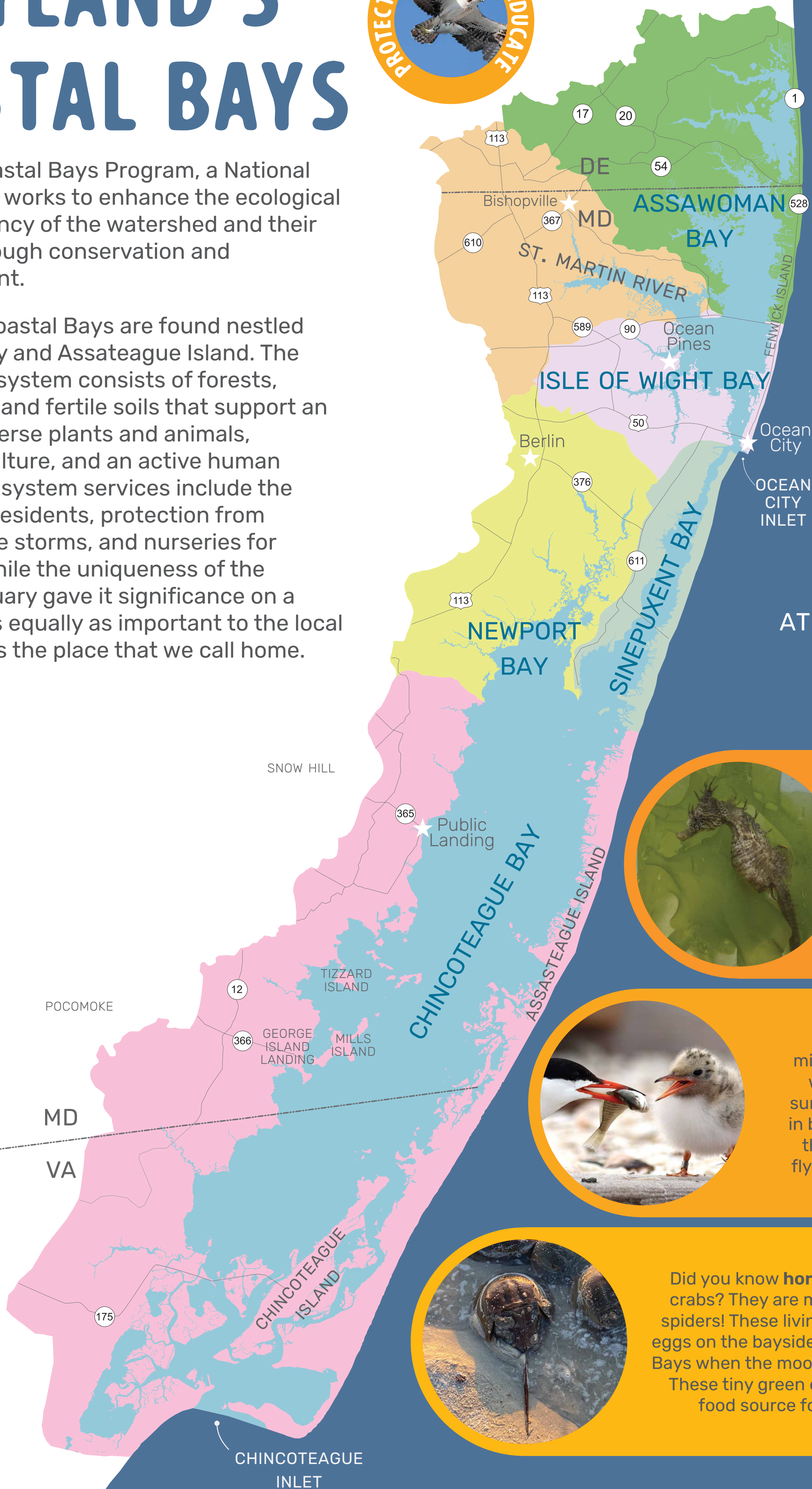


MARYLAND'S COASTAL BAYS



The Maryland Coastal Bays Program, a National Estuary Program, works to enhance the ecological values and resiliency of the watershed and their communities through conservation and public engagement.

