## Talbot County, Maryland

# Water Resources Element

As recommended and amended by the by the
Talbot County Planning Commission and Public Works Advisory Board

September 1, 2010

# Chapter X Water Resources Element

The Water Resources Element of the Talbot County Comprehensive Plan creates a policy framework for sustaining public drinking water supplies and protecting the County's waterways and riparian ecosystems by effectively managing point and nonpoint source water pollution. It complies with the requirements of Article 66B of the Annotated Code of Maryland—as modified by Maryland House Bill 1141, passed in 2006. When developing a comprehensive plan, among the requirements a planning commission is required to include is a Water Resources Element that:

1. Identifies drinking water and other water resources that will be adequate for the needs of existing and future development proposed in the land use element of the plan, considering available data provided by the Department of the Environment;
2. Identifies suitable receiving waters and land areas to meet storm water management and wastewater treatment and disposal needs of existing and future development proposed in the land use element of the plan, considering available data provided by the Department of the Environment;
3. Is reviewed by the Department of the Environment to determine whether the proposed plan is consistent with the program goals of the Department reflected in the general water resources program required under §5-203 of the Environmental Article.

The Water Resources Element identifies opportunities to manage existing water supplies, wastewater effluent, and stormwater runoff, in a way that balances the needs of the natural environment with the County's projected growth, including the growth projected for the County's municipalities. In this way, this Water Resources Element helps to protect the local and regional ecosystem while ensuring clean drinking water for future generations of Talbot County residents.

## Inter-jurisdictional Coordination

There are five incorporated municipalities in Talbot County. Residents and businesses of four of these communities (Easton, Oxford, St. Michael's, and Trappe) receive public water and/or sewer service (Queen Anne residents and businesses do not receive public water or sewer service). These municipalities own and operate all of the County's public water systems. Easton, Oxford, and Trappe operate their own wastewater treatment plants.

The municipalities are preparing their own Water Resources Elements. However, the County recognizes the importance of inter-jurisdictional water resources planning. This Countywide Water Resources Element compiles, to the greatest degree possible, up-to-date data from the municipalities, in order to coordinate water resources, growth, and land use planning. Data from municipal WREs and Municipal Growth Elements (MGEs) was used for this County WRE. The growth areas identified in MGEs are not substantially different from the future water and sewer service areas identified in this WRE.

Where possible, Talbot County has also obtained data and information on water resources from adjoining Counties, in order to paint the fullest possible picture of future impacts to the Choptank, Wye, and other rivers and streams that form Talbot County's boundaries.

# I. Goals

***In cooperation with the County's municipalities, maintain a safe and adequate water supply, and adequate amounts of wastewater treatment capacity to serve projected growth.***

***Take steps to protect and restore water quality, and to meet water quality regulatory requirements in the county's rivers and streams.***

# II. County Projections and Scenarios

## A. Watersheds

This Element takes a watershed-based approach in analyzing the impact of future growth on Talbot County's water resources—particularly in relation to nutrients discharged to the County's streams. Land in Talbot County drains to one of seven major watersheds (or "8-digit watersheds," referring to the numeric classification system used by the Maryland Department of the Environment). These watersheds, shown on Map 1, are: the Eastern Bay, Lower Chesapeake Bay, Lower Choptank River, Miles River, Tuckahoe Creek, Upper Choptank River, and Wye River.

## B. Population Projections

The Water Resources Element uses Countywide population projections developed by the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP), shown in Table 1. These projections indicate that County population will reach approximately 42,100 by the year 2030, an annual increase of approximately 0.7 percent per year, or 16 percent overall between 2007 and 2030.

The population projections in Table 1 are intended only to support the analyses in the Water Resources Element (as required by the state in HB 1141). This said, the County and its municipalities have granted at least preliminary approval for more than 5,500 housing units not accounted for in MDP's 2030 projections. Three thousand units alone have been approved by the Town of Trappe. A Development Capacity Analysis conducted by MDP showed that more than 20,000 new housing units could eventually be built in the County.

