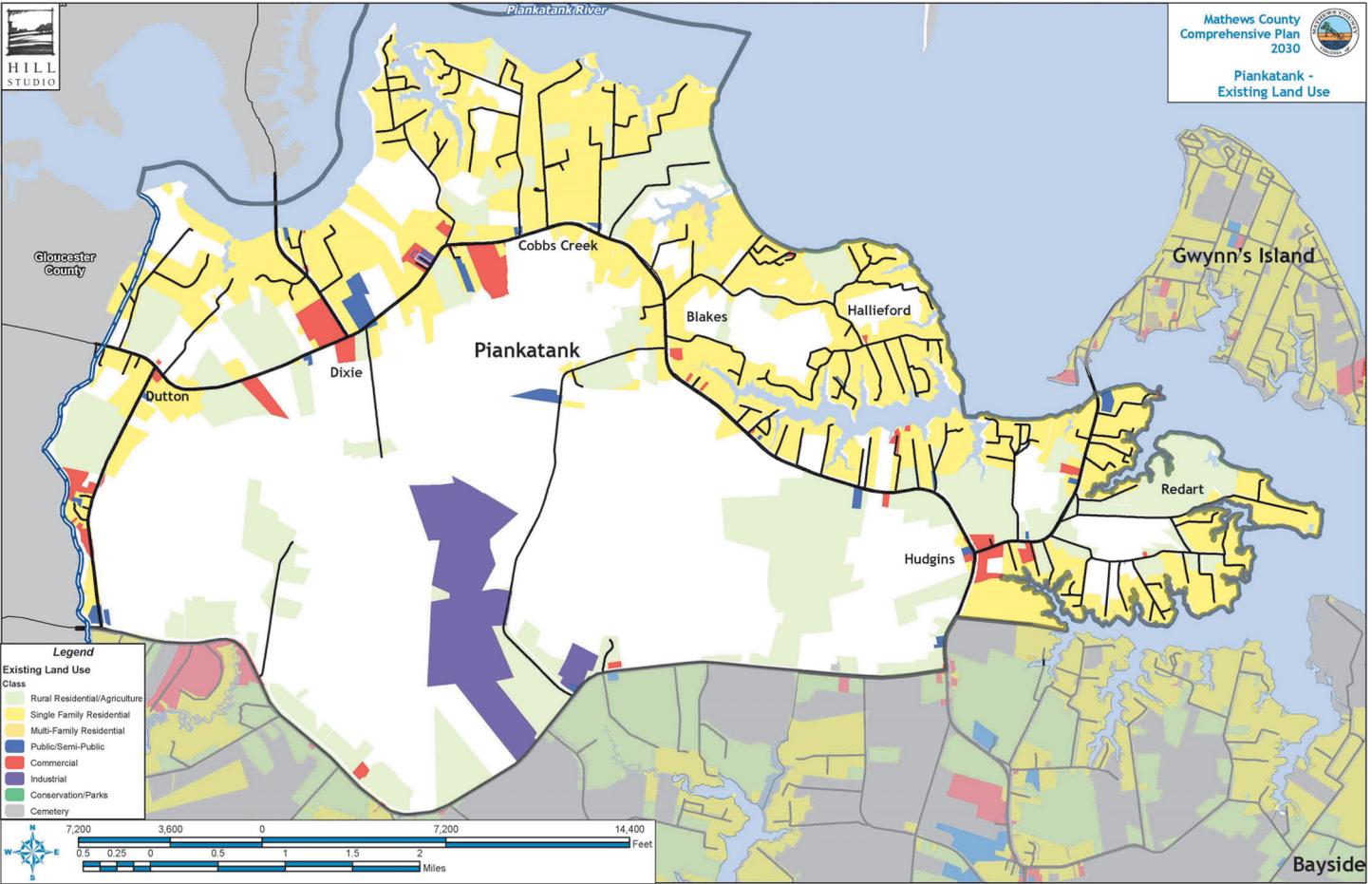
- Existing Land Use
- Public Facilities
- Development Constraints
- Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas



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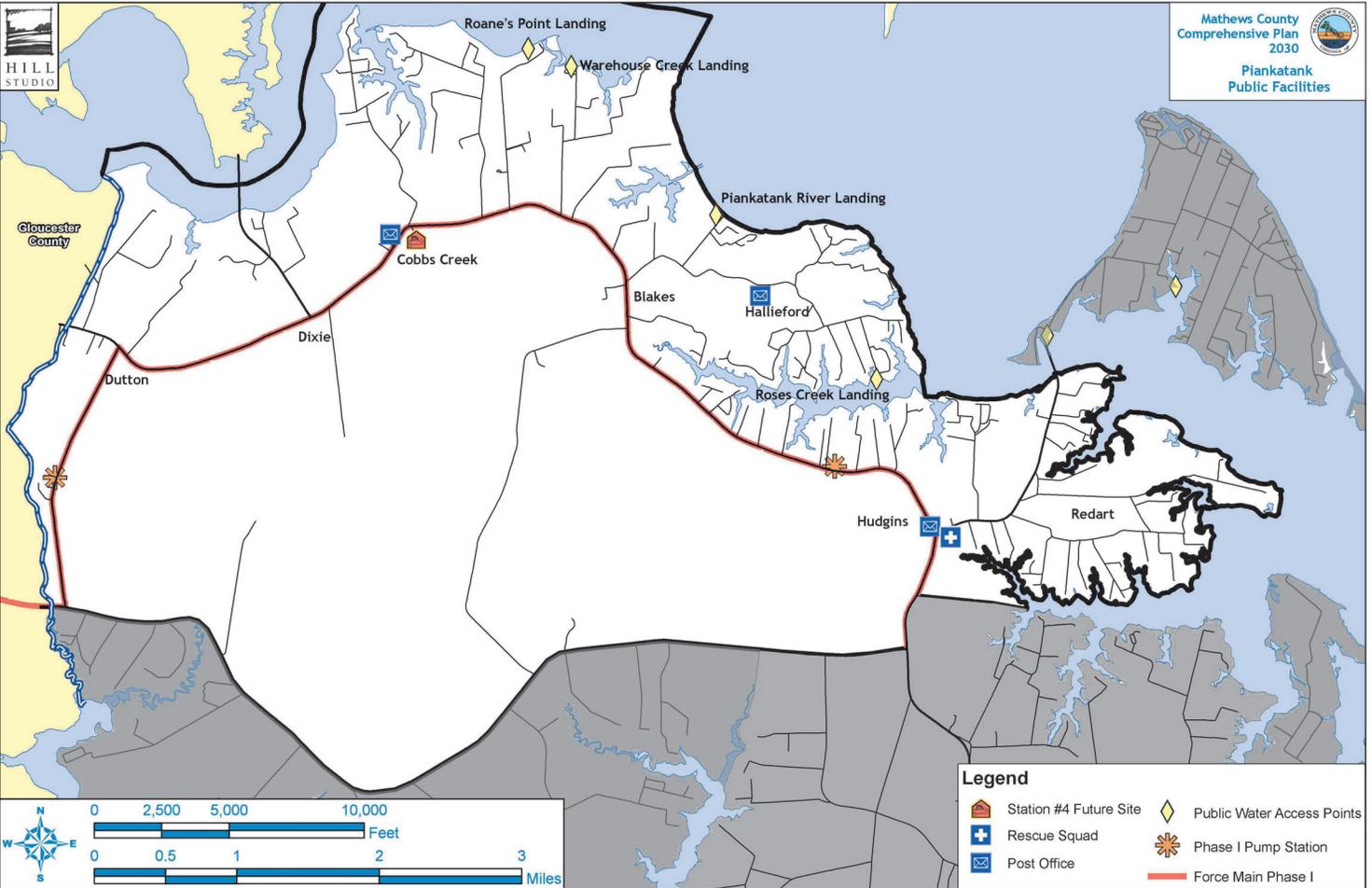
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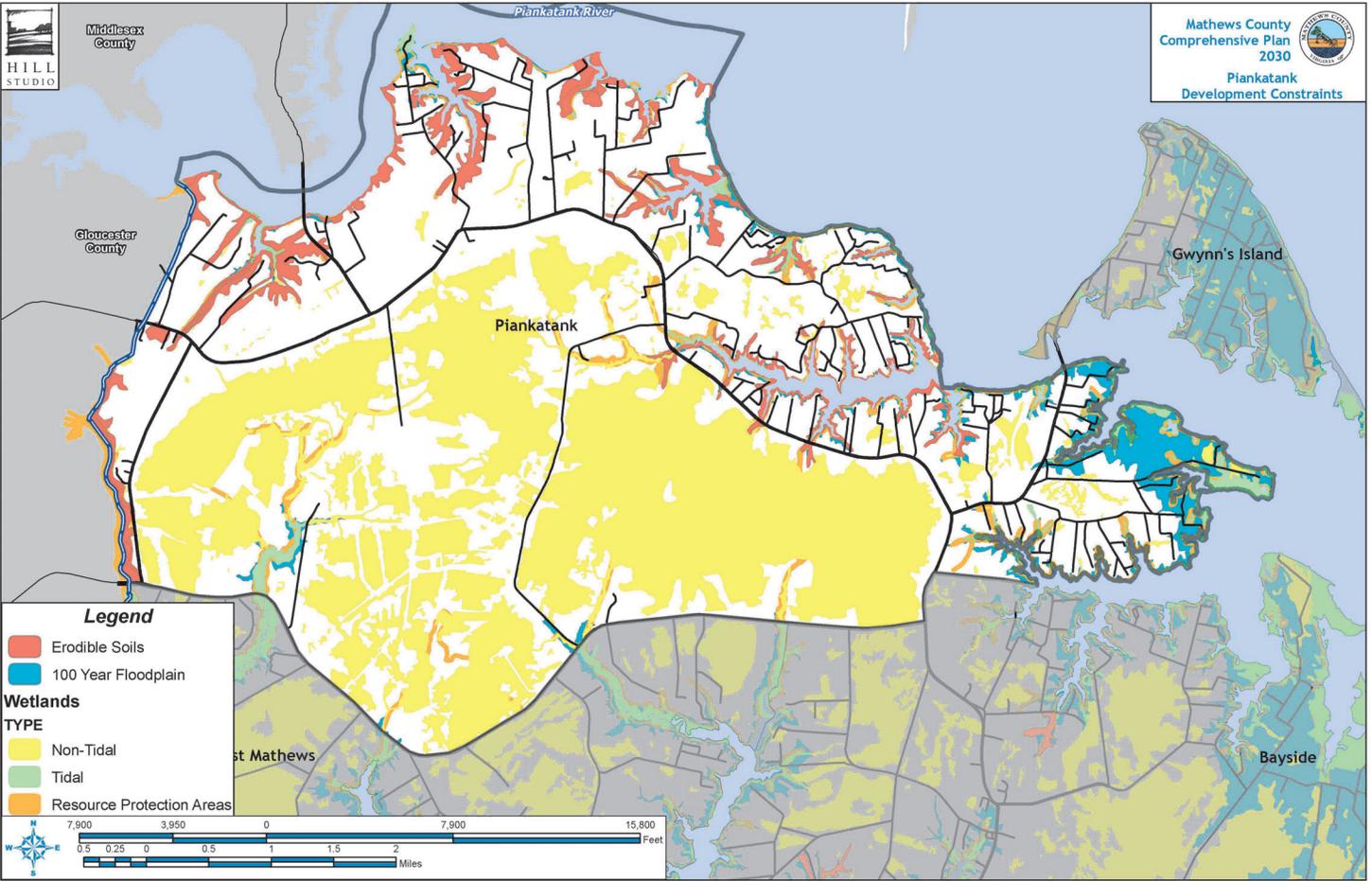
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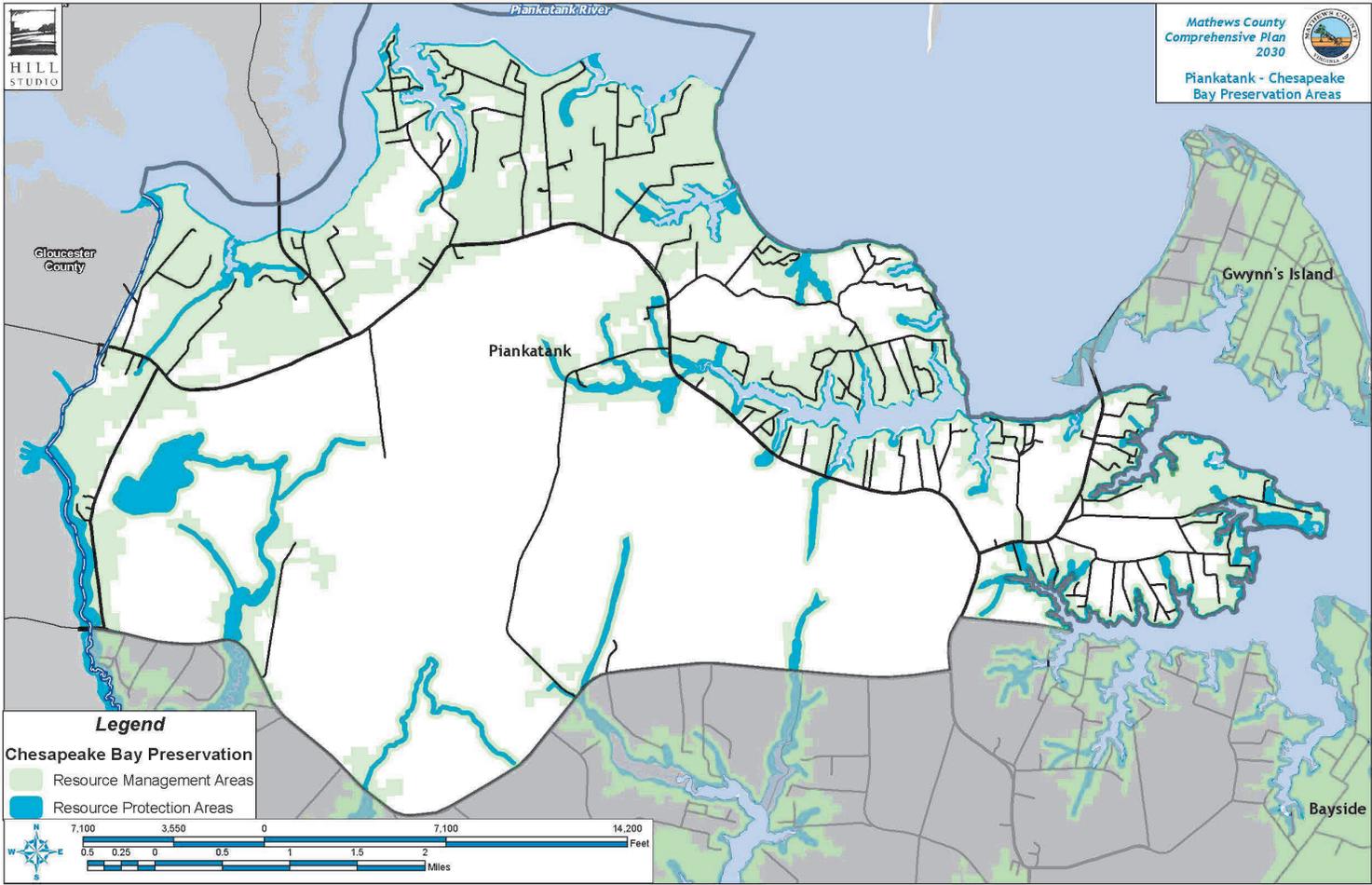
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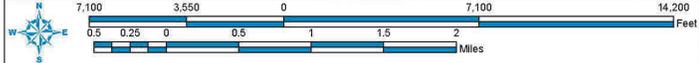
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**Legend**

**Chesapeake Bay Preservation**  
 Resource Management Areas  
 Resource Protection Areas





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Community Opportunities and Challenges

Over the next 10-20 years, some of the opportunities and challenges for Piankatank include:

- The Sanitary Sewer Transmission Force Main constructed in this portion of the County will provide an opportunity to accommodate new development at defined concentrated areas along the corridor. This is beneficial to the County in that it provides opportunities for managed growth that is not dependent on septic systems; also, it encourages growth in the northern section of the County where there are fewer development constraints and better access. The challenge for the new sanitary sewer areas will be to manage the land uses along the corridor to ensure that the land uses and patterns of development complement the gateway corridors and the visual character of the County. The Board of Supervisors will need to work with HRSD, taxpayers, and businesses to establish recommendations and guiding policies for future connections that will balance costs and benefits.
- The Piankatank River is considered “qualifying” as a scenic river from Route 17 in Middlesex, Gloucester and Mathews Counties to the Chesapeake Bay. In Mathews County, the public access areas on the Piankatank are some of the most frequently used. A scenic river designation could be beneficial in helping maintain the natural integrity of the area and encourage tourism.
- Much of the undeveloped land in the Piankatank Planning Area is non-tidal wetlands and large tract forests and agricultural lands. These are important natural features that need to be carefully managed in order to maintain the overall environmental quality and visual character of Mathews County. Leadership and special land management and conservation efforts are needed to ensure their continued contribution to the community’s quality of life. Increased minimum lot sizes are recommended, as well as best management practices for agriculture and forestry operations.
- Cobbs Creek and Hudgins offer opportunities for additional business development, now that the sanitary sewer transmission force main is completed and further direction is provided by the Board of Supervisors regarding any future connection policies. They are recommended as “hamlets” for the purposes of future land use, which are areas where there would be a mixture of supporting commercial and residential uses in a concentrated area. Cobbs Creek can provide increased sites for economic development in a planned business environment and other commercial development along the corridor; residential uses also could be considered in denser development patterns along the corridor or located above first floor commercial uses. Hudgins could provide a very interesting opportunity for mixed residential and commercial uses because of the unique architecture and pedestrian scale of the community. Improvements to the street frontage, landscaping, sidewalks, and existing buildings could create a very welcoming small hamlet environment for the community.
- Much of the demand for residential development will likely continue to be oriented to



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the waterfront. Because of environmental factors, there must be careful management of land uses and development patterns along the Piankatank River. New residential buildings and subdivisions should incorporate conservation and low-impact/light imprint environmental principles into the design of parcels and supporting systems. Public education about waterfront environments and risks will play an important part in managing land development and achieving community goals for improved water quality and environmental sustainability.