Maryland's five Coastal Bays are found nestled behind Ocean City and Assateague Island. The Coastal Bays ecosystem consists of forests, marshes, waters, and fertile soils that support an abundance of diverse plants and animals, productive agriculture, and an active human environment. Ecosystem services include the livelihoods of its residents, protection from natural events like storms, and nurseries for young critters. While the uniqueness of the Coastal Bays estuary gave it significance on a national level, it is equally as important to the local community as it is the place that we call home.



ATLANTIC OCEAN



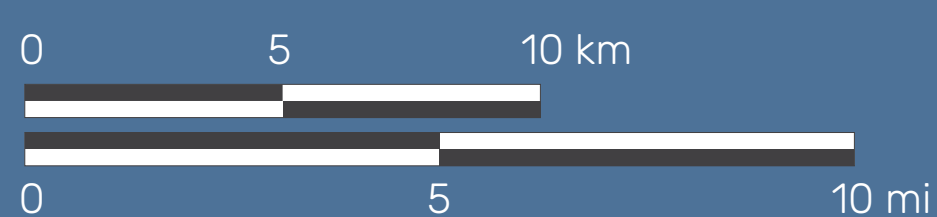
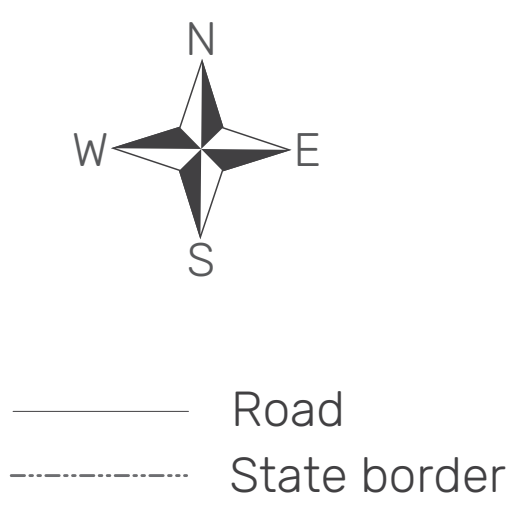
Lined Seahorses aren't the fastest swimmers, but they sure are smart. As superstars of camouflage, they blend into seagrasses to avoid being seen.