It is understood that some of the "pipeline" (approved but unbuilt) units will not be built and occupied by 2030, and that some completed units will not be occupied by full-year residents. However, the number of units in the "pipeline" does cast some doubt on the official projections. Accordingly, while the data in Table 1 are used throughout this Element, the County's population projections will be thoroughly reviewed and updated as part of a full revision to the 2005 Comprehensive Plan.

**Table 1. Population Projections for the Water Resources Element**

| *Year* | | | | | | *Change, 2007-2030* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2007** | **2010** | **2015** | **2020** | **2025** | **2030** | **Number** | **Percent** | **Annual Increase** |
| 36,193 | 37,050 | 38,600 | 40,050 | 41,250 | 42,100 | 5,907 | 16% | 0.7% |

*Sources:*
*2007: MDP, 2007 Estimates for Maryland's Jurisdictions*
*All Other Years: MDP, Projected Total Population for Maryland's Jurisdictions (Revisions, December 2008).*

## C. Future Development Scenario

A single future development scenario, based on the population projections described above and the 2005 Comprehensive Plan was carried forward for detailed analysis this Water Resources Element. The intent of analyzing a single scenario is to evaluate the sustainability of the County's adopted Comprehensive Plan, and to provide input into the next full revision of the Comprehensive Plan, which would likely occur

in 2011. For purposes of the nonpoint source loading analysis (Section VI), the amount of septic denitrification was varied, to show the impact that such a program might have on the County's receiving waters.

Because water and sewer service is often measured in terms of Equivalent Dwelling Units, or EDU,1 the Water Resources Element uses housing units as the basis for its water, sewer, and nonpoint source pollution analyses.

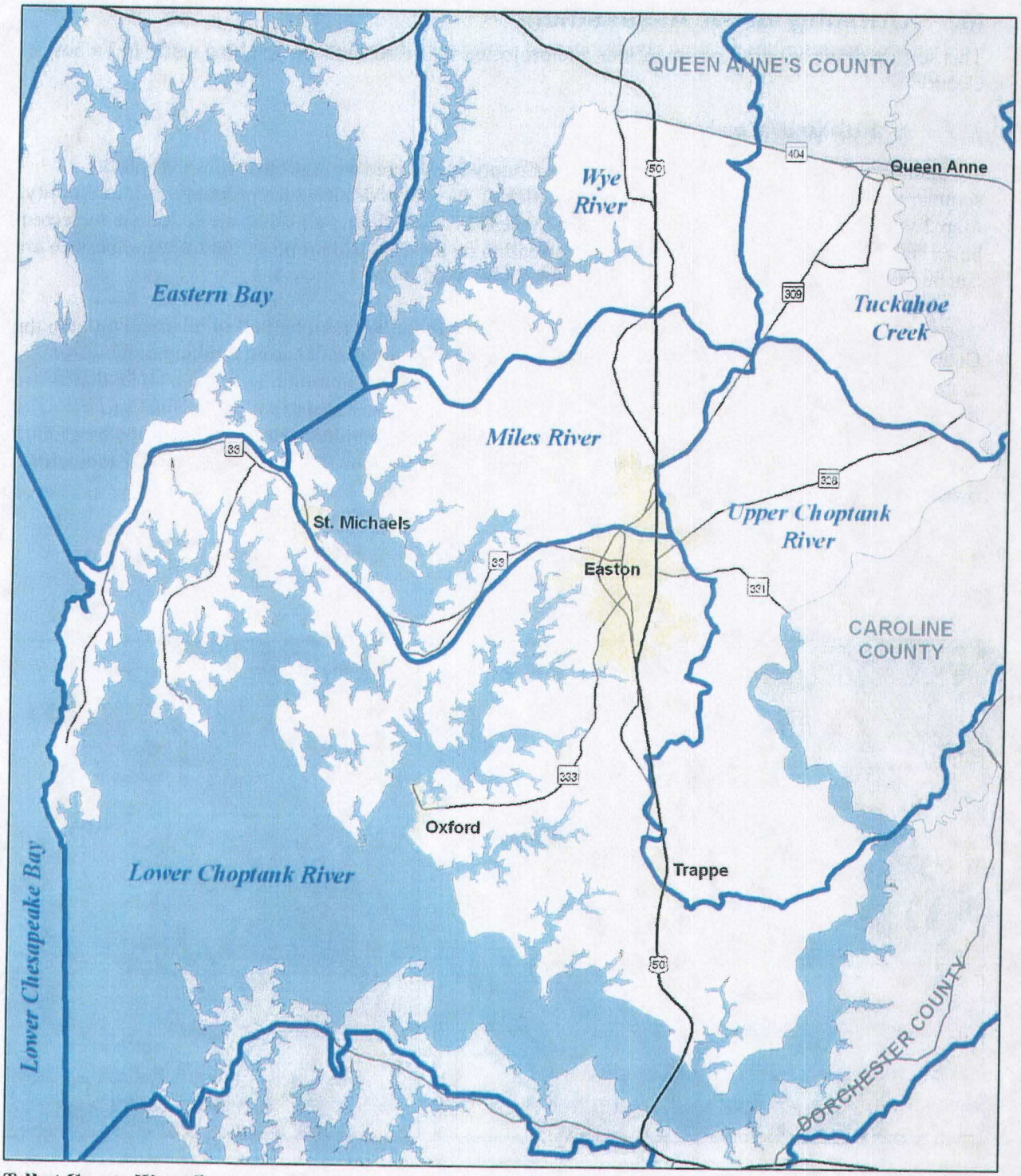
Table 2 shows the projected watershed-level distribution of housing units in the scenario described above. The projected increase of 2,683 housing units represents an increase approximately 13 percent. As shown in Table 2, approximately 70 percent of new housing units would be built in municipalities (including areas likely to be annexed in the future, based on the County's Water and Sewer Master Plan).

