

COASTAL MANAGEMENT NEWS

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Dorchester County, Maryland, during a high tide in 2007. As sea levels rise, extreme high tide events are becoming more frequent. Credit: Wanda Cole

Maryland Advances Sea Level Rise Adaptation with Interactive Summit

With over 4,000 miles of coastline, rising sea levels (anticipated to be two-three feet over the next 100 years), and naturally occurring regional land subsidence, Maryland is one of the most vulnerable states in the country to climate change. On April 27, 2009, hundreds of coastal leaders will gather in Annapolis, Maryland, to participate in *Building Coast-Smart Communities*, a high-level, interactive summit focused on sea level rise adaptation in Maryland. Maryland's Chesapeake & Coastal Program (CCP) is bringing a diverse set of stakeholders together to engage in difficult, real-life discussions and decisions facing coastal communities vulnerable to

climate change impacts such as sea level rise, coastal erosion, and storm inundation.

In August 2008, the Maryland Commission on Climate Change issued the *Climate Action Plan*, detailing the effects global warming will have on Maryland and recommending 61 specific actions to reduce global warming pollution and protect Maryland's people and property from rising sea levels and changing weather patterns (See also October 2008 story in *Coastal Management News*). To help implement the *Climate Action Plan*, the Maryland CCP developed a partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and U.S.

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Geological Survey's group, the Science Impact Collaborative (MUSIC), and the Consensus Building Institute to help Maryland coastal communities adapt and respond to climate change.

During the summit, participants will work through a set of actions that communities can take to protect their people, infrastructure, and investments from future risk. This simulation will be based on a hypothetical Maryland community that reflects the reality of many of the state's coastal towns and cities. The set of actions will be scored on a "Coast-Smart Community" scorecard that ranks each action's effectiveness and cost. Participants will play the role of different stakeholders in this hypothetical community and must reach a

minimum total score to qualify for benefits under a hypothetical state-funded, incentive-based initiative called the Coast-Smart Community Bill.

This event will provide an excellent opportunity to get hands-on experience that will help participants as they address the challenges presented by climate change. Importantly, this initial event will create a network of community leaders who can coordinate and learn from other Maryland coastal communities.

For more information on the event, visit <http://maryland.coastsmart.org/> or contact Gwen Shaughnessy at gshaughnessy@dnr.state.md.us.

Dolphin SMART Program Moves to Alabama

The Alabama Coastal Area Management Program is working with NOAA, the Alabama Gulf Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium to implement the Dolphin SMART program in Alabama. The Dolphin SMART program is a voluntary recognition and education program for businesses that seek to responsibly view dolphins in the wild.

The Dolphin SMART program teaches techniques to minimize the potential of wild dolphin harassment by commercial viewing operations. All participating businesses receive training on dolphin viewing etiquette, behavior, research, and natural history, and must

commit to dolphin viewing practices that exceed required legal standards to prevent harassment and promote stewardship. Upon completion of the program and subsequent evaluations, participating businesses can identify themselves as Dolphin SMART by displaying a flag or decal, which features the Dolphin SMART logo, on their vessel or in their advertising.

The acronym "SMART" is a reminder of the basic principles of dolphin viewing etiquette:

- **Stay** at least 50 yards from dolphins.
- **Move** away slowly if the dolphins show signs of disturbance.
- **Always** put your vessel engine in neutral when dolphins are near.
- **Refrain** from feeding, touching, or swimming with wild dolphins.
- **Teach** others to be Dolphin SMART.

The Dolphin SMART program began in the Florida Keys in 2007 as a partnership between NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program and National Marine Fisheries Service, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, and the Dolphin Ecology Project. The program expanded to the Alabama coast the following year, and the first Alabama charter operation, Cetacean Cruises out of Orange Beach, was certified as Dolphin SMART in November 2008. Alabama scheduled another Dolphin SMART operator training workshop for April 21, 2009, in hopes of bringing on more recognized participants. The Dolphin SMART program has recently expanded to include Hawaii, who hopes to hold their first operator training very soon.

For additional information, contact Kelly Brinkman at Kelly.Brinkman@dcnr.alabama.gov or visit www.dolphinSMART.org/.



Dolphin watching businesses that complete the Dolphin Smart program can display the program logo on their vessel in recognition of their proper dolphin viewing etiquette.