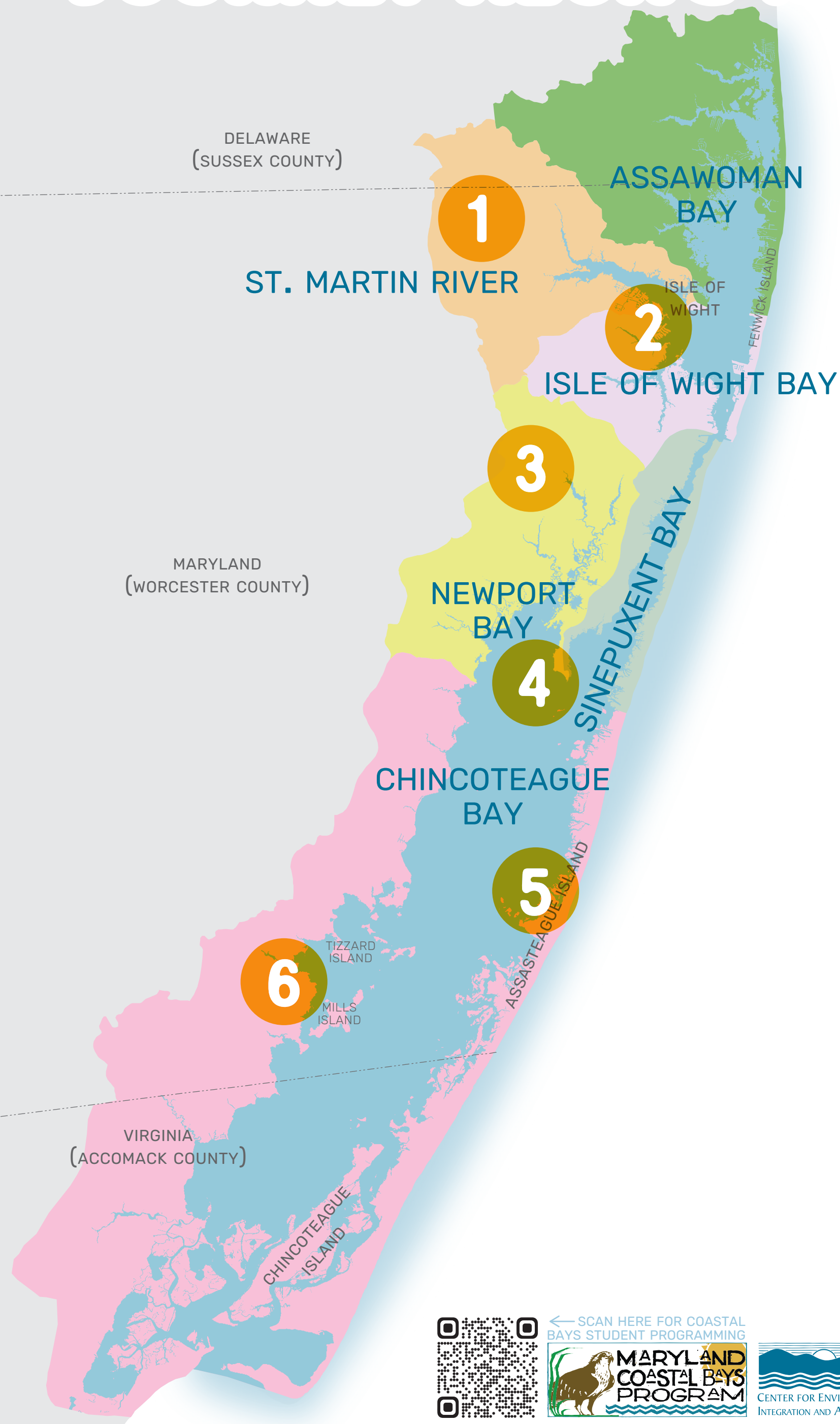
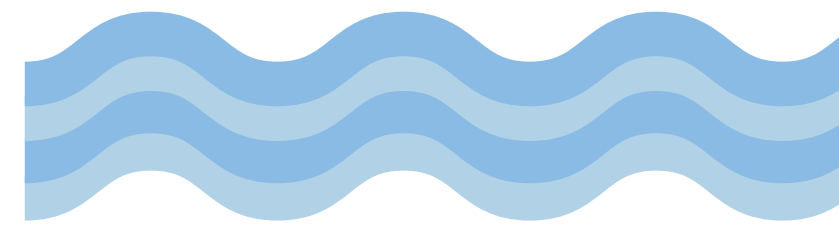
Common Terns are migratory colonial nesting waterbirds. During the summer months, they nest in big colonies on islands in the Coastal Bays before flying south for the winter.



Did you know **horseshoe crabs** are not crabs? They are more closely related to spiders! These living fossils lay millions of eggs on the bayside beaches of the Coastal Bays when the moon and tide are just right. These tiny green eggs are an important food source for many creatures.



JOURNEY ALONG MARYLAND'S COASTAL BAYS



1



AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is crucial to the economy, environment, and local communities. Agriculture is the second-largest industry in Worcester County, and includes timber harvesting, poultry farming, and growing corn and soybeans for animal feed. Worcester County's diverse habitats and fertile soil allow for many kinds of agriculture. Every year in August, the harvest season begins with the Annual Blessing of the Combines in Snow Hill, MD.