**Table 2. Housing Unit Projections by Watershed**

| Watersheds | 2007 Existing[2] | *2007-2030 Growth* Increment | 2030 Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Eastern Bay | 242 | 85 | 247 |
| Lower Chesapeake Bay | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| Lower Choptank River | | | |
| Easton[1] | 5,224 | 1,141 | 6,365 |
| Trappe[1] | 368 | 116 | 443 |
| St. Michaels[1] | 327 | 5 | 373 |
| Oxford | 963 | 20 | 983 |
| Remainder of Watershed | 6,077 | 237 | 6,314 |
| Miles River | | | |
| Easton[1] | 896 | 119 | 1,015 |
| St. Michaels[1] | 693 | 91 | 784 |
| Remainder of Watershed | 2,087 | 119 | 2,206 |
| Tuckahoe Creek | | | |
| Queen Anne | 48 | 4 | 52 |
| Remainder of Watershed | 567 | 103 | 670 |
| Upper Choptank River | | | |
| Easton[1] | 506 | 45 | 551 |
| Trappe[1] | 117 | 336 | 453 |
| Remainder of Watershed | 1,386 | 185 | 1,572 |
| Wye River | 677 | 156 | 833 |
| **Total** | **20,183** | **2,683** | **22,866** |

*Notes:*
*1: Includes the portion of the municipality (including areas likely to be annexed, based on the Talbot County Water and Sewer Master Plan) that falls within this watershed.*
*2: Source: Maryland Property View 2007*

[1] An EDU represents the average amount of water used by one household, and is also used to calculate residential and non-residential (e.g., businesses) water demand. In Talbot County, one EDU equals to 220 gallons per day (gpd).