**Piankatank Future Land Use**

The future land use map for Piankatank is shown in greater detail on the following page. The recommended future land use categories are discussed in the preceding land use section of this plan; for the purposes of this section they are summarized below:

- **Rural Agriculture/Forestal** - This land use category is intended for large-tract agriculture and forests. Land uses may include agriculture, forests and accompanying very low density residential.
- **Waterfront Residential** - There are many environmental challenges associated with expanding development in these areas. New development should be conservative in terms of lot sizes, building types and locations, and shoreline and water access. New or expanded development on existing lots must recognize constraints relative to providing and maintaining safe wastewater treatment and water supply, as well as protecting water quality. Land uses may include single-family residential development and well-managed agriculture or open space. Building heights should be limited to an appropriate scale to maintain community character.
- **Low Density Residential** - Land uses within this category may include single family and duplex residential uses at a density of 1-2 dwelling units per acre depending on environmental constraints and access to public utilities.
- **Planned Business** - This land use category is for targeted business areas to enhance employment opportunities and economic development for the County. Land uses may include corporate offices, light manufacturing or assembly, medical facilities, and other larger-scale business uses or warehouse/distribution uses. Signage, access and building materials and placement should be carefully planned and coordinated to ensure a well-designed and complementary environment. Dixie and the existing business park in Cobbs Creek apply to this future land use category.
- **Hamlet** - This land use category is applicable to Hudgins and Cobbs Creek. A hamlet consists of a small-scale, compact settlement area that may include several business uses and community services. Housing may be located adjacent to the hamlet or within the hamlet above ground floor commercial uses. Rehabilitation of existing buildings is encouraged; new development should complement the corridor and surrounding uses.
- **Crossroads Community** – These are small crossroad business centers that serve local



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residents on roads that frequently carry neighborhood traffic. Typical land uses may include a small convenience store, gas station, post office, café or small office.

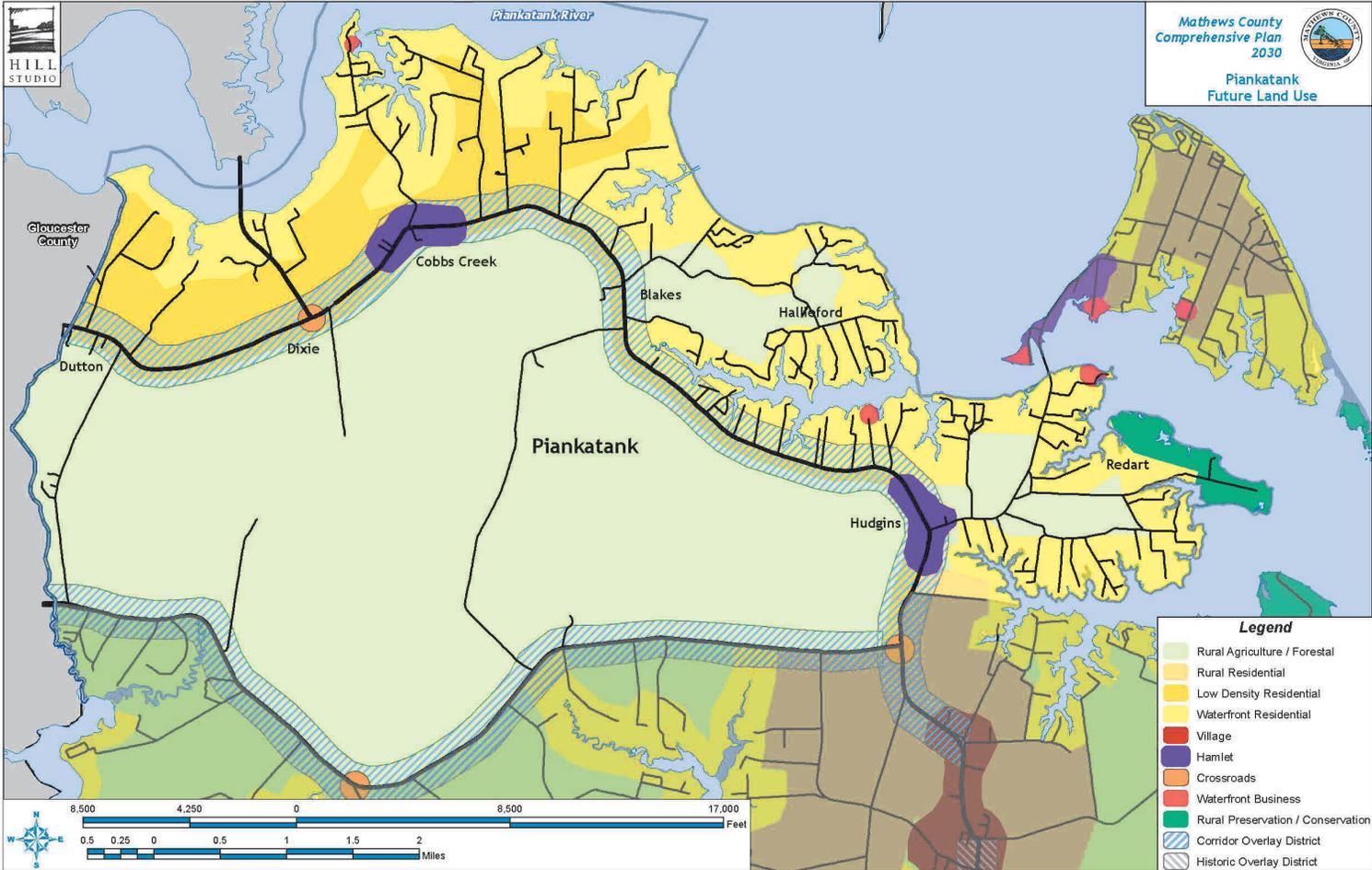
- **Waterfront Business** – This category is for important working waterfront businesses of Mathews County that are important to the long-term economy. Quality aquaculture requires wise management of shorelines and off-shore waters with promoted understanding of aquaculture operations, processing, and access.
- **Corridor Overlay District** - This district would follow the major entrance corridors into the County and include the Phase I area to be served by the sanitary sewer transmission force main. It could provide development guidance for new development to enhance the entrances to the historic Mathews Court House.



## Mathews County Comprehensive Plan 2030

### *V. Mathews County Community Plans: Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

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Mathews County Comprehensive Plan 2030

*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*



*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
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**Piankatank Community Development Policies and Strategies**

Development Policies and Strategies for Piankatank	
<b>PIANK 1</b>	<p><b>The Piankatank Planning Area exhibits the highest elevations in Mathews County and some of the best opportunities for suitable housing and business development given the sanitary sewer infrastructure improvements. New development should complement the gateway entrance corridors and maintain the environmental resources of the County.</b></p>
	1. Encourage new business development in the designated hamlet areas. Develop and adopt corridor design standards that will provide guidance for new development and redevelopment.
	2. Encourage new residential development that is designed to maintain the natural and environmental qualities of the area. In designated hamlets, promote housing above commercial uses and in compact groupings.
	3. Consider adopting a corridor overlay district to include Routes 198, 14 and 3 and work with private and public partners to adopt design guidelines and implement them. Install County gateway and wayfinding signs along these routes.
	4. Encourage the rehabilitation of existing buildings, particularly where they contribute to the architectural character of the community or have historic value. Promote the use of historic tax credits where applicable. Develop incentive programs to encourage appropriate rehabilitation in the corridor overlay district that is consistent with adopted design standards.
	5. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to limit business uses in residential zones. (This is particularly important along the corridor in order to orient business to the hamlets rather than sprawled along the corridor.)
<b>PIANK 2</b>	<p><b>The Piankatank District includes some of the largest tracts of agricultural lands and forests in the County. These are important natural assets that should be managed carefully and protected.</b></p>
	1. Identify major land ownership patterns and work with the owners to conserve lands and manage using best management practices.
	2. Amend the County zoning ordinance to increase lot sizes for rural agriculture and forested lands.



*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
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**Piankatank: Special Action Projects**

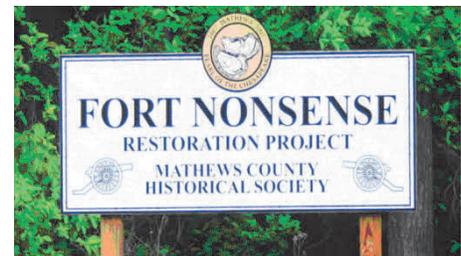
**Gateway Entrance Signs**

Gateway entrance signs are excellent ways to introduce a community to visitors. Initially, signs could be erected at the entrances to the County. These gateway signs could include entrances to the County along waterways as well as along roads. Additional signs could be added to each of the smaller communities in a district to promote identity and sense of place. Special attention must be given to the design and placement of the signs. There should be consistency with an overall County theme, yet promote individuality with respect to specific communities or districts.



**Fort Nonsense**

In addition to its early settlement heritage, Mathews County played a role in the Civil War. Earthen fortification elements are intact at Fort Nonsense located northeast of the intersection of John Clayton Memorial Highway (Route 14) and Windsor Rd. (Route 3). The County and the Mathews County Historical Society are working to develop an educational and visitors' center that will celebrate the Civil War experience in Mathews.



**Entrance Corridor Building Rehabilitation**

There are many early buildings along entrance corridors that offer interesting architectural features that can complement the character of the corridor if rehabilitated appropriately. Building improvements should respect architectural features and site improvements must provide an attractive relationship to the street.





*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

**Gwynn’s Island**

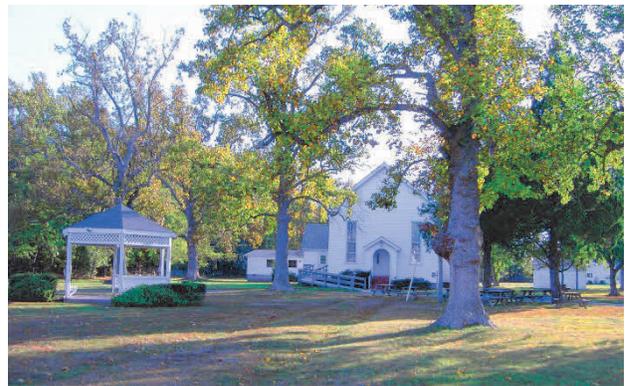
**Community Overview**

Gwynn’s Island has an extensive heritage, including an early visit by the explorer Captain John Smith. The island contains a mixture of commercial, residential and working waterfront-facilities. It is accessible by boat or across an iron truss bridge that connects to the County mainland. Unfortunately, the bridge, which rotates for navigational purposes and is a special architectural asset, is being considered for replacement.

Gwynn’s Island exhibits some of the oldest settlement patterns and includes some of the densest development patterns in the County. Many of the houses are small cottages or two-story structures on small lots; many have been expanded over the years. The island contains two small post offices (Grimstead and Gwynn), as well as several small commercial and tourist attractions on the island including the Gwynn’s Island Museum, public boat ramp, and an old, vacant motel which was once an active destination for both visitors and residents. Gwynn offers a community center, waterfront condominiums, and a small campground.



*Island Campground*



*Gwynn’s Island Community Center*

*Spirit Branch Cemetery*

*Truss Bridge*

*Gwynn’s Island Museum*





*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
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*Gwynn's Island condominiums, retail businesses, housing and working waterfront.*

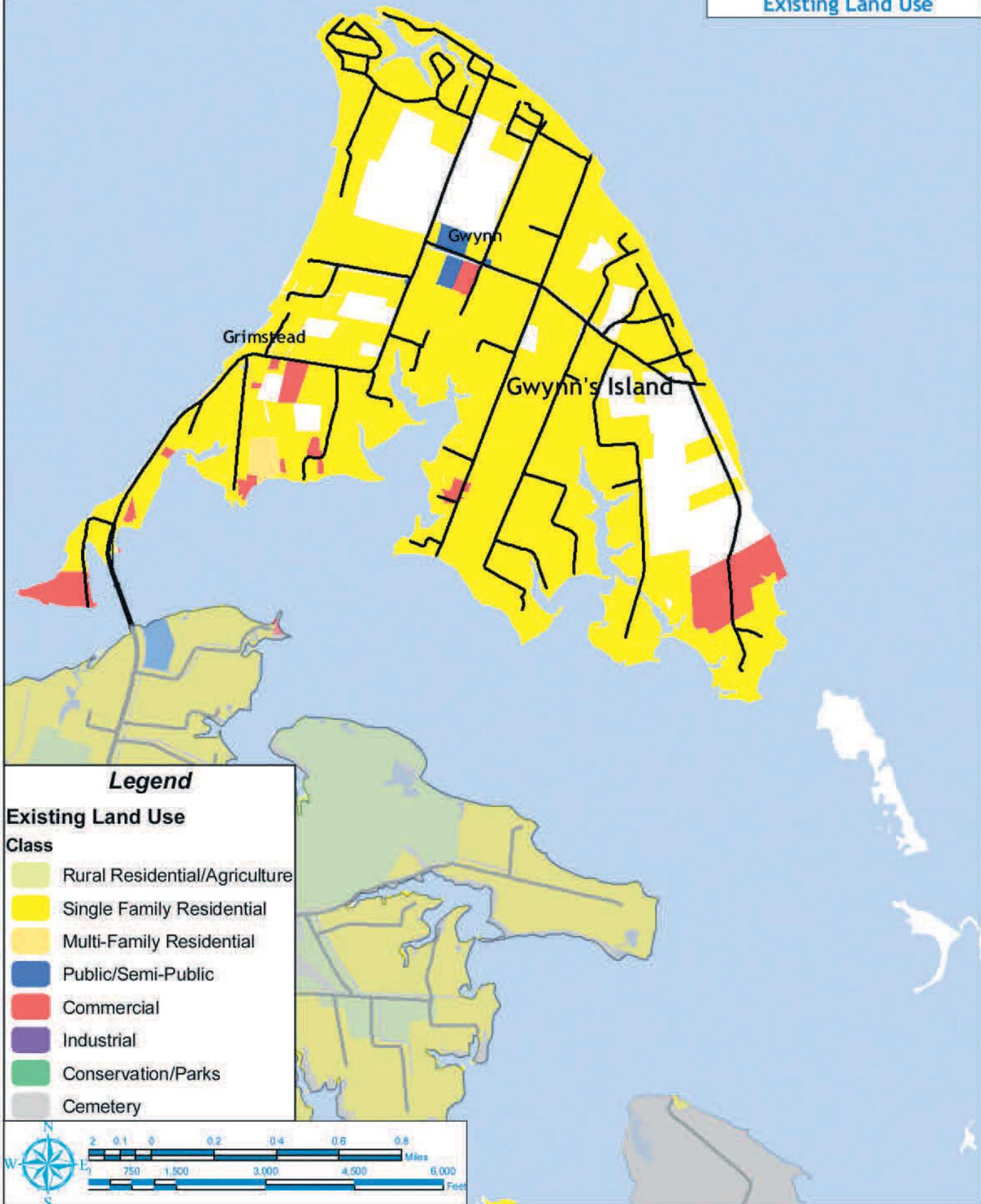


The following maps provide a more detailed overview of the existing conditions and planned public infrastructure on Gwynn's Island:

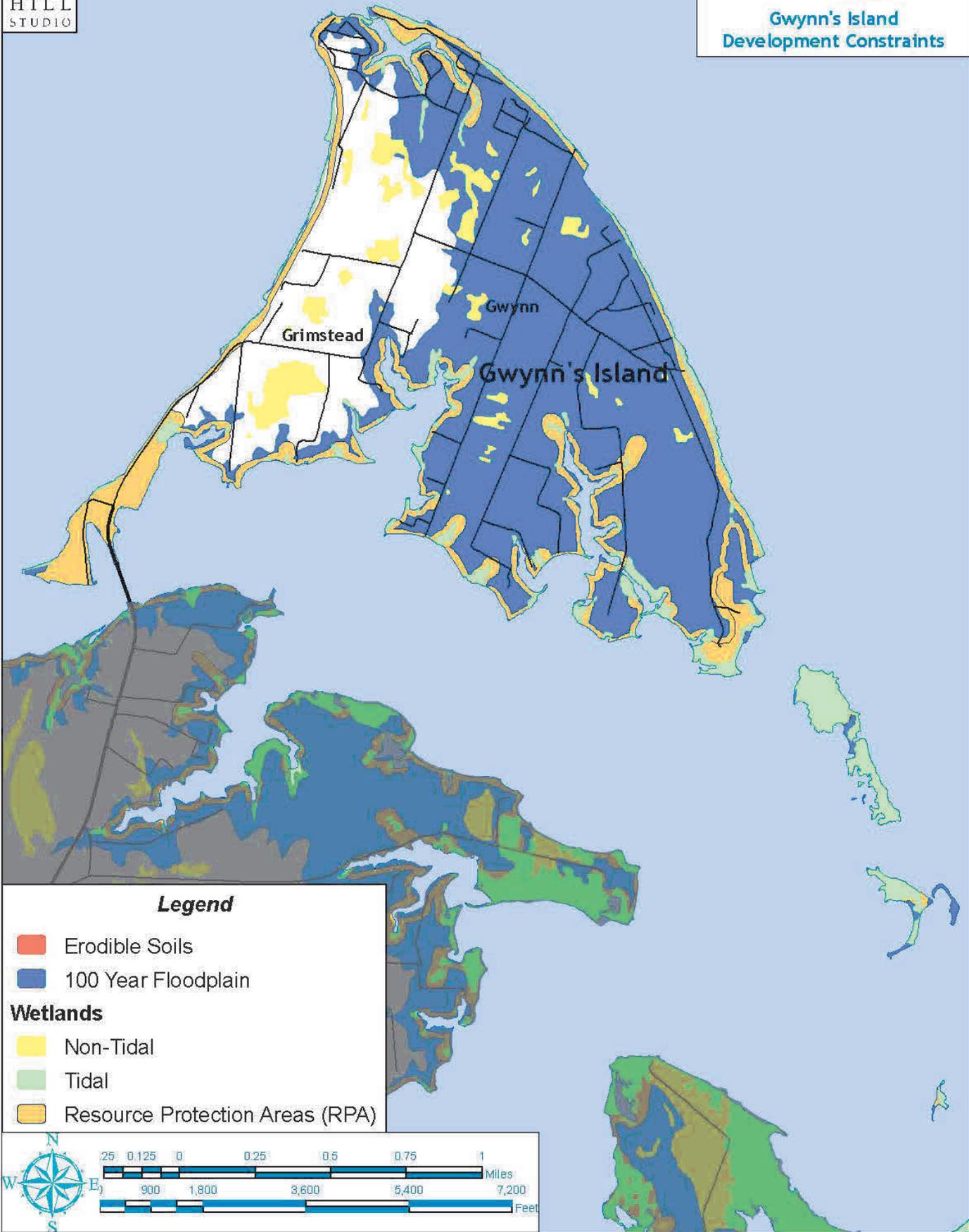
- Existing Land Use
- Public Facilities
- Development Constraints
- Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas

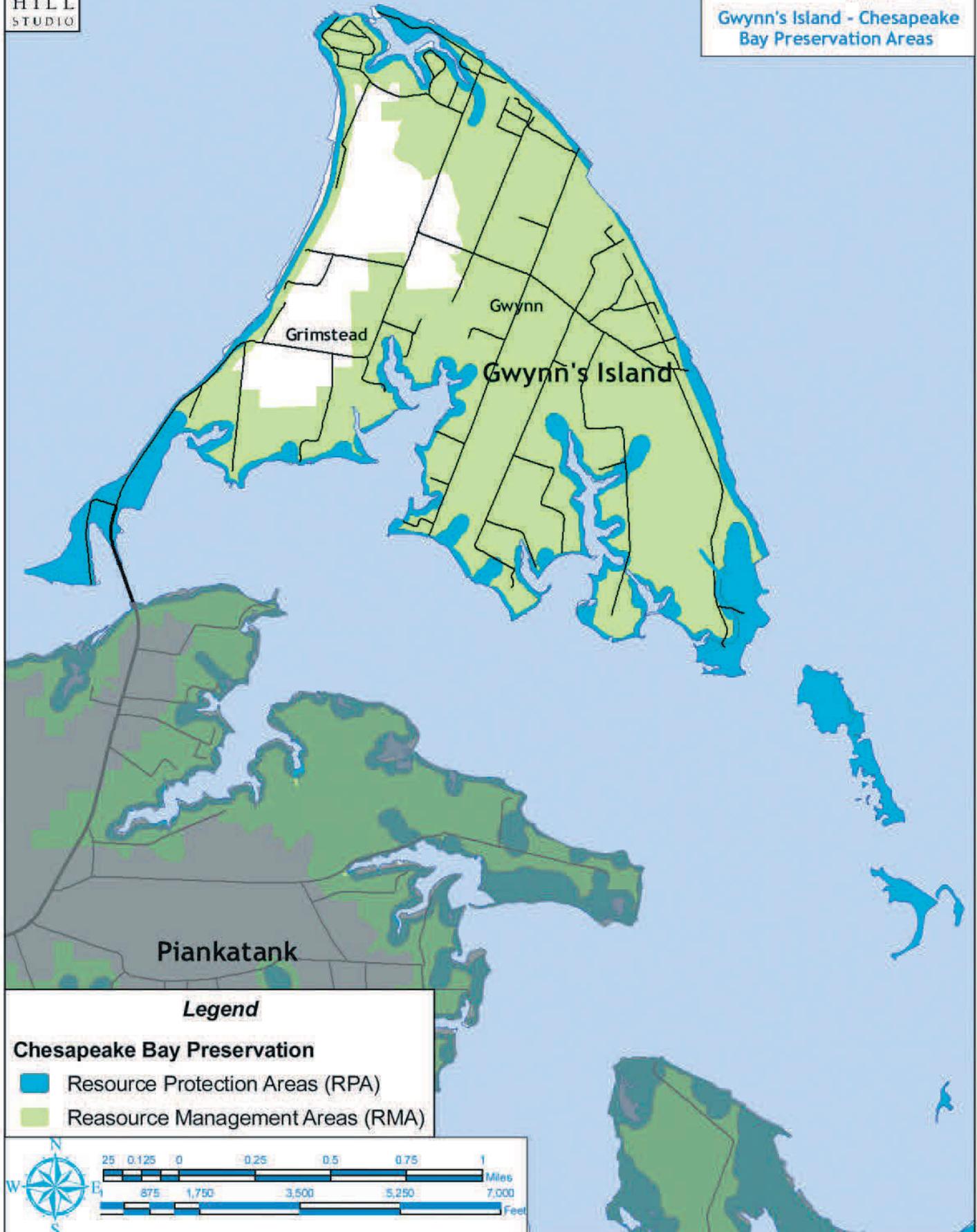


Gwynn's Island  
Existing Land Use











*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

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**Community Opportunities and Challenges**

Over the next 10-20 years, some of the opportunities and challenges for Gwynn's Island include:

- Gwynn's Island exhibits a more dense development pattern than other parts of the County and is surrounded by water, making it susceptible to storm winds and rising waters. Land elevations are less than ten feet above sea level. Possible sea level rise over the next few decades could affect half of the island. New and existing development must consider these factors and appropriately plan for these potential impacts in an environmentally responsible manner.
- The development on the island is served primarily by septic systems. This presents water quality issues for both surface and ground water. Many of the systems are failing and there is a need for active measures to protect public health and safety. Phase II of the Sanitary Sewer Transmission Force Main is planned to extend to Gwynn's Island at a to-be-determined future time. Phase I construction is expected to be completed in early 2011.
- Many of the older structures on Gwynn's Island have been rehabilitated or expanded, reducing the amount of open space available on lots. The County's Zoning Ordinance does not regulate the maximum percent of a lot that may be covered with structures or impervious surfaces. Extensive development on small lots may exacerbate drainage issues. To help minimize development conflicts in the future, the County should consider amending the zoning ordinance to establish maximum lot coverage for driveways, parking and structures.
- Because of its proximity to the Chesapeake Bay, the Piankatank River and several inner waterways, the Island has historically had many waterfront businesses ranging from marinas to shipyards and seafood processing. There are two public landings. These amenities and historical operations may offer beneficial opportunities for aquaculture development and working waterfront preservation for the future.
- The Islander Motel once provided bay-front accommodations for tourists and was a gathering spot for residents for special events. It represented the only motel facility in the County, offering spaces for large hospitality events. This property could be rehabilitated or redeveloped for a similar use; however, access and environmental issues are challenges.
- Gwynn's Island is a tourist destination and home to residents (permanent and seasonal), as well as a place of business for waterfront operations. Most recognize the special small community charm and the waterfront opportunities, but may not realize the delicate balance that must be achieved to maintain the community's qualities, environmental amenities and overall contributions to the County. Careful land management and planning will be needed to preserve waterfront businesses and enhance the quality of life for residents.



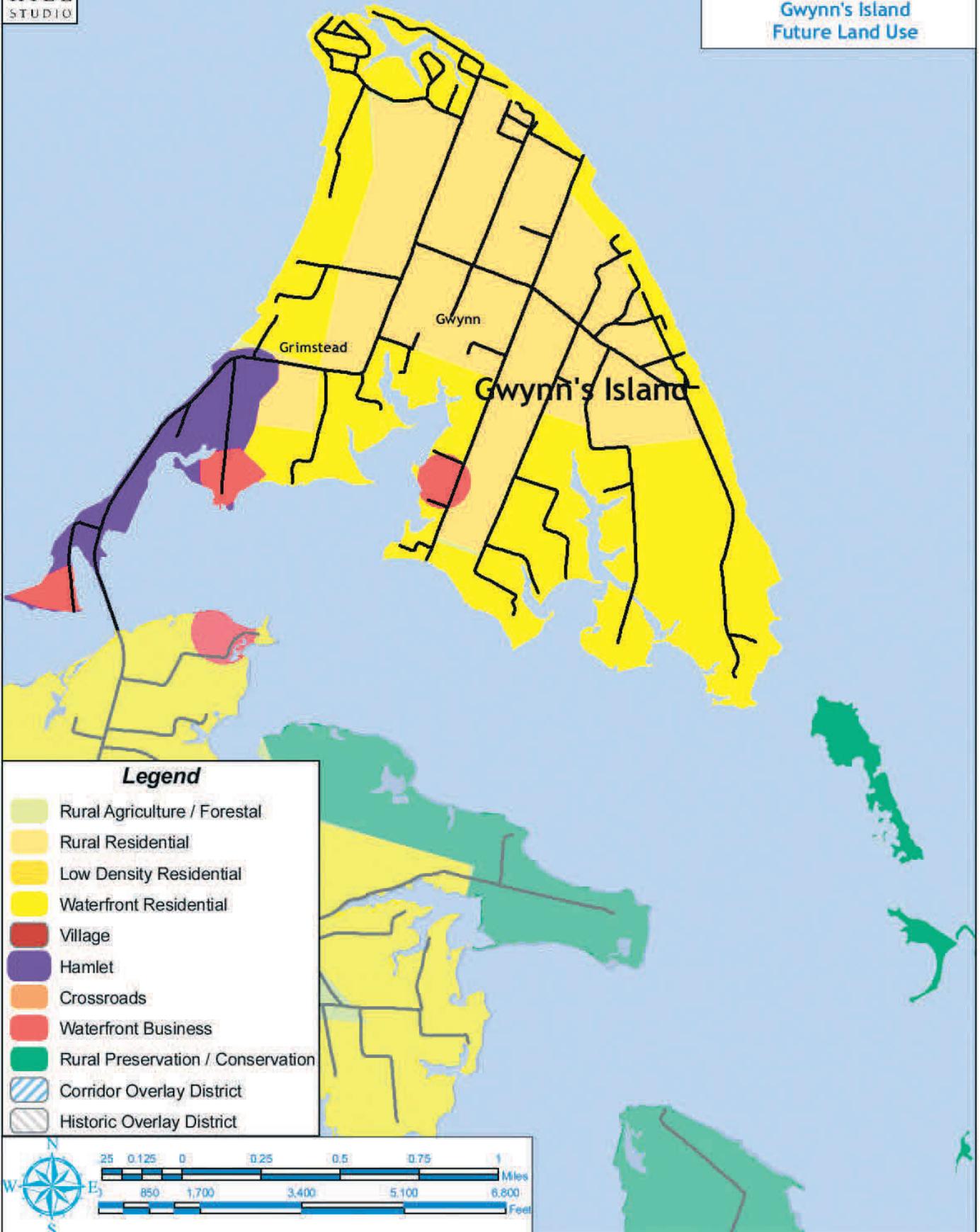
*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

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**Gwynn's Island Future Land Use**

The future land use map for Gwynn's Island is shown in greater detail on the following page. The recommended future land use categories are discussed in the preceding land use section of this plan; for the purposes of this section they are summarized below:

- **Waterfront Residential** - There are many environmental challenges associated with expanding development in these areas. New development should be conservative in terms of lot sizes, building types and locations, and shoreline and water access. New or expanded development on existing lots must recognize constraints relative to providing and maintaining safe wastewater treatment and water supply, as well as protecting water quality. Land uses may include single-family residential or clustered-open space development as well as limited agriculture. Building heights should be at an appropriate scale to maintain community character.
- **Rural Residential** – This category applies to areas that are appropriate for very low-density residential development. Development should maintain community character.
- **Hamlet** – This land use category is applicable near the Gwynn's Island Bridge, Grimstead Public Landing, and other adjacent areas where mixed-uses have developed on Gwynn's Island. A hamlet consists of a small-scale, compact settlement area that may include several business uses and community services. Housing may be located adjacent to the hamlet or within the hamlet above ground floor commercial uses. Rehabilitation of existing buildings is encouraged; new development should complement the corridor and surrounding uses.
- **Waterfront Business** – This category is for working waterfront businesses that are important to the long-term economy of Mathews County. Quality aquaculture requires wise management of shorelines and off-shore waters with promoted understanding of aquaculture operations, processing, and access.
- **Rural Preservation/Conservation** - Rural Preservation/Conservation areas include public open space, natural preserves, and areas that should be carefully managed and conserved because of special ecosystems, natural conditions, or possible rise in sea level. Appropriate land uses include open space, passive recreation, low-density residential, and managed agriculture, forestry or aquaculture.





V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
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**Community Development Policies and Strategies**

Development Policies and Strategies for Gwynn’s Island	
<b>GWYNN 1</b>	<b>Gwynn’s Island is an important heritage resource for Mathews County because of its early settlement and its waterfront business history. New or expanded development on the Island should complement existing land uses, minimize use conflicts, and respect environmental features.</b>
	1. Ensure that new or expanded development addresses environmental constraints and protects water quality. Encourage design solutions that will enhance the environment and protect resources and physical investment for the long-term.
	2. Protect working waterfront operations that are important to the economy of Mathews County. Work with multiple partners to enhance water quality of the Bay and its tributaries. Work with and educate residents and businesses on aquaculture needs and waterfront operations.
<b>GWYNN 2</b>	<b>Gwynn’s Island is important to County tourism and economic development efforts. Underutilized properties within the “hamlet” should be carefully considered for rehabilitation or redevelopment. Commercial waterfront development outside of the hamlet should be limited to appropriate sites for aquaculture.</b>
	1. Consider redevelopment of the former motel site on Gwynn’s Island as a small resort facility. Ensure that development is low-impact, environmentally-friendly and a good neighbor.
	2. Pursue the redevelopment of underutilized waterfront sites as recommended for aquaculture development.
<b>GWYNN 3</b>	<b>Gwynn’s Island is susceptible to storm surges and potential rising sea levels. Public education of risks and mitigation solutions is essential in order to raise awareness, reduce adverse effects and limit property damages. Expanded or new development on Gwynn’s Island should carefully consider these factors. Conservation and appropriate environmental solutions are preferred.</b>



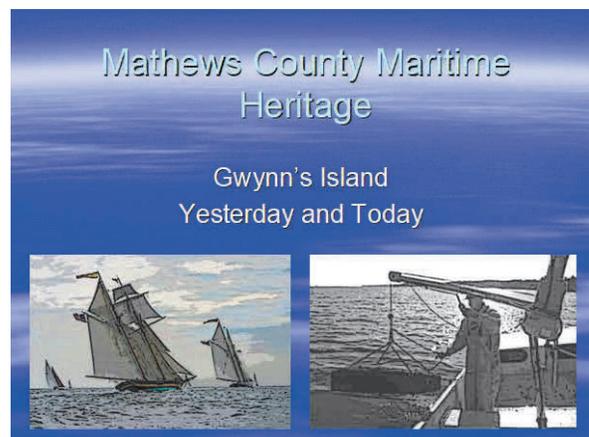
V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies

Development Policies and Strategies for Gwynn’s Island	
	1. Increase public awareness regarding the risks to property and life during storm surges and long-term risks related to possible sea level rise. When possible, discourage development in high-risk areas or encourage appropriate environmental solutions to reduce impacts. Develop and publish appropriate materials for public distribution.
	2. Revise land use and development regulations to direct growth and development out of high risk areas outside of the floodplain. Consider enhancing existing regulations to increase setbacks and buffers in the floodplain.
	4. Identify alternative means for evacuating residents from Gwynn’s Island in the event of a hurricane. Work with the U. S. Coast Guard and other agencies to provide boat and air rescue. Encourage residents to register with the County’s Code Red Emergency Alert service.
<b>GWYNN 4</b>	<b>Gwynn’s Island has a low elevation and near-surface water table that poses risks for proper functioning of septic systems. These systems should be monitored frequently to reduce impacts on water quality.</b>
	1. Pursue and support local and regional pump-out programs for septic systems in the County.
	2. Amend the County zoning ordinance to address development by creating maximum lot coverage standards that minimize impacts on water quality.

**Gwynn’s Island: Special Action Projects**

**Maritime History of Gwynn’s Island**

The maritime heritage of Gwynn’s Island could be shared by writing a history of important activities and events. By integrating current aquaculture operations, the publication could serve as an educational aid, as well as provide a bridge between collections in the Gwynn’s Island Museum and the Maritime Museum. Suggestions for walking, driving and boating tours of important maritime sites could enhance the value of the publication.





*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

## Central Mathews

### Community Overview

The Central Mathews Planning Area includes historic Mathews Court House (the County seat) and the residential communities of Moon and Diggs. The Court House area is the center of business and governmental activity for the County and contains multiple businesses, offices and public facilities (library, schools, court facilities and county administration. Central Mathews also includes the local area known as “Ward’s Corner,” which is located at the intersection of Buckley Hall Road and John Clayton Memorial Highway.

Residents of the County and of Central Mathews proudly proclaim that there are no stop lights in the County, not even in the County seat of Mathews. This serves as a testament to the easy-going ambiance and charming quality of life cherished by residents of the County.

Mathews Historic Courthouse has a charming village character that boasts historic buildings, pedestrian-friendly environment, and quaint shopping and dining experiences. Many buildings on the historic Courthouse Green have been restored. Other buildings in the Courthouse area have been renovated through the efforts of public and private investors. Planning and visioning for Mathews and Main Street has progressed since 1995 (*Vision for Future Mathews Court House*), culminating in various plans in 2002 (*Mathews Action Plan*), 2004 (*Mathews Court House Transportation Plan*) and 2008 (*Mathews Court House - Historic Gateway to the Chesapeake - Transportation Enhancement Program Application*). As of 2018, construction has been completed for streetscape and building facade improvements to the downtown business district, funded in part through a VDOT Transportation Enhancement Grant and a DHCD Community Development Block Grant.

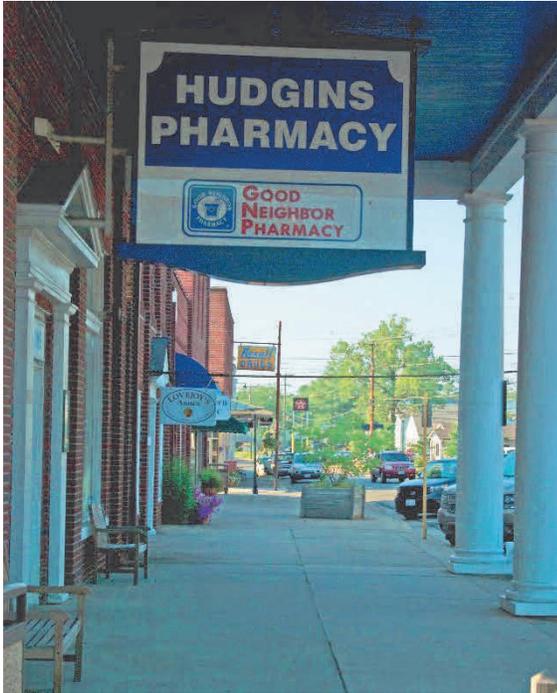


*Main Street Mathews is welcoming to residents and tourists.*



*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

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*Main Street Hudgins Pharmacy*



*Main Street Richardson's, a local landmark*

*Restoration of the Historic Courthouse Buildings*





**V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies**

**1995 Vision for Mathews Court House**

*Mathews Court House is a thriving village with bustling shops and restaurants; there is water access to the Court House and plenty of parking; a place where people enjoy coming on Saturday nights and Sunday afternoons for shopping, dining and entertainment; it is a pleasant and unique place to visit and shop and to enjoy historic walks and rural life; it is a model community for beauty and ecological sustainability; it has retained its pedestrian focus and charming, small-town atmosphere, with park benches, maintained the courthouse green, and preserved Courthouse building; it is the capstone of the County, depicting a sense of community pride for our environment and resources, and for educational opportunities for residents and visitors; it is free of crime and drugs and is a friendly place to shop and enjoy leisure time and a safe place to walk from building to building and visit local stores.*

*Mathews Court House has come alive with a central public water supply, street lighting, street furniture, landscaping, sidewalks, bike lanes, underground power lines and renovated historic buildings; the sewage treatment plant has been relocated and replaced with a park, recreational facilities and a dock at a navigable Put-In Creek.*

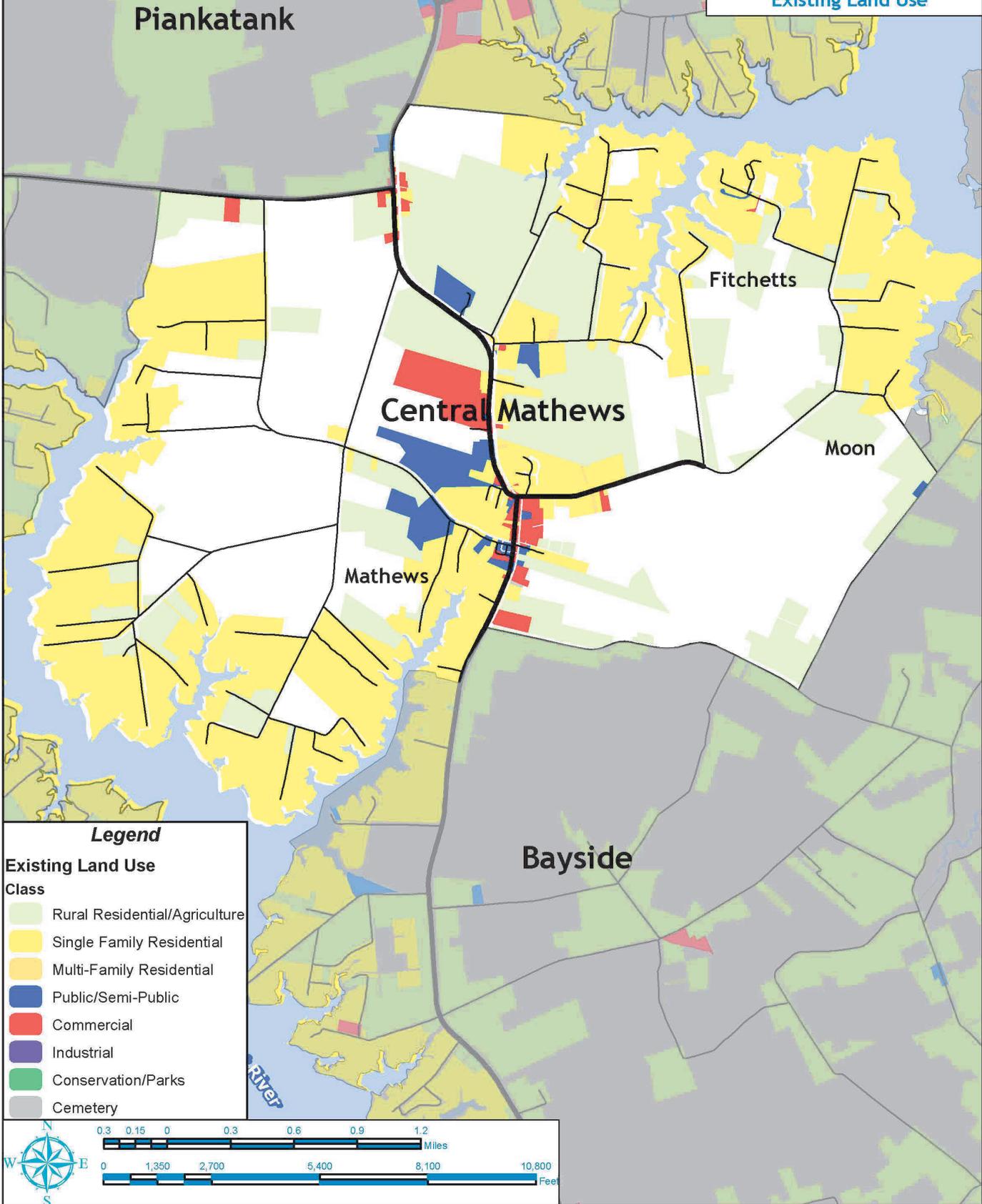
*Mathews Court House has core stores for local needs, specialty stores and a thriving tourist trade, museum, cultural center and thriving arts community; it has regained its status as a significant stopping place for boaters with water access through Put-In Creek.*

*Mathews Court House has balanced population growth – retirees, young families, professionals and is a diverse, living community; it is a good place to grow up and encourage interaction with all ages; it has residences that are inhabited and well-tended.*



The following maps provide a more detailed overview of the existing conditions and planned public infrastructure in Central Mathews:

- Existing Land Use
- Public Facilities
- Development Constraints
- Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas

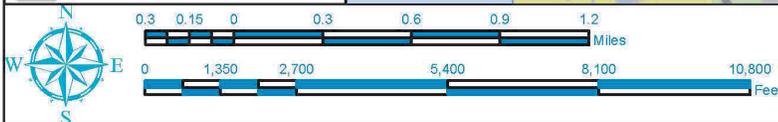


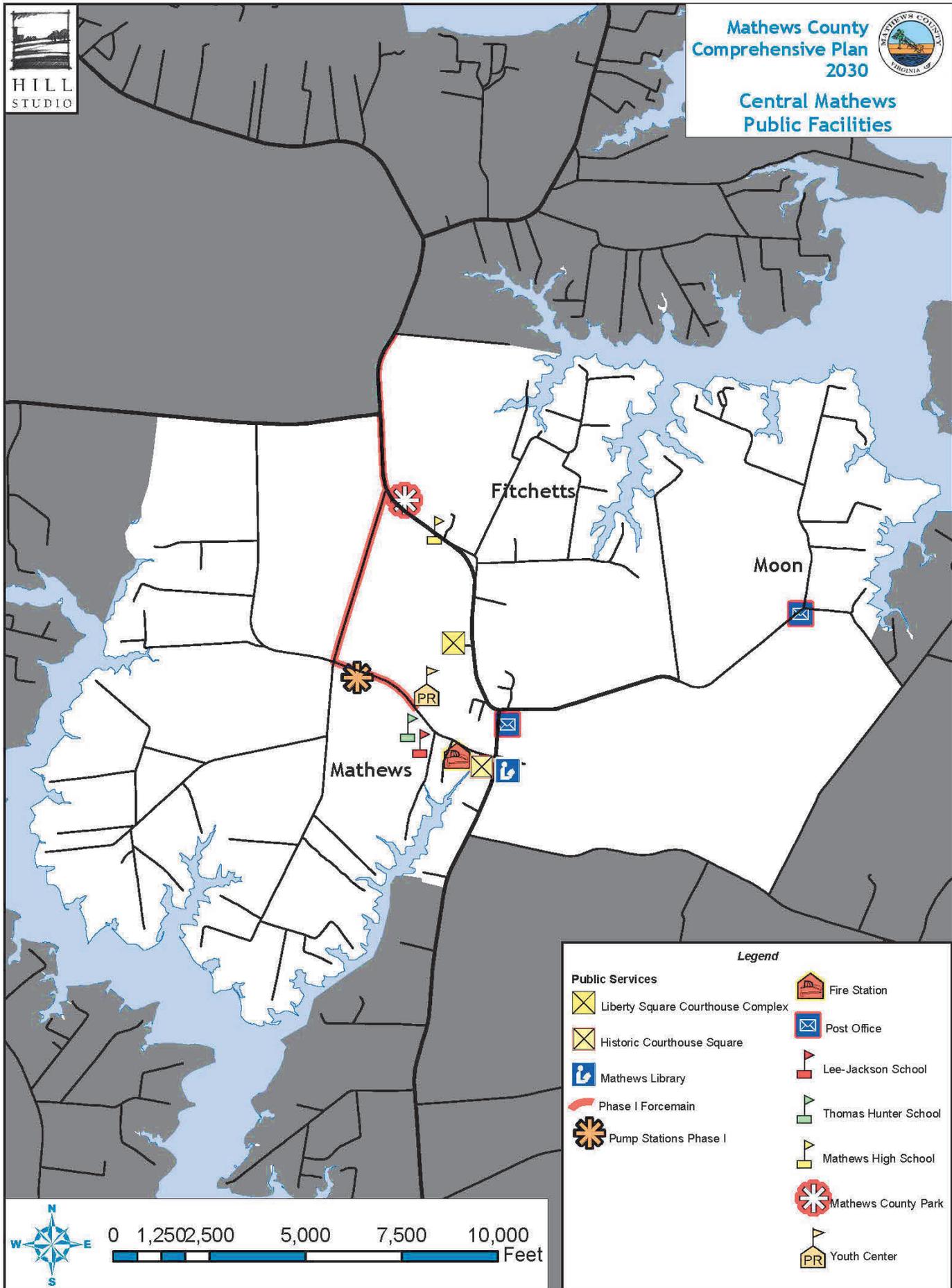
**Legend**

**Existing Land Use**

**Class**

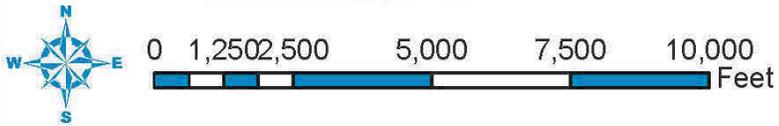
- Rural Residential/Agriculture
- Single Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Public/Semi-Public
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Conservation/Parks
- Cemetery

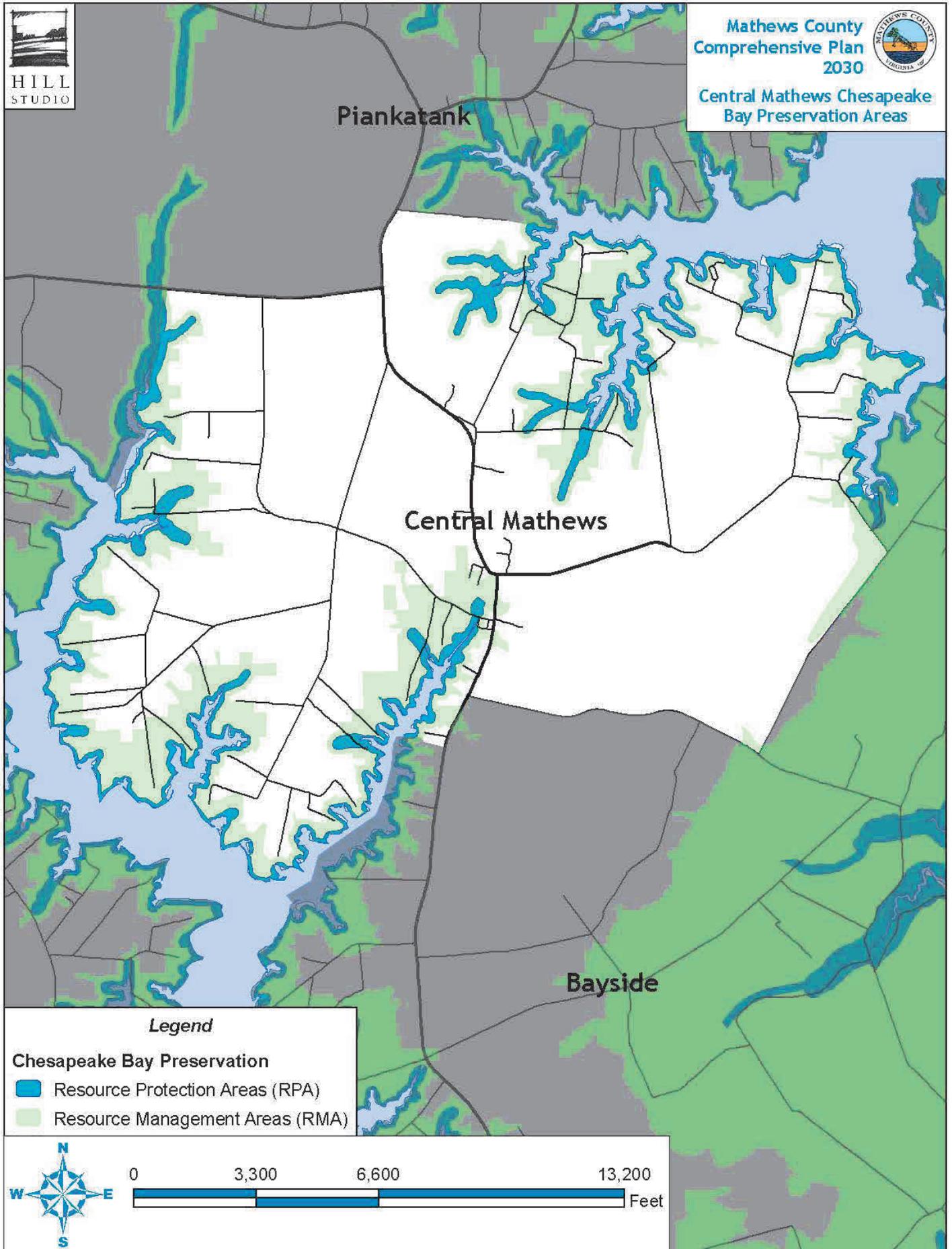




**Legend**

Liberty Square Courthouse Complex	Fire Station
Historic Courthouse Square	Post Office
Mathews Library	Lee-Jackson School
Phase I Forcemain	Thomas Hunter School
Pump Stations Phase I	Mathews High School
	Mathews County Park
	Youth Center

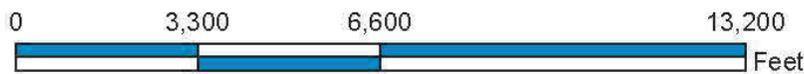




**Legend**

**Chesapeake Bay Preservation**

-  Resource Protection Areas (RPA)
-  Resource Management Areas (RMA)





*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

**Community Opportunities and Challenges**

Over the next 10-20 years, some of the opportunities and challenges for the Central Mathews Planning Area include:

- Mathews Court House will continue as the growth center of the County due to its designation as the County seat and its existing development patterns. Additional improvements to the infrastructure in Mathews Court House will be needed, particularly with respect to water, waste treatment and transportation. Already, the wastewater treatment has closed and a new sanitary sewer transmission force main constructed which will extend from Mathews Court House to Gloucester County. A water supply feasibility study has been discussed and a regional water supply plan be completed in 2018.
- With the closing of the wastewater treatment plant, the transformation of the property adjacent to Put-In Creek offers an opportunity for added recreational space in downtown Mathews. This can complement the existing Town Point Landing at Put-In Creek and extend the opportunities to downtown. Trails could link the three schools and the new courts facility to Mathews. Since the closure, improvements to the site include an accessible canoe/kayak launch, an open-sided pavilion, and native landscaping.



- Residential development opportunities in and around Mathews Village can provide expanded housing for young professionals and seniors. Locating alternative housing types in Mathews allows a more dense development pattern and links residents with nearby supporting facilities within easy walking distance.



### *V. Mathews County Community Plans: Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

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- Central Mathews has a tremendous heritage that is not well documented by historic survey. While the Courthouse Green is on the National Register of Historic Places, there are additional areas of Mathews (and the County) that should be inventoried for the purposes of preservation and future planning. Federal and State historic district designation could help rehabilitate existing buildings by offering historic tax credits to property owners; local historic district designation (and zoning protection) could help guide rehabilitation of buildings and encourage complementary new development.
- Development along the road corridors leading into historic Mathews Court House needs to be carefully planned and managed in order to maintain the attractiveness and character of the County. A corridor overlay district with adopted design standards could potentially guide the development patterns of new development.



*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

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**Central Mathews Future Land Use**

The future land use map for the Central Mathews Planning Area is shown in greater detail on the following page. The recommended future land use categories are discussed in the preceding land use section of this plan; for the purposes of this section they are summarized below:

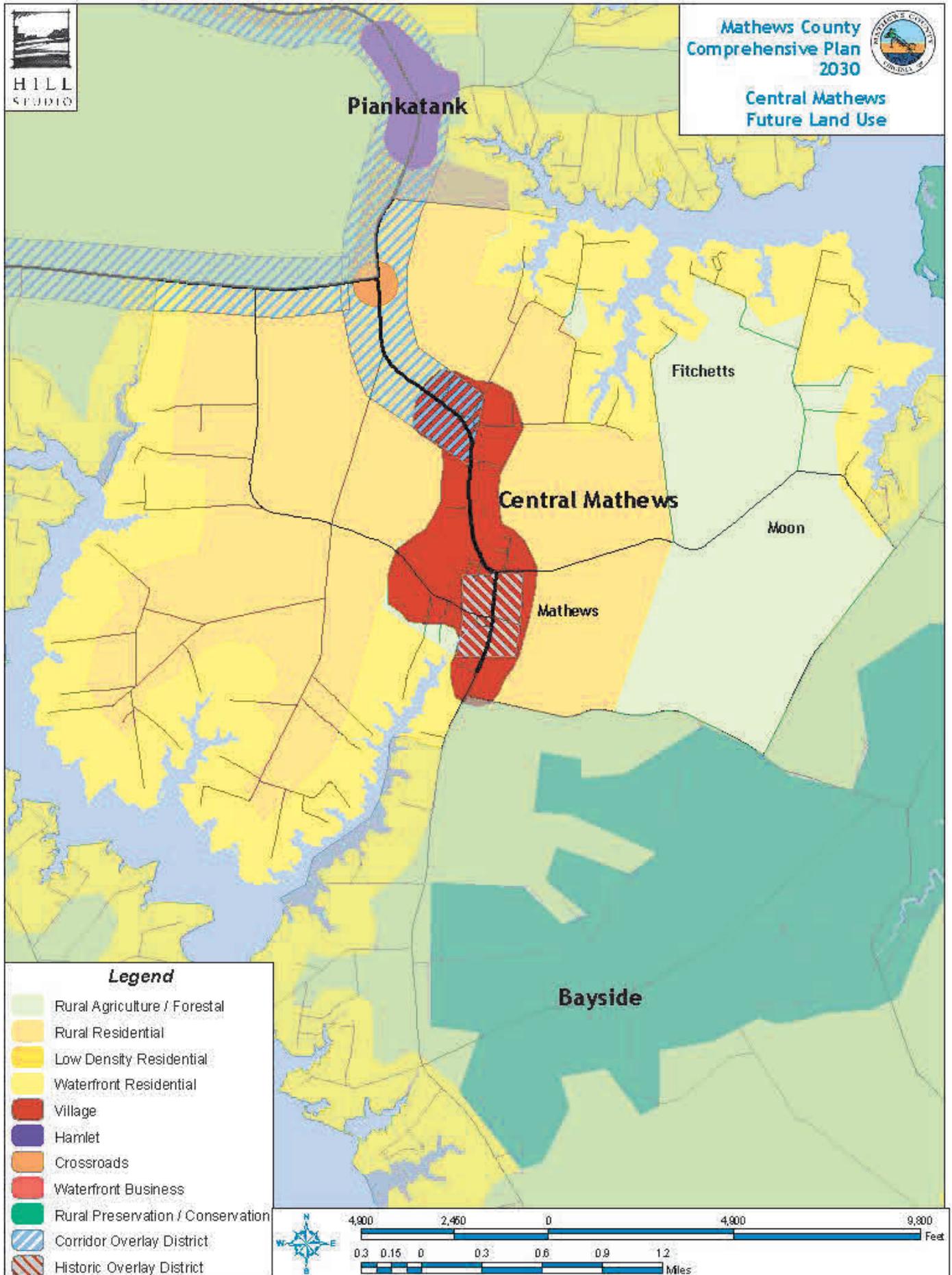
- **Village** - This land use category applies to the County historic commercial center, Mathews Court House. This compact development center consists of a core of mixed residential, commercial and community services that may include small businesses, upper-story residential, live/work units, and surrounding groupings of residential uses. Within the village there are a variety of residential types and densities ranging from single-family homes to small groups of dwelling units. The village exhibits an interconnected street network, sidewalks and landscaping. Buildings are positioned close to the street with parking on the street or in small, shared lots located to the side or rear of buildings.
- **Rural Residential** - This land use category include areas of the county that are still rural in character and exhibit very low-density residential uses. Typical land uses may include agriculture and residential uses with larger lots.
- **Waterfront Residential** - There are many environmental challenges associated with expanding development in these areas. New development should be conservative in terms of lot sizes, building types and locations, and shoreline and water access. New or expanded development on existing lots must recognize constraints relative to providing and maintaining safe wastewater treatment and water supply, as well as protecting water quality. Land uses may include single-family residential development and well-managed agriculture or open space. Building heights should be limited to an appropriate scale to maintain community character.
- **Corridor Overlay District** - The Corridor Overlay District could extend from historic Mathews Court House, along Main Street, Buckley Hall Road and John Clayton Memorial Highway corridors to Gloucester County. It could guide new development and enhance corridor entrances into historic Mathews Court House.
- **Historic Overlay District** - A Historic Overlay District is proposed for the historic Mathews Court House and surrounding Mathews Village. This district would provide design recommendations for building improvements and new building construction, as well as establish a process for reviewing building demolition.



Mathews County  
Comprehensive Plan  
2030



Central Mathews  
Future Land Use



**Legend**

-  Rural Agriculture / Forestal
-  Rural Residential
-  Low Density Residential
-  Waterfront Residential
-  Village
-  Hamlet
-  Crossroads
-  Waterfront Business
-  Rural Preservation / Conservation
-  Corridor Overlay District
-  Historic Overlay District



*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
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**Community Development Policies and Strategies**

Development Policies and Strategies for Central Mathews	
<b>CENTRAL 1</b>	<b>Historic Mathews Court House is the official County seat and the economic and governmental center of the County. Development within the village and along the corridors leading into the historic center should be carefully planned and managed to enhance business development and the visual qualities of the County.</b>
	1. Consider adopting a Corridor Overlay District for application to entrance corridors leading to the historic Mathews Court House. Consider design guidelines for the corridor to assist property owners in understanding standards and addressing development requirements.
	2. Develop and adopt a Historic Overlay District for downtown Mathews. Develop design guidelines to assist property owners in understanding standards and addressing rehabilitation and new development requirements.
	3. Work with VDOT to ensure that future transportation planning for the entrance corridors includes landscaping and medians consistent with adopted design standards. Include pedestrian and bicycle accommodations where appropriate.
<b>CENTRAL 2</b>	<b>The Village of Mathews is the business center of the county and is the most densely developed area of the County. Continued development of the village should be consistent with the vision for Mathews and maintain the special building context and qualities of the community.</b>
	1. Update cost estimates for constructing the improvements identified in the water supply study for Mathews Court House. Coordinate with the regional water supply study. Implement recommended water improvements to the extent feasible. Solicit multiple partners and funding sources.
	2. Manage future increased traffic movements on entry corridors by exploring various unsignalized intersection designs in lieu of a traffic signal. Ensure that designs retain the pedestrian scale of the community.
	3. Amend land use planning tools to encourage and direct growth to areas of the district where public infrastructure exists or is planned.
	4. Ensure that public facilities and new or expanded development in low-lying



V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
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Development Policies and Strategies for Central Mathews	
	areas are protected from flooding.
	5. Encourage developers to develop a diverse range of housing types in Mathews. Identify key properties that may work and pursue available funding sources, and partner with private for profit or non-profit developers for implementation. Ensure that the size and design of housing developments complement Mathews Village and are consistent with adopted design guidelines for new development.
	6. Implement expanded broadband services in Mathews Village and along entrance corridors. Pursue funding sources to assist in implementation.
<b>CENTRAL 3</b>	<b>Mathews Village is a tourist destination. Special efforts should be undertaken to ensure that there are a variety of supporting businesses, services, facilities and events available to foster tourism.</b>
	1. Pursue the development of recreational and event facilities at Put-In Creek.
	2. Market the artisan and cultural opportunities in Mathews, as well as the environmental activities and resources. Host regular artisan events in Mathews Village. Promote the “Be Here” marketing/branding campaign.
	3. Designate and sign bicycle routes in the County and link to downtown Mathews.
	4. Work with various organizations to promote a variety of walking, biking, boating and driving tours of the County. Start with Mathews Village and expand.
	5. Work with the MPPDC and others to identify transportation planning projects that help to promote safe pedestrian and bicycle access throughout the village area

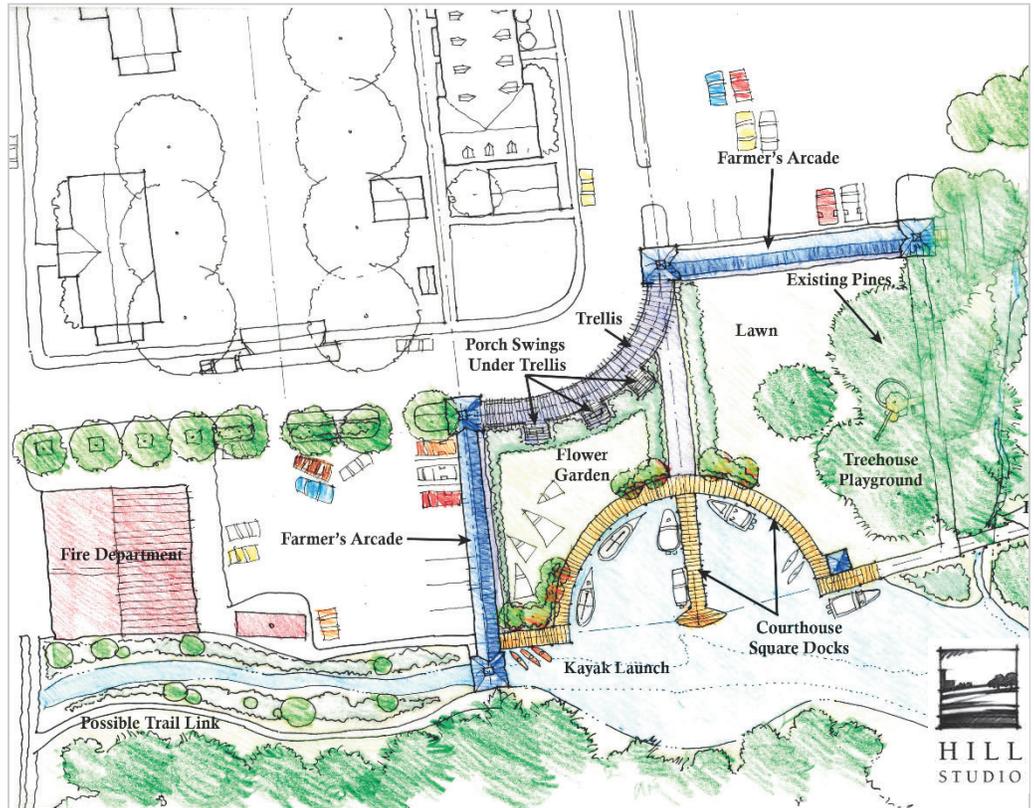


V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies

**Central Mathews: Special Action Projects**

**Put-In Creek Park**

Closure of the County wastewater treatment plant near Put-In Creek offers an opportunity for redevelopment of the key property for recreation and tourism. The site can link downtown Mathews to the water and provide opportunities for many waterside activities.



*The concept plans shown above and right show a kayak launch and dock area, arcade for an expanded farmer's or artisan market, outdoor pedestrian connection, activity lawn, tree house playground, and possible trail to connect to the schools.*





*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

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**Downtown Housing**

Downtown Mathews offers opportunities for residential uses above second-floor commercial uses. These can be very desirable and affordable for young professionals and for downtown workers. Live-work units are popular and can be good investments to boost artisan and business entrepreneurship.



*Example of upper-floor housing in renovated downtown commercial building.*

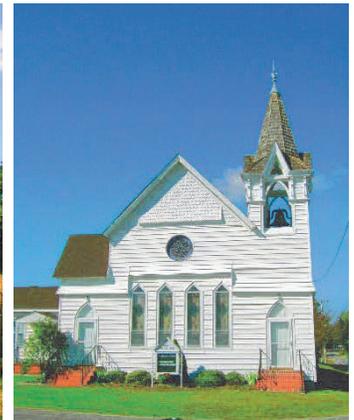
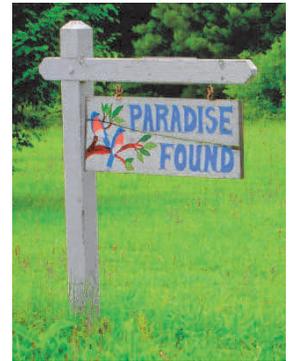


*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

**West Mathews**

**Community Overview**

The West Mathews Planning Area lies to the south of John Clayton Memorial Highway (Route 14) and extends to waterfronts on the North River, East River and Mobjack Bay. Like its northern neighbor, West Mathews contains many large tracts of agricultural and forested lands. This district has numerous farms (produce and livestock) and several commercial landscaping operations. Most of the properties are in residential use and include early farm houses, more traditional single-family houses, and manufactured homes. The area includes the communities of North, Foster, Cardinal, and Bohannon which have become established as commercial crossroads.



*West Mathews Farms and Community Landmarks*





*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

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The following maps provide a more detailed overview of the existing conditions and public facilities in West Mathews:

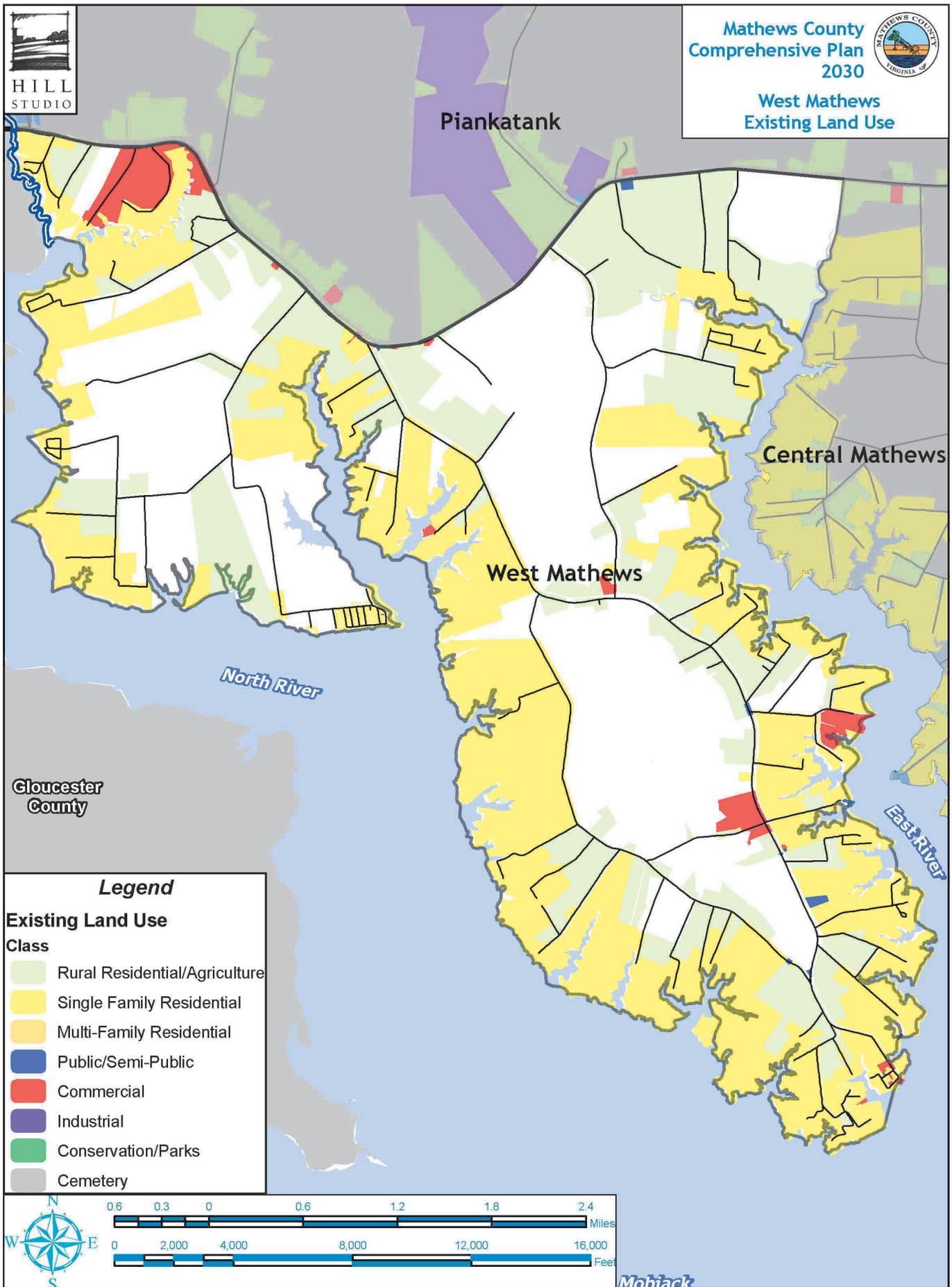
- Existing Land Use
- Public Facilities
- Development Constraints
- Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas



# Mathews County Comprehensive Plan 2030



## West Mathews Existing Land Use

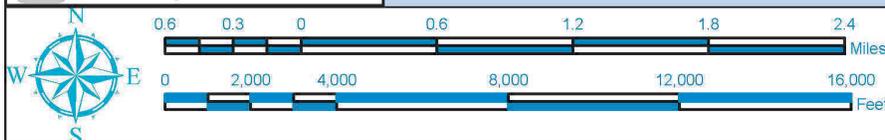


### Legend

#### Existing Land Use

##### Class

- Rural Residential/Agriculture
- Single Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Public/Semi-Public
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Conservation/Parks
- Cemetery





West Mathews  
Public Facilities

Piankatank

Transfer Station

Foster

North

West Mathews

Cardinal

Auburn Wharf Landing

North River

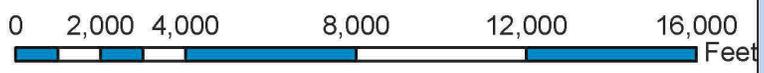
Gloucester  
County

Bohannon

East River

**Legend**

-  Transfer Station
-  Fire Station
-  Post Office
-  Public Water Access

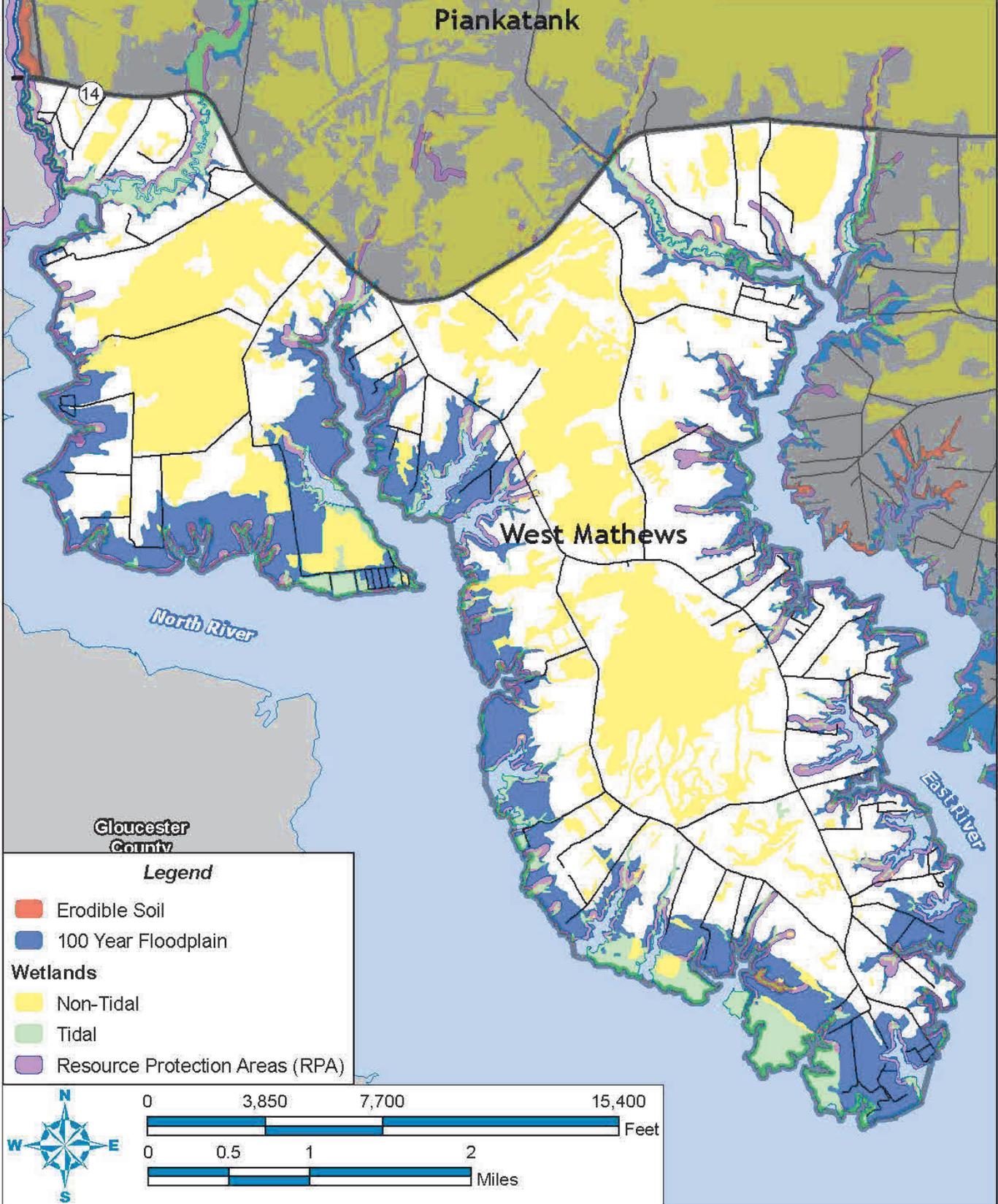




Mathews County  
Comprehensive Plan  
2030



West Mathews  
Development Constraints

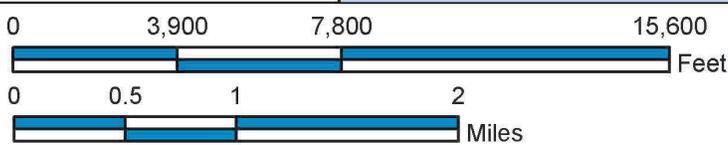




**Legend**

**Chesapeake Bay Preservation**

-  Resource Protection Areas (RPA)
-  Resource Management Areas (RMA)





*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

**Community Opportunities and Challenges**

Over the next 10-20 years, some of the opportunities and challenges for the West Mathews Planning Area include:

- The elevation of this part of the County is low; two-thirds of the district has an elevation of less than ten feet above sea level. Thus, there are many inland non-tidal wetlands and the perimeter of the district lies in the 100-year floodplain. The district is affected by storm surges and potentially affected by rising sea levels.
- The district's elevation and soils are not well suited for septic systems. There are failing systems in the district. This presents particular problems in the more densely populated waterfront manufactured home communities (i.e. North River).
- Although much of the West Mathews District has frontage on the water, and there are many marinas, there are few public access points in the District. The County has one public water access point on the North River (Auburn Wharf Landing); it recently purchased the East River Boat Yard property and plans to develop it for public recreation. Access to the property is somewhat challenging and may limit the amount of activity that can be accommodated.



**West Mathews Future Land Use**

The future land use map for the West Mathews Planning District is shown in greater detail on the following page. The recommended future land use categories are discussed in the preceding land use section of this plan; for the purposes of this section they are summarized below:

- **Rural Agriculture/Forestal** - This land use category is intended for large-tract agriculture and forests. Land uses may include agriculture, forests and accompanying very low density residential.
- **Waterfront Residential** - There are many environmental challenges associated with expanding development in these areas. New development should be conservative in terms of lot sizes, building types and locations, and shoreline and water access. New or expanded development on existing lots must recognize constraints relative to providing and maintaining safe wastewater treatment and water supply, as well as protecting water quality. Land uses may include single-family residential development and well-managed agriculture or open space. Building heights should be limited to an appropriate scale to maintain community character.
- **Waterfront Business** – This category is for important working waterfront businesses of Mathews County that are important to the long-term economy. Quality aquaculture requires wise management of shorelines and off-shore waters with promoted

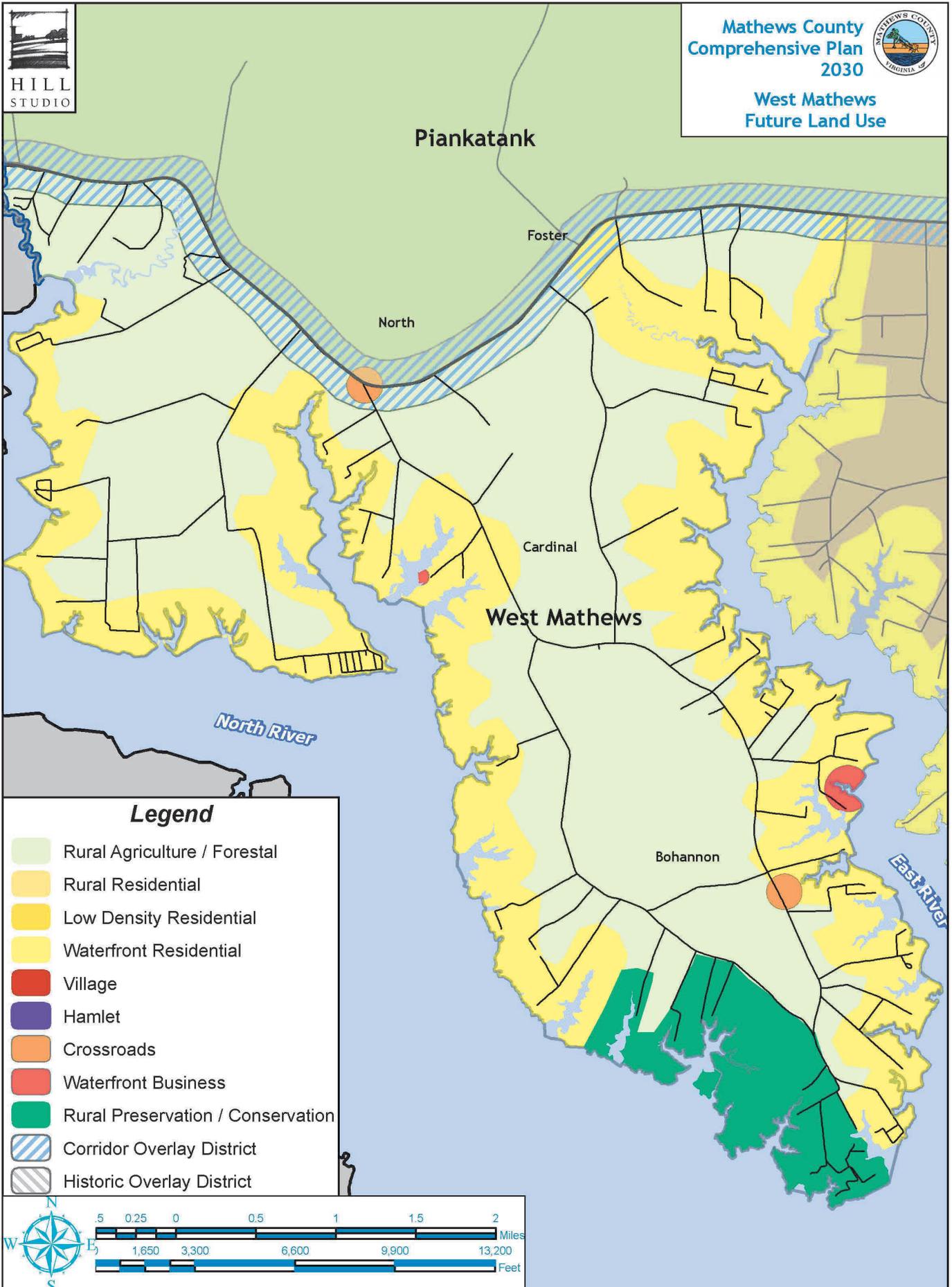


*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

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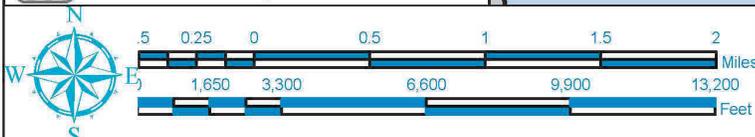
understanding of aquaculture operations, processing, and access.

- **Crossroads Community** - Road intersections have developed as small crossroad business centers. In addition to the central village and hamlets, these areas serve local residents and provide small business opportunities or services at intersections of roads that frequently carry neighborhood traffic. Typical land uses could include a small convenience store, gas station, post office, café or small office.
- **Rural Preservation/Conservation** - Rural Preservation/Conservation areas include public open space, natural preserves, and areas that should have carefully managed development and be conserved because of special ecosystems or natural conditions. Appropriate land uses would include open space, passive recreation, low-intensity residential, and carefully managed agriculture, forestry or aquaculture.
- **Corridor Overlay District** - This district could follow the major entrance corridors into the County. It could provide development guidance for new development to enhance the entrances to the historic Mathews Court House.



**Legend**

- Rural Agriculture / Forestal
- Rural Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Waterfront Residential
- Village
- Hamlet
- Crossroads
- Waterfront Business
- Rural Preservation / Conservation
- Corridor Overlay District
- Historic Overlay District





*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

**Community Development Policies and Strategies**

Development Policies and Strategies for West Mathews	
<b>WEST 1</b>	<b>The forests and open agricultural lands of West Mathews are unique natural assets to the County. The agrarian vistas and dense forests contribute greatly to the character of the County. It is important that these assets be actively managed and protected.</b>
	1. Identify major land ownership patterns and work actively with the owners to conserve and manage land using best management practices.
	2. Amend the County Zoning Ordinance to increase lot sizes for rural agriculture and forested lands. Consider using agricultural and forestal districts to preserve the land for production.
	3. Consider a corridor overlay district to include Route 14 from the Gloucester County line to its intersection with Route 198 at Ward’s Corner. Install gateway entrance signs to the County.
<b>WEST 2</b>	<b>West Mathews is susceptible to storm surges and rising sea levels. Public education of risks and mitigation solutions is essential in order to raise awareness, reduce adverse effects and limit property damages. Expanded or new development should carefully consider these factors. Conservation and appropriate environmental solutions are preferred.</b>
	1. Increase public awareness regarding the risks to property and life during storm surges and long-term risks related to possible sea level rise. When possible, discourage development in high-risk areas or encourage appropriate environmental solutions to reduce impacts. Develop and publish appropriate materials for public distribution.
	2. Consider amending land use tools and implementing both regulatory and planning options to mitigate the potential impacts of recurrent flooding in the area.
<b>WEST 3</b>	<b>West Mathews has multiple environmental constraints for development. New or expanded development in the district should respect environmental factors, integrate low-impact development alternatives, and actively plan for any adverse effects. Existing development should be monitored regularly for faulty septic discharges or non-point sources of pollution.</b>
	1. Ensure that new or expanded development appropriately addresses environmental constraints and protects water quality. Encourage design



*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

Development Policies and Strategies for West Mathews	
	solutions that will enhance the environment and protect resources and physical investment for the long-term.
	2. Pursue and support local and regional pump-out programs for septic systems in the County.
<b>WEST 4</b>	<b>Public access to the waterfront is a priority for the County. Increased public access to the waterfront should be provided in West Mathews.</b>
	1. Pursue development of the East River Boat Yard property as a public access point in West Mathews. Develop a concept plan for the property and coordinate it with district residents. Solicit partners and applicable grant funds for implementation. Encourage small business, as well as recreational concepts.
	2. Continue to work closely with the Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority and other public and private entities to provide more opportunities for public access to the water in this area.

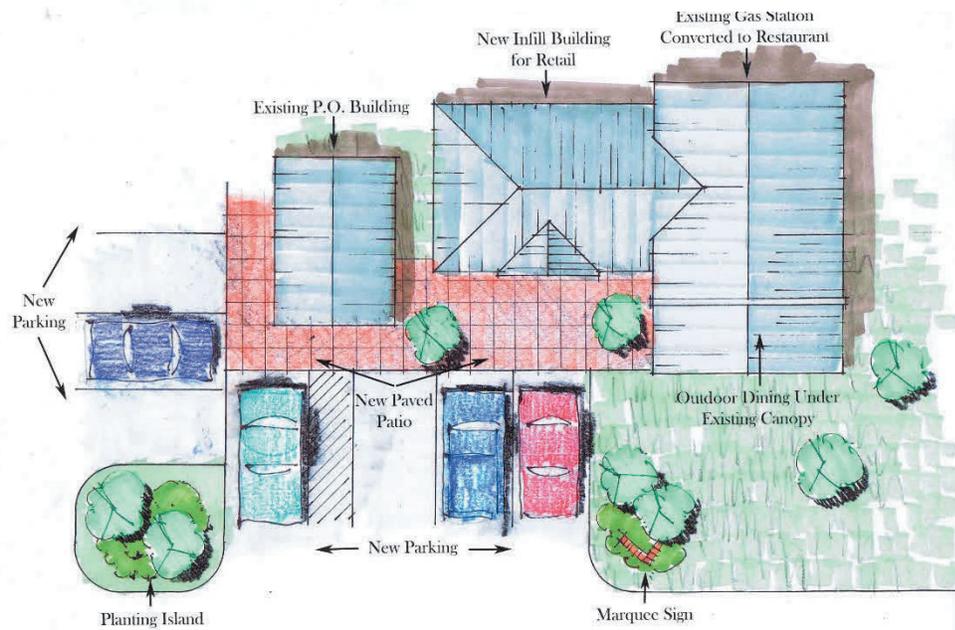
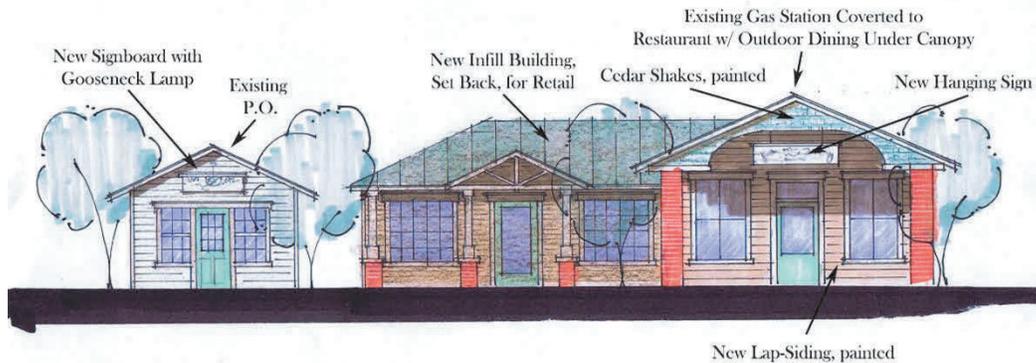


V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies

West Mathews: Special Action Projects

Bohannon Revitalization Plan

Like many crossroads communities throughout Mathews County, Bohannon has an interesting collection of commercial buildings that could be revitalized to create a pedestrian-scale, small business and mixed-use center. This could be a model for other crossroads areas.



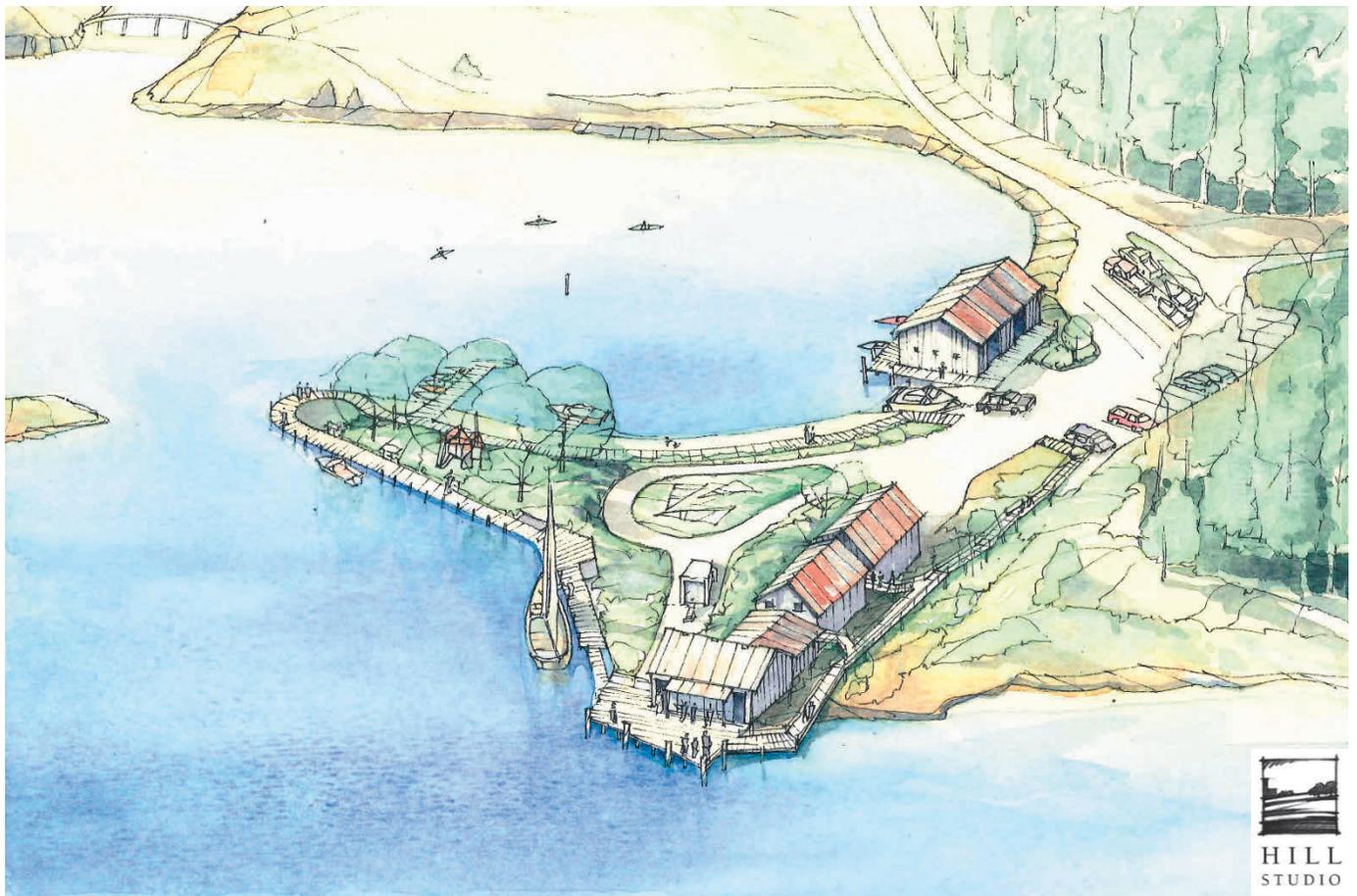
The concept plans above and to the left show a rehabilitated gas station that could house a small restaurant, deli or grocery. A new building addition could add additional retail space. Parking is defined at the edge of the road with landscaping and a common plaza area.



*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

**East River Boat Yard - Public Access Landing**

The East River Boat Yard provides an excellent opportunity to improve public access to the waterfront while encouraging local business. Currently, the County leases several of the existing buildings to local watermen for business purposes. The property has great potential for a variety of uses including public recreation and water access, aquaculture and education. The following illustrations provide concepts that could be considered for the property.

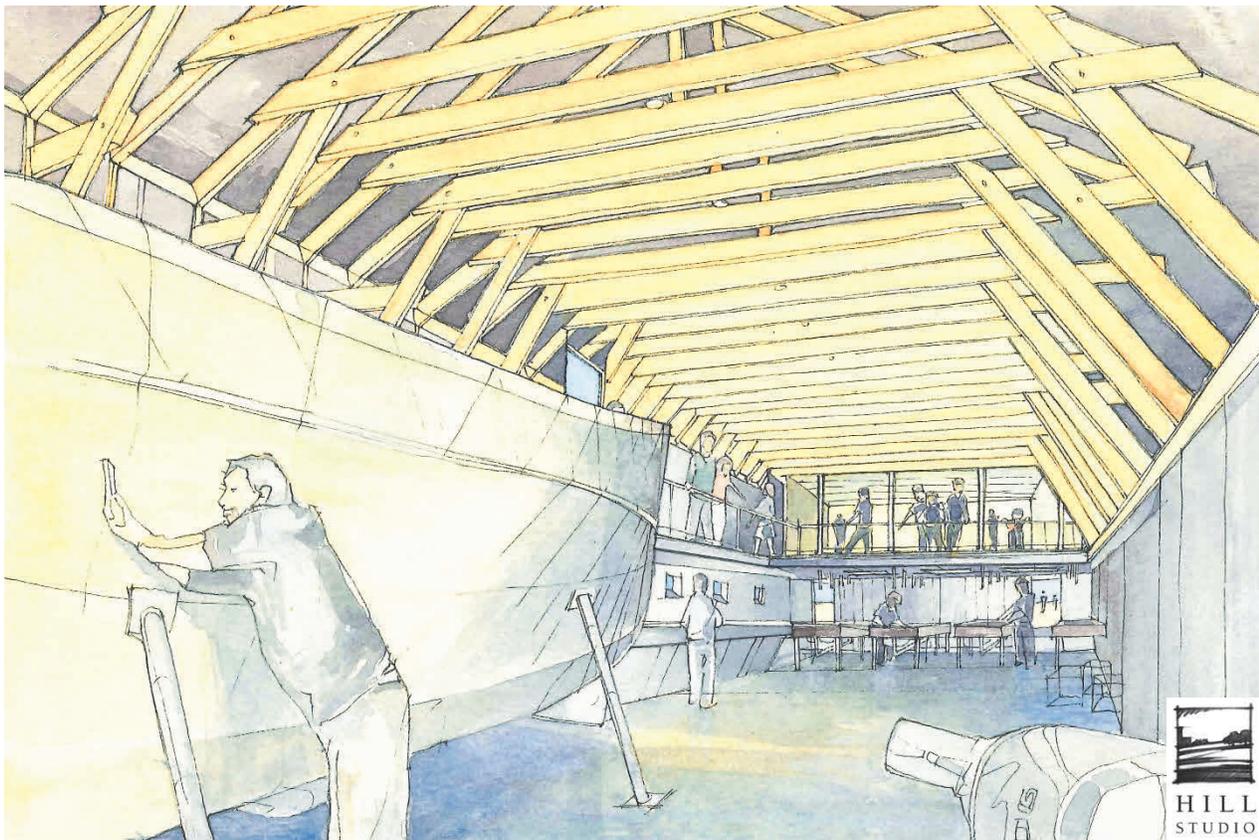




*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*



*One possible concept for the facility could use the primary building fronting on the East River as an active aquaculture operation and offer public viewing of crab shedding tanks and boat building. Exterior decks could provide views of the adjacent wetlands and East River*





*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

## ***Bayside***

### **Community Overview**

The Bayside Planning Area is appropriately named because of its proximity and orientation to the Chesapeake Bay. Generally, it can be described as being south of the Village of Mathews and Tabernacle Road. The shorelines within Bayside are extensive, incorporating numerous tidal creeks, inlets and harbors that are part of the Bay network.

Bayside contains some of the most frequently used public water access points for residents and visitors – Haven/Festival Beach, Bethel Beach Natural Area Preserve, Williams Wharf, and New Point Comfort Lighthouse and Observation Area. In addition, there are seven other public landings in the Bayside District; thus, the area hosts 11 of the 19 public water access points in the County. Bayside includes the several small communities that have become established over the years: Onemo, Sarah, Port Haywood, Susan, Peary, Shadow, New Point, and Bavon.



*Residential Structures in Bayside.*

*Bayside Water Access Points – Haven/Festival Beach and Bethel Natural Preserve.*





*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*



*Tidal Waterway and Wetlands in Bayside*



*Ocean Products*



*New Point Waterfront*

*New Point RV Resort*

*Port Haywood Business*



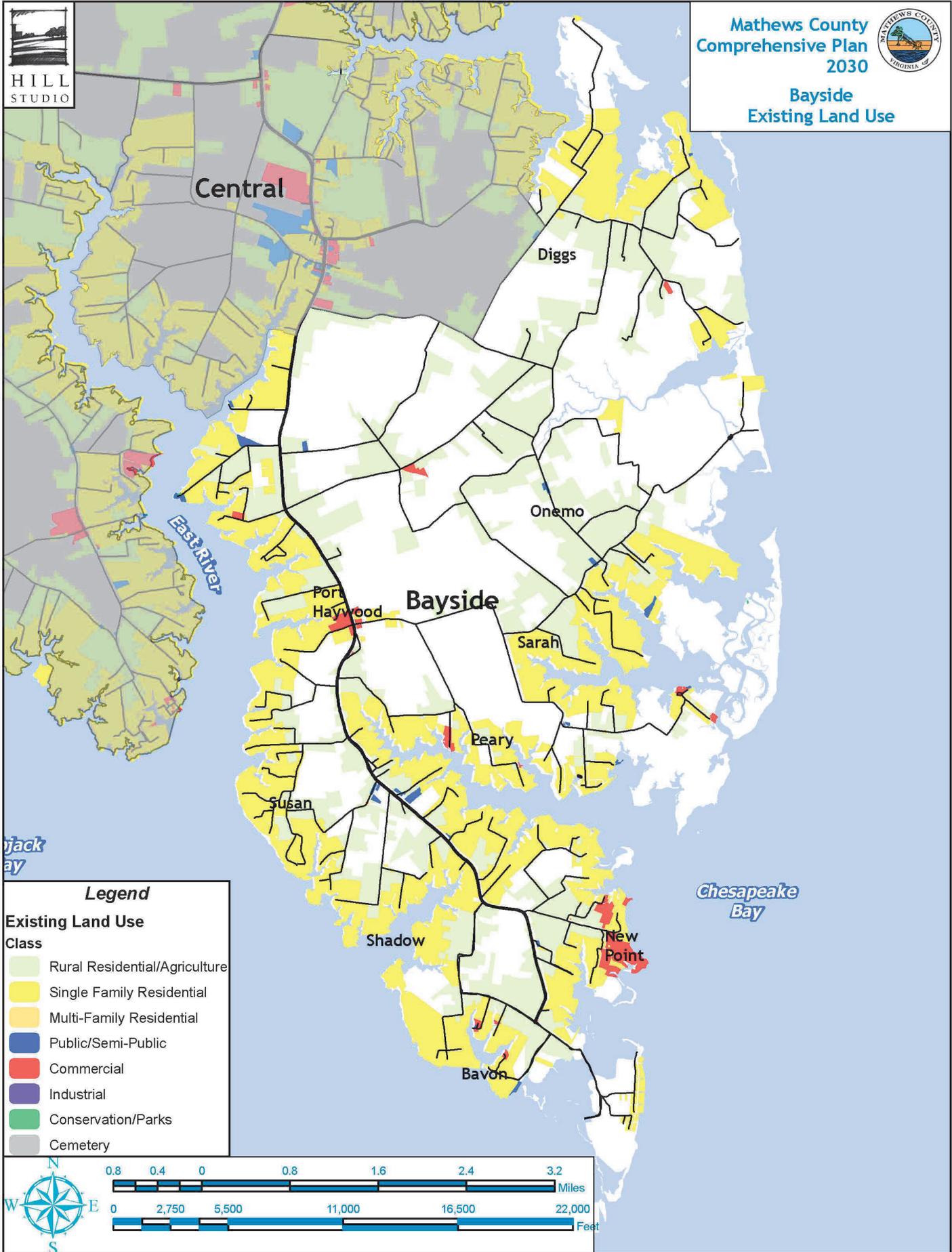


*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

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The following maps provide a more detailed overview of the existing conditions and public facilities in Bayside:

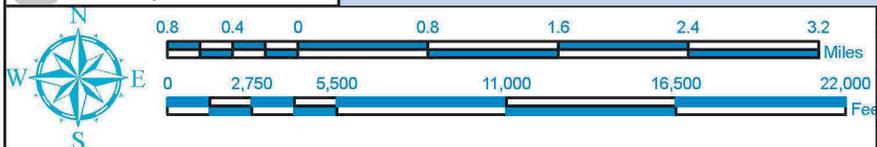
- Existing Land Use
- Public Facilities
- Development Constraints
- Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas



**Legend**

**Existing Land Use Class**

- Rural Residential/Agriculture
- Single Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Public/Semi-Public
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Conservation/Parks
- Cemetery

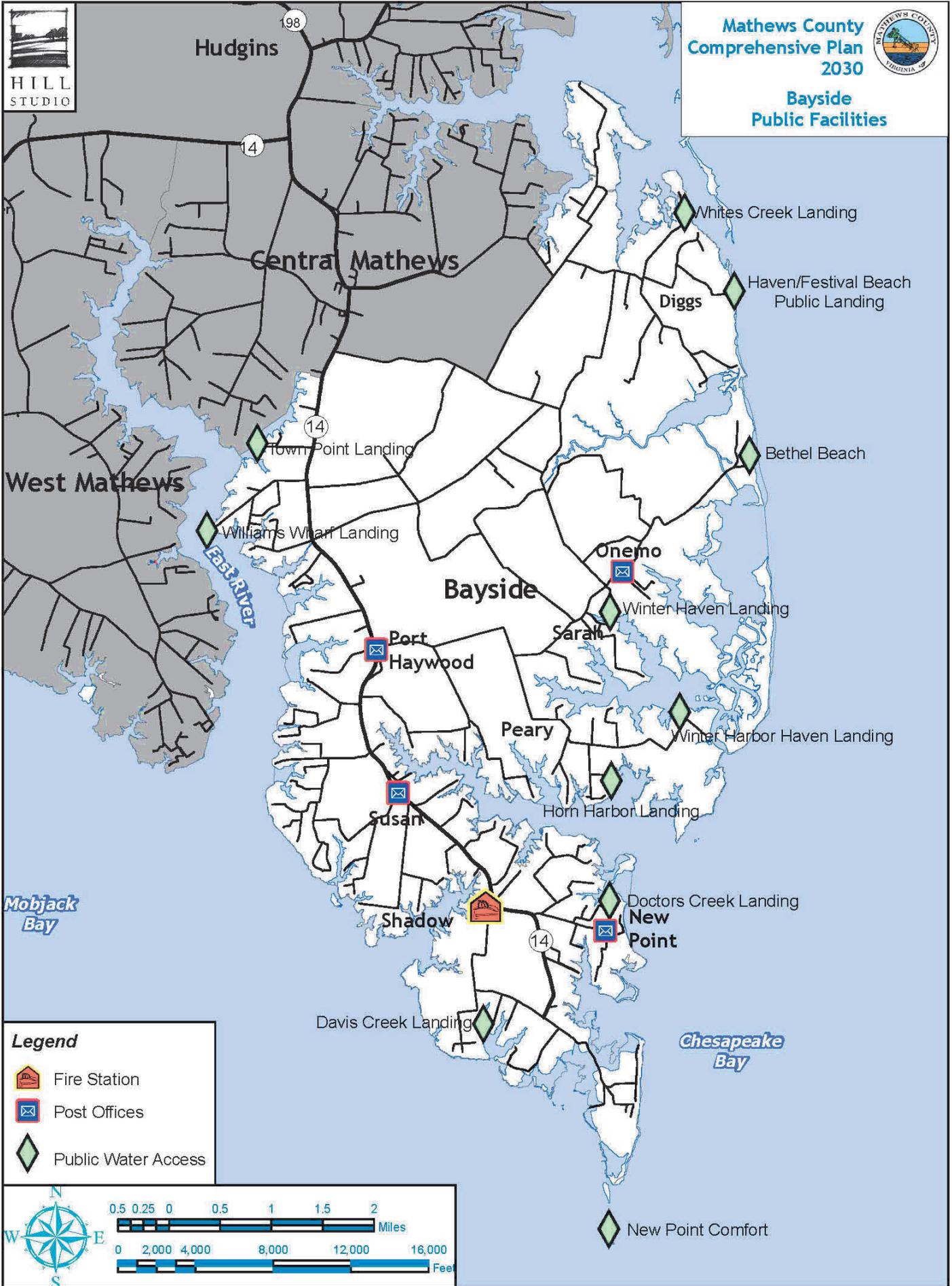




# Mathews County Comprehensive Plan 2030



## Bayside Public Facilities



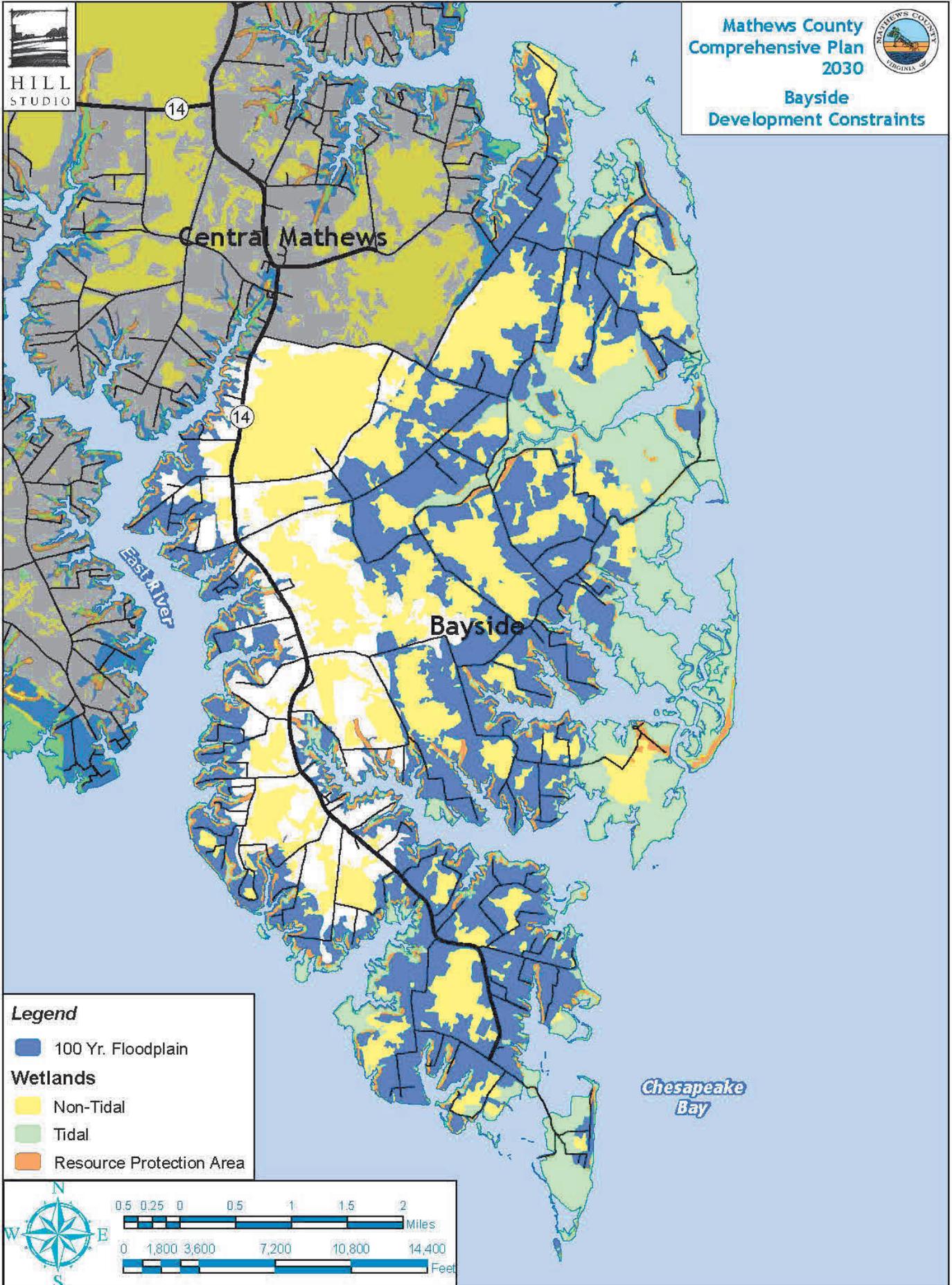
**Legend**

-  Fire Station
-  Post Offices
-  Public Water Access



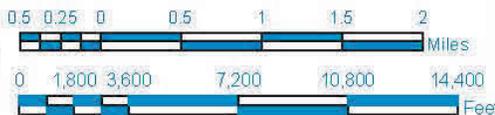
0.5 0.25 0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

0 2,000 4,000 8,000 12,000 16,000 Feet



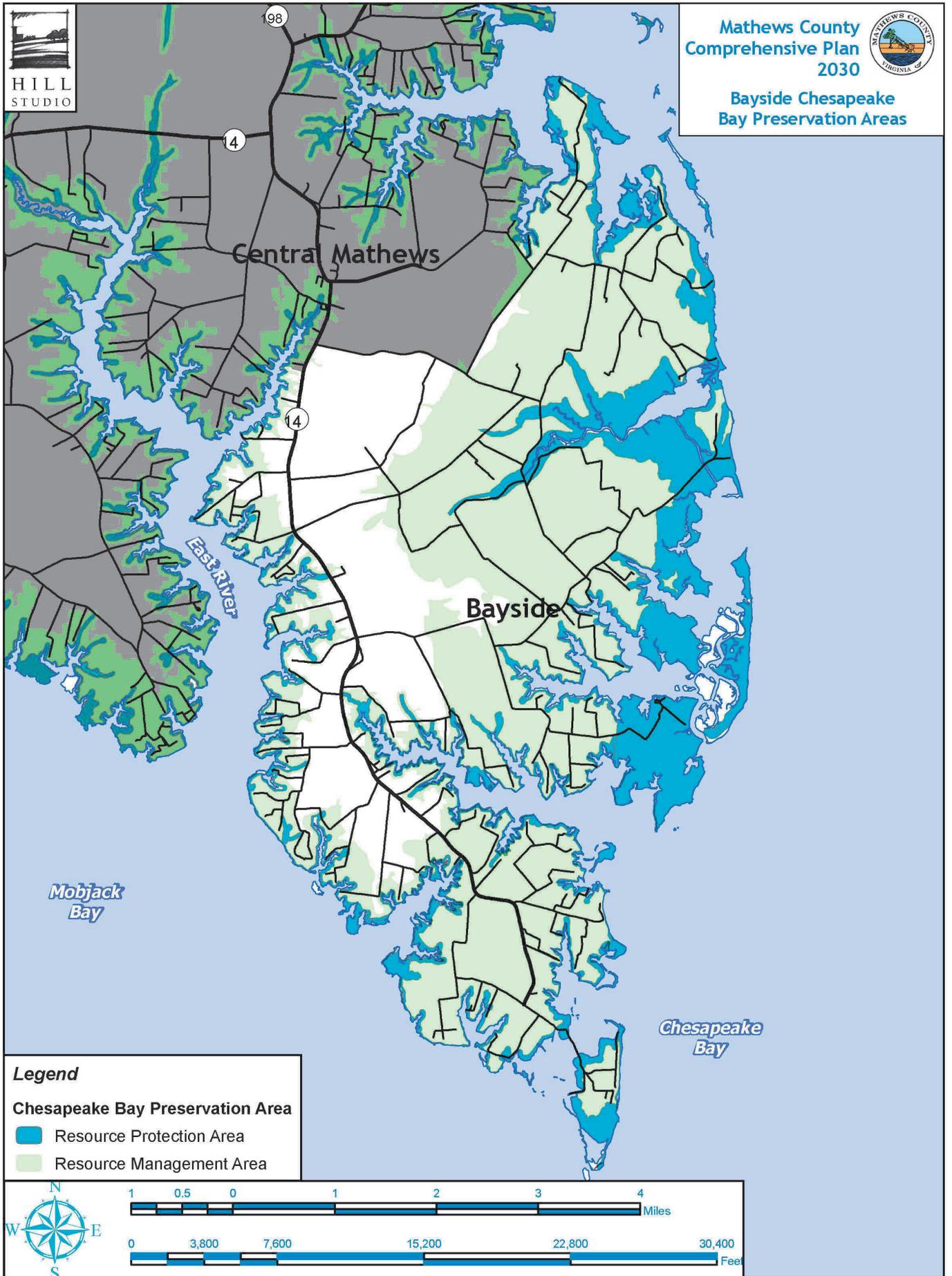
**Legend**

- 100 Yr. Floodplain
- Wetlands**
- Non-Tidal
- Tidal
- Resource Protection Area





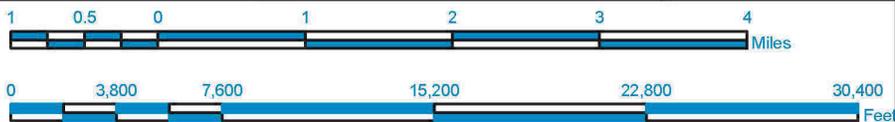
Bayside Chesapeake  
Bay Preservation Areas



**Legend**

**Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area**

- Resource Protection Area
- Resource Management Area





*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

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**Community Opportunities and Challenges**

Over the next 10-20 years, some of the opportunities and challenges for the Bayside Planning Area include:

- The proximity of Bayside to water and the low-lying elevation of the land present numerous challenges for development, particularly with respect to flooding, safe water supply, and waste disposal. These issues likely will become more significant in the future, particularly with potential rising sea levels and continued pressure for waterfront living.
- With potential rise in sea level in the future, mitigation of hazard impacts and loss of life and property are important issues that will require active leadership and response from both governmental officials and property owners. The natural environmental areas of Bayside provide important buffers, habitat and transitional ecosystems that protect inland areas and help to enhance water quality. Increased development can diminish these resources and increase the potential for increased flooding and pollution. In addition, this area of the County is most affected by storm surges and there is only one primary arterial (Route 14, New Point Comfort Highway) that provides an evacuation route.
- For existing development in Bayside, particularly that on the waterfront, the challenge for the future will be to stabilize investment to the extent possible and to do that in a manner that supports the environment and benefits Bayside and the County as a whole. Continuing education of property owners and officials regarding “living shoreline” techniques for shoreline stabilization will be very important to furthering the long-term goal of “living with the water”. Furthermore, raising building elevations above the floodplain may not address many of the continuing challenges and may not be sensitive to residents’ potential requirement to invest in public infrastructure.
- Bayside has played a significant role in the working waterfront heritage of Mathews County. The waterfront of Bayside offers opportunities for enhancing the economy of the County in a variety of ways: recreation, boating, fishing, tourism, and aquaculture. All of these can co-exist with careful planning and understanding of the goals and vision for the future. In particular, aquaculture may be the most beneficial to foster as it may prove to be economically productive for the County with extensive regional benefits.
- Port Haywood is centrally located in the district and could provide additional business services to residents of Bayside. If businesses are expanded, careful oversight is needed to ensure appropriate land uses and building and site development that complement the character of the area.



*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

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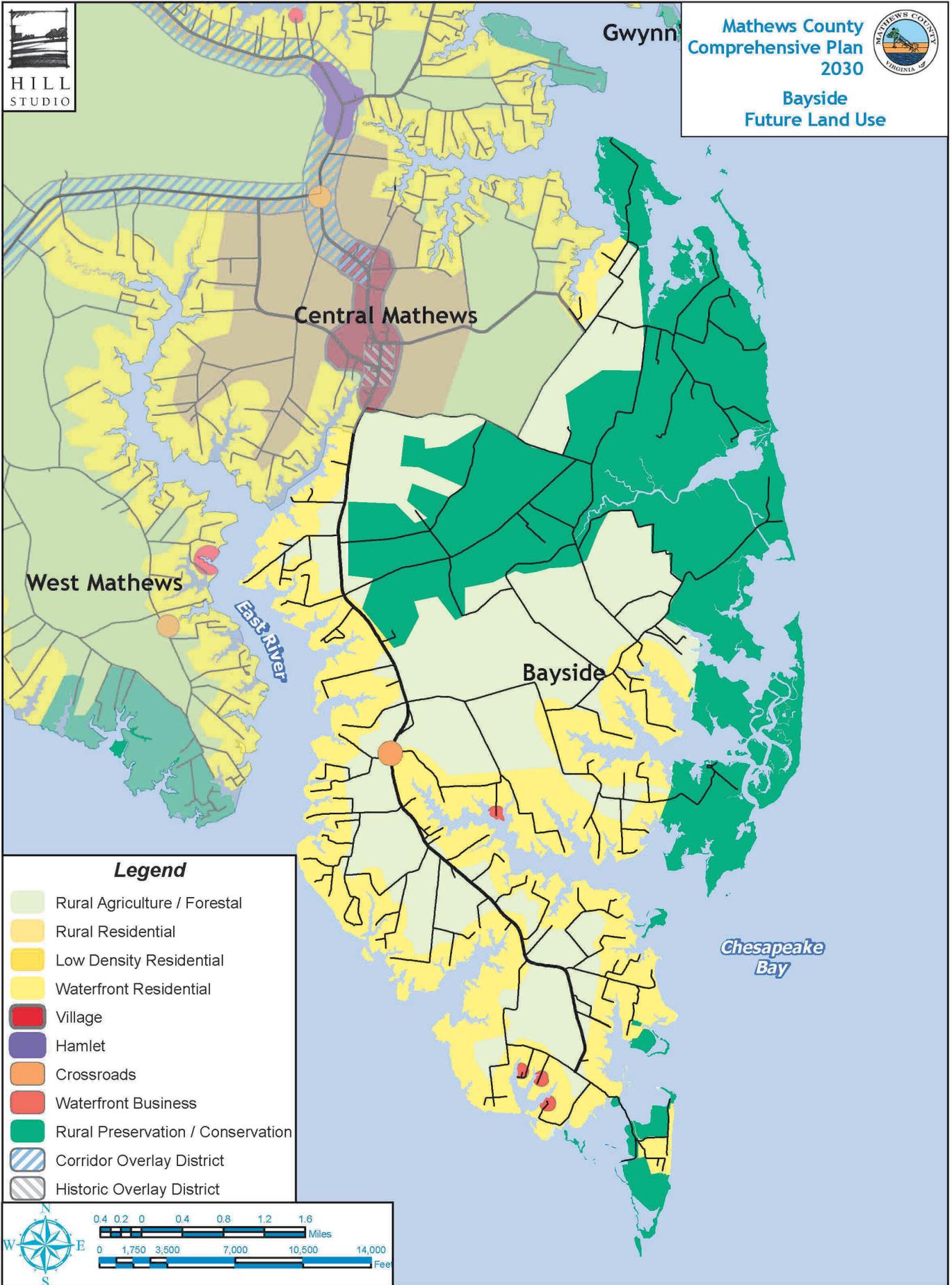
**Bayside Future Land Use**

The future land use map for the Bayside Planning Area is shown in greater detail on the following page. The recommended future land use categories are discussed in the preceding land use section of this plan; for the purposes of this section they are summarized below:

- **Rural Agriculture/Forestal** - This land use category is intended for large-tract agriculture and forests. Land uses may include agriculture, forests and accompanying very low density residential.
- **Waterfront Residential** - There are many environmental challenges associated with expanding development in these areas. New development should be conservative in terms of lot sizes, building types and locations, and shoreline and water access. New or expanded development on existing lots must recognize constraints relative to providing and maintaining safe wastewater treatment and water supply, as well as protecting water quality. Land uses may include single-family residential development and well-managed agriculture or open space. Building heights should be limited to an appropriate scale to maintain community character.
- **Waterfront Business** – This category is for working waterfront and eco-tourism businesses of Mathews County that are important to the long-term economy. Quality aquaculture requires wise management of shorelines and off-shore waters with promoted understanding of aquaculture operations, processing, and access.
- **Crossroads Community** - Road intersections have developed as small crossroad business centers. In addition to the central village and hamlets, these areas serve local residents and provide small business opportunities or services at intersections of roads that frequently carry neighborhood traffic. Typical land uses could include a small convenience store, gas station, post office, café or small office.
- **Rural Preservation/Conservation** - Rural Preservation/Conservation areas include public open space, natural preserves, and areas that should have carefully managed development and be conserved because of special ecosystems or natural conditions. These areas include dedicated conservation areas that are public set-asides for recreation and natural conservation. Other areas noted for preservation/conservation are areas likely to be influenced by storm surge or possible rising sea levels over the next twenty years. Appropriate land uses would include open space, passive recreation, low-intensity residential and carefully managed agriculture, forestry or aquaculture.



Mathews County  
Comprehensive Plan  
2030  
Bayside  
Future Land Use



**Legend**

- Rural Agriculture / Forestal
- Rural Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Waterfront Residential
- Village
- Hamlet
- Crossroads
- Waterfront Business
- Rural Preservation / Conservation
- Corridor Overlay District
- Historic Overlay District





*V. Mathews County Community Plans:  
Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies*

**Community Development Policies and Strategies**

Development Policies and Strategies for Bayside	
<b>BAY 1</b>	<p><b>Bayside hosts some of the most significant environmental resources and natural vistas in Mathews County. Preservation and protection of this portion of the County is especially important to maintain the cherished character of Mathews County and to support its environmental quality. Conservation of important assets should be encouraged. Future development in Bayside should be carefully evaluated with respect to environmental impact.</b></p>
	<p>1. Actively pursue public education and outreach to waterfront property owners regarding environmental sensitivities and alternative practices (e.g., living shorelines, low-impact development, etc.) in order to promote protection and enhancement of valuable environmental resources.</p>
	<p>2. Amend the Zoning Ordinance to reflect the community vision and future land use recommendations of this plan.</p>
	<p>3. Consider amending land use tools and implementing both regulatory and planning options to mitigate the potential impacts of recurrent flooding in the area.</p>
<b>BAY 2</b>	<p><b>Bayside is susceptible to storm surges. Public education of risks and mitigation solutions is essential in order to raise awareness, reduce adverse effects and limit property damages. Expanded or new development should carefully consider these factors. Conservation and appropriate environmental solutions are preferred.</b></p>
	<p>1. Increase public awareness regarding the risks to property and life during storm surges and long-term risks related to possible sea level rise. When possible, discourage development in high-risk areas or encourage appropriate environmental solutions to reduce impacts. Develop and publish appropriate materials for public distribution.</p>
	<p>2. Work with residents of Bayside to improve community response to storm hazards. Ensure that the County hazard mitigation plan is updated on a regular basis.</p>
<b>BAY 3</b>	<p><b>The waterfronts of Bayside host a diversity of economic businesses that serve the regional economy. Working waterfront businesses that enhance the environment are especially important to County economy and should be preserved and promoted.</b></p>



V. Mathews County Community Plans: Community Conditions, Opportunities, Policies and Strategies

Development Policies and Strategies for Bayside	
	1. Identify specific opportunities and properties for enhancing aquaculture. Collaborate with multiple agencies and coordinate with property owners and businesses to build understanding and consensus.
	2. Promote understanding among property owners of the multiple uses of waters and the waterfront, particularly with respect to the economic and environmental importance of sharing these important resources. Consider a regular newsletter or written publication to provide important information. Establish a business-citizens forum that can provide regular opportunities for discussion of conflicts or issues.

**Bayside: Special Action Projects**

**Bike Route & Signage**

The Bayside area provides wonderful opportunities for bicyclists. A signed bicycle route would assist visitors and link important community recreational facilities and landmarks.



**Haven/Festival Beach Improvements**

Haven/Festival Beach is used by many residents and visitors. Continued investment in the facility will provide expanded recreational benefits and assist in tourism efforts.





## Implementing the Plan

### **2030 Vision for Mathews County**

*By 2030, Mathews County, with its 280 miles of waterfront, will be widely acknowledged as the Pearl of the Chesapeake and celebrated as a beautiful, vibrant County with a rich cultural, political and economic heritage. The County has become a model community that showcases its outstanding quality of life, unique natural resources, and successful environmentally-friendly development practices.*

An effective comprehensive plan is one that is implemented and used on a daily basis by citizens and governmental officials in dealing with land development and public decisions.

Implementation of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan will require a diversity of partners. County government will provide leadership and will be a primary player; however, local officials cannot undertake all the recommended action strategies. Participation of civic groups, business leaders, residents, and others will be needed to effectively achieve the vision established by this plan. Both public and private investment will be required. In addition, a variety of potential funding sources must be considered to assist County officials in improving public facilities and addressing complex issues.

An implementation matrix is provided as an appendix to this plan as a tool for County officials and citizens. This matrix is a summary of the development policies and action strategies discussed in this plan, as well as a summary of proposed priorities and participants responsible for implementation. The matrix can be used as a quick reference guide for programming work efforts and planning for capital improvements. It can also be used to develop a report card for monitoring implementation of the plan.

One of the first steps in implementing the plan will be to update County development regulations to reflect the long-term goals and recommendations of the comprehensive plan. In addition to these ordinances, other "special action projects" are recommended to move the community forward, engage residents, and show incremental progress in achieving the vision. Key action projects are discussed in the following section and in greater detail in the preceding sections. A composite map of the recommended implementation strategies follows the discussion.



*VI. Mathews County Comprehensive Plan:  
Implementing the Plan*

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**2030 Implementation: Special Action Projects**

**Sanitary Sewer Transmission Force Main**

The County and Hampton Roads Sanitation District completed Phase I of a sanitary sewer transmission force main from Mathews Court House to Gloucester County in 2011. Phase II would add Gwynn's Island to the transmission force main sewer system. However, both timing and funding for implementation of Phase II have not been identified.

**Entrance Corridor Overlay District & Design Guidelines**

This overlay zoning district could be aligned with the two entrance corridors leading to historic Mathews Court House. The corridor district could apply to new and expanded development along the corridors. Attractive entrance signs could be placed at gateway entrances into the County.

**Historic Overlay District Mathews Court House**

An historic overlay district is proposed for Mathews Court House that could guide building improvements and site development in the downtown. Financial incentives could assist business owners in improving their properties in accordance with appropriate standards; these could include historic tax credits and special rehabilitation funds set aside to encourage development.

**Fort Nonsense**

Restoration of the Civil War site at Fort Nonsense for an educational and tourist center has been completed at the intersection of Routes 3 and 14. This ~~can be~~ serves as an entrance corridor asset to Mathews County assisting in increased heritage tourism efforts.

**East River Boatyard Public Access**

Redevelopment of the East River Boatyard for recreation is proposed in West Mathews. This is an opportunity to address the need for increased public access in this part of the County. In addition, the facilities that may be located here can complement the other recreational assets in the County.

**Put-In Creek Recreation & Public Space Venue**

Redevelopment of the wastewater treatment site at Put-In Creek in downtown Mathews is proposed for recreation and a public gathering space along with the opportunity to expand the Farmer's Market. An accessible kayak/canoe launch area installed in 2015 provides increased tourism opportunities for the County in the Courthouse area as well as improved recreational facilities.

**Conference Center Development/Redevelopment**

The development or redevelopment of property for a conference center/hotel facility is identified as a potential revitalization project. This project could provide benefits to a specific planning area as well as the County as a whole.



*VI. Mathews County Comprehensive Plan:  
Implementing the Plan*

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**Age-Restricted Housing Initiative**

Age-restricted housing has been identified as a need by County residents and officials. Encouraging a developer for such a project in the Mathews Court House area is identified as a priority.

**Housing Redevelopment**

There are residential properties in the Bayside and West Mathews Planning Areas that have experienced challenges due to failing septic systems and increased storm surges. These areas should be targeted for redevelopment and structures elevated or acquired using grant funds awarded to the County through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

**Cobbs Creek / Dixie Development Opportunities**

With the construction of the sanitary sewer transmission force main there are increased opportunities for development in Cobbs Creek and the Dixie area. In particular, Dixie could capitalize on an opportunity for small-scale commercial development because of its connectivity to Gloucester and Middlesex Counties.

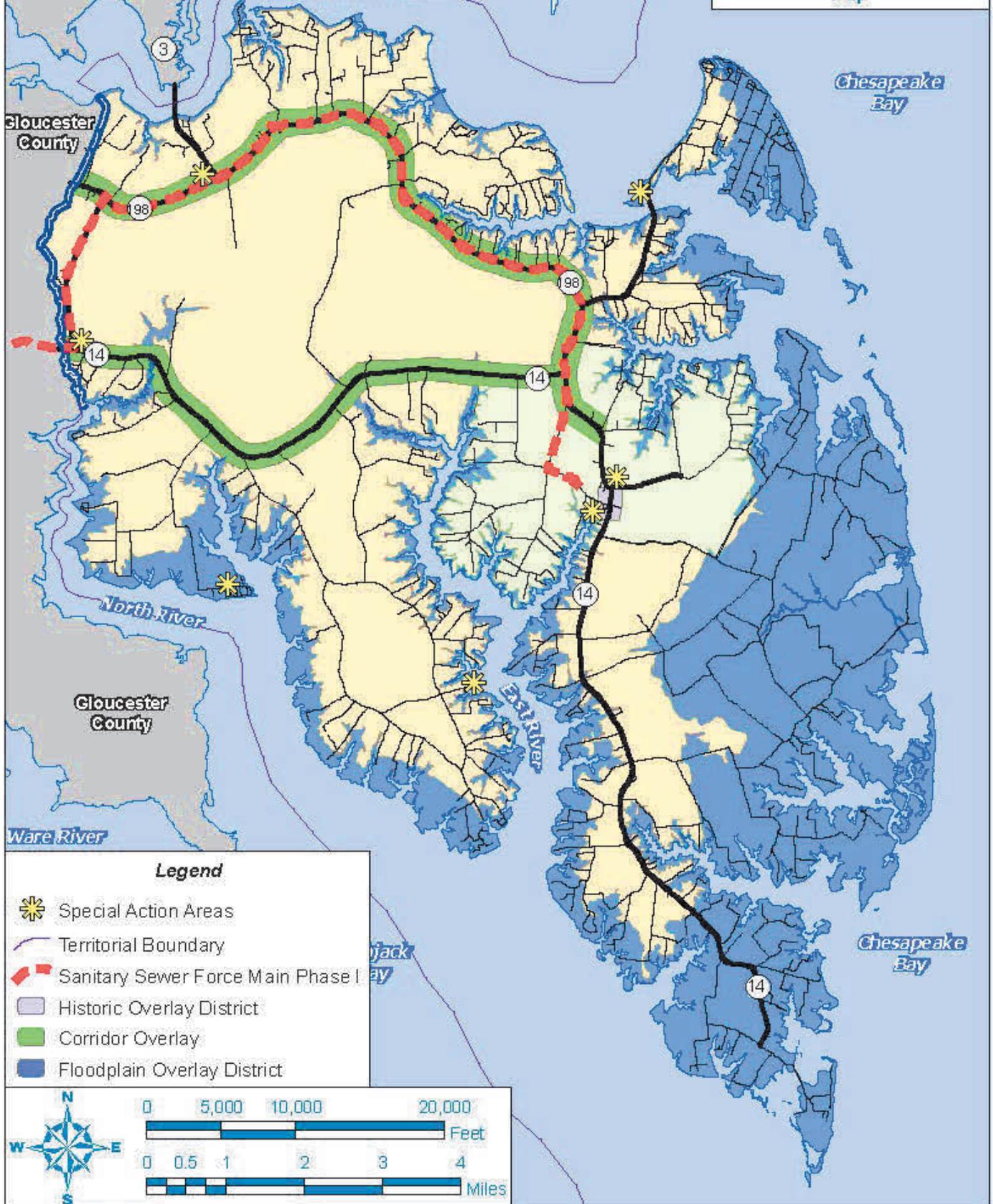


Middlesex  
County

Mathews County  
Comprehensive Plan  
2030



Implementation Strategy  
Map



**Legend**

- Special Action Areas
- Territorial Boundary
- Sanitary Sewer Force Main Phase I
- Historic Overlay District
- Corridor Overlay
- Floodplain Overlay District