4



ESTUARIES

Estuaries are coastal areas where freshwater meets saltwater, otherwise known as brackish! Estuaries are more than just water, they are complex ecosystems filled with wetlands, beaches, forests, and more. Did you know that estuary environments are among the most productive ecosystems on our planet? A healthy, biodiverse estuary is a key habitat and food source for all its creatures. It also supports our local economy and preserves a way of life.

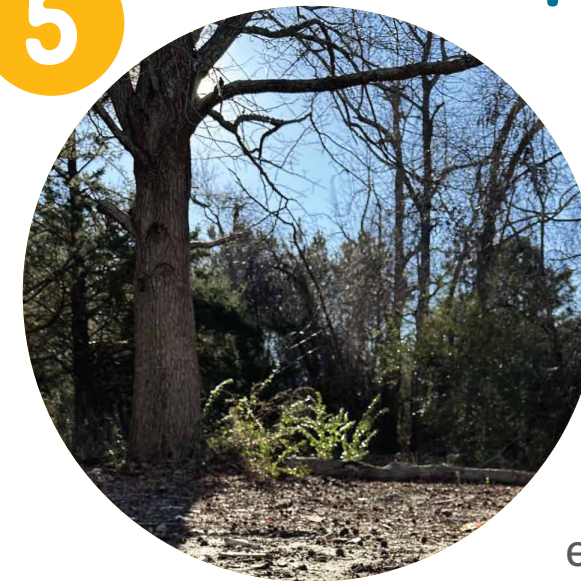
2



SHORELINE

When you are walking along the water's edge, you will likely be looking at one of two types of shoreline, human-made or natural. Living shorelines are made with natural materials and protect water quality by slowing runoff, reducing erosion, and filtering nutrients. Natural and human-made living shorelines provide habitat for fish, diamondback terrapins, horseshoe crabs, and more!

5



FORESTS

Mixed pine-hardwood forests are the most common type of forest currently found in our watershed. A unique forest found in our watershed is a maritime forest. Maritime forests have a connection to the ocean and have adapted over time to thrive in the salty environment. Historically, forests covered much of the watershed, providing clean water, clean air, and vertical habitat diversity.

3



HUMAN COMMUNITIES

People are an important part of the Coastal Bays watershed. The many towns, cities, and suburbs in the watershed are where people come together to learn, play, eat, and grow. The ways in which our communities influence the local economy, environment, and culture of our watershed are what makes the Coastal Bays a special place to call home.

6



WETLANDS

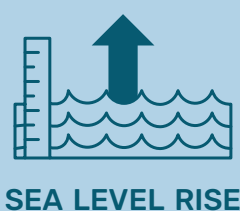
In this watershed, there are saltwater (tidal) and freshwater (nontidal) wetlands. Wetlands are vitally important to the health of our Bays and contain habitats like marshes, scrub, and forest. They buffer the mainland from erosion, provide habitat to vulnerable species, and filter runoff and excess nutrients before it enters the Coastal Bays. Unfortunately, wetlands are under serious threat from rising water levels.



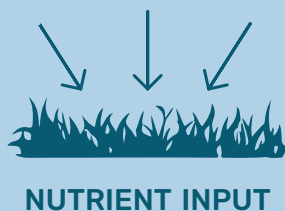
← SCAN HERE FOR COASTAL BAYS STUDENT PROGRAMMING



CHALLENGES



SEA LEVEL RISE



NUTRIENT INPUT



DEVELOPMENT



ACTIONS



RESTORATION



ENGAGEMENT



EDUCATION

Ensuring the health of the Coastal Bays is vital to the communities that depend on the ecosystem services the watershed provides on a daily basis. The Maryland Coastal Bays Program works with community members and partners to better understand the challenges that face our watershed, and create solutions to those challenges through restoration, community engagement, and education.