**Talbot County Water Resources Element**

## Map 1. Major Watersheds

0 1 2 4 Miles

**Legend**

Major (8-digit) Watersheds

Municipalities

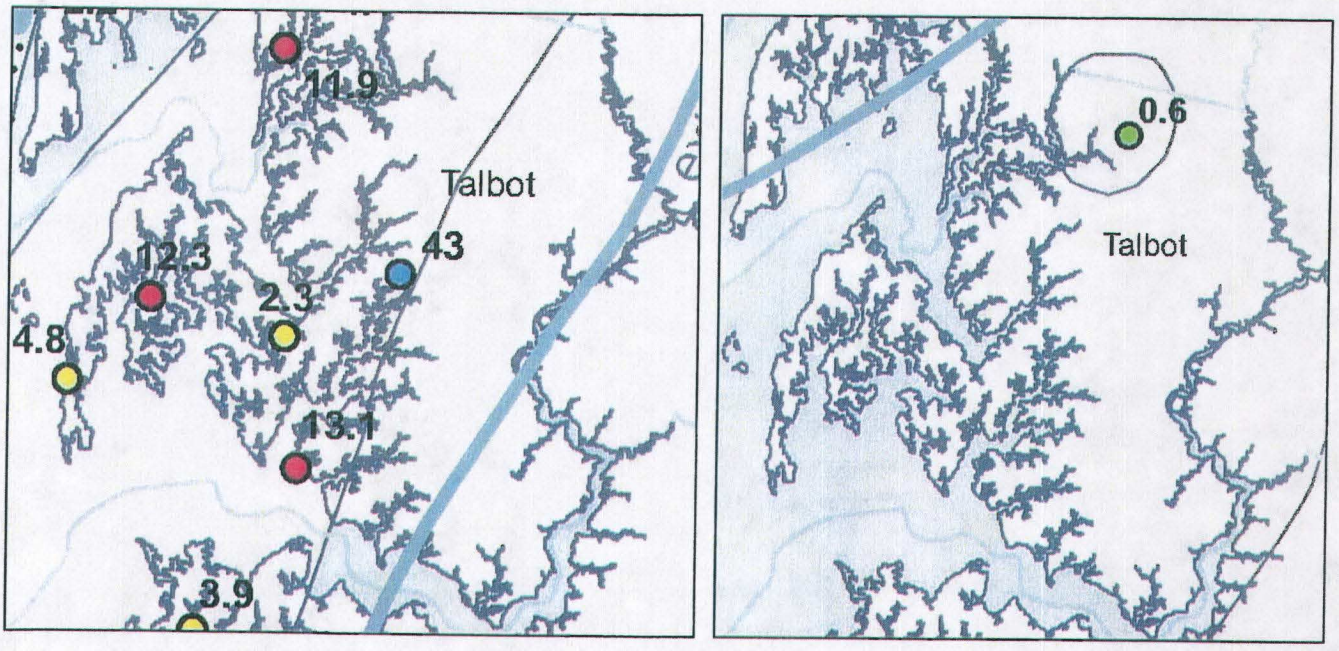
# III. Drinking Water Assessment

This section describes existing conditions and projected future demand for drinking water in Talbot County.

## A. Public Water Systems

All public and private drinking water in Talbot County is obtained from groundwater. Table 3 summarizes water sources and other characteristics of the public drinking water systems in the County. Map 2 shows the location of these water service areas as of 2008, as well as the areas that are expected to be served within ten years. More detailed information on existing and proposed future water service areas can be found in the County's Water and Sewer Master Plan.

Approximately 9,600 dwelling units in Talbot County (slightly less than half of all dwelling units in the County) and a considerable share of businesses receive drinking water from municipal public water systems in Easton, Oxford, St. Michaels, and Trappe, as well as community systems in Hyde Park (near Easton), Martingham, (near St. Michaels), and Claiborne. These systems are described in Table 3. Talbot County does not operate any public water systems. All public water systems are supplied by groundwater wells. The future water service areas in Map 2 are expected to be provided by County or municipally-owned facilities.

