

## CHAPTER 12: SUMMARY

After 20 years of implementation, the natural resource protection goals established by Governor Hughes and the General Assembly as part of the original Critical Area Law and Criteria are still applicable. The unique partnership between the Critical Area Commission and the 64 local jurisdictions surrounding Maryland's Bays has provided both opportunities and challenges. Like any pioneering regulatory program, patience, cooperation, and innovation have been essential to implementing and maintaining the Program. Because each local government adopted its own Critical Area program that included provisions specific to that jurisdiction, there are opportunities to assess effectiveness of various strategies and approaches. These assessments can be used to refine and amend Maryland's Critical Area Program as necessary to meet the challenges facing the Program in the future.

The past decade has shown that in order for the Critical Area Program to be effective, efforts must be made to increase the public's knowledge of the Program, improve enforcement of existing Critical Area regulations, and clarify and strengthen provisions of the Program that have proven ineffective or

impracticable. This publication is part of an effort to make information about the Critical Area Program more accessible and understandable. It is anticipated that this educational effort will facilitate a better understanding of the regulations, and, coupled with intensified enforcement efforts, will result in greater compliance with local Critical Area programs. Another purpose of this publication is to emphasize the tremendous significance of Maryland's Critical Area Program and to highlight that a sustained commitment to restoring Maryland's Bays is necessary.

In recent years, it has become apparent that if the Bays are ever to be truly restored while continuing to undergo significant development pressure, local Critical Area programs must be thoughtfully and rigorously implemented and enforced, and every opportunity to restore the Bays must be aggressively pursued. To do otherwise is to accept the continued degradation of habitat and deterioration of water quality that are responsible for the Bay's decline. This means that each occasion to restore habitat and improve water quality, regardless of its size and scope, is ultimately significant.

The challenge of restoring Maryland's Bays is now greater than ever. However, heightened awareness of the Bays' fragile condition, new technologies for managing the adverse impacts of development, and intensified State and local enforcement efforts provide hope for the future. By supporting Maryland's Critical Area Program and becoming effective stewards of Maryland's extensive water resources, all Marylanders have a role to play in restoring, enhancing, and protecting Maryland's grandest natural resources. In the words of Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

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