

Communicating the Health of Maryland's Coastal Bays – Involving Citizens with Science

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In the Maryland Coastal Bays watershed several products are collaboratively produced to communicate the health of the Coastal Bays to several audiences. Produced on different timescales, these reports are variously addressed to laymen, scientists, managers, and elected officials. A highly technical ecosystem health report is prepared on a 5-year scale. Concomitantly, a 'public friendly' State of the Bays Report is also produced. Beginning with 2008, in collaboration with several partners and the Mid-Atlantic Tributary Assessment Coalition, Maryland DNR, Maryland Coastal Bays Program, and Assateague Island National Seashore have produced an annual report card to the citizens of the watershed. This format – an abbreviated synthesis on a timescale relevant to politicians and tourists as well as residents - functions to keep the health of the Bays continuously in the public eye. The report card presents the progress of water quality and living resources indicators, combining data generated by State and federal agencies, and volunteer private citizen monitoring groups. It evaluates sub-basins within the Coastal Bays system, tells stories of successful partnerships and accomplishments, and recommends individual actions and opportunities for citizens and visitors. Data and methods underpinning the report card are made available through a dedicated webpage.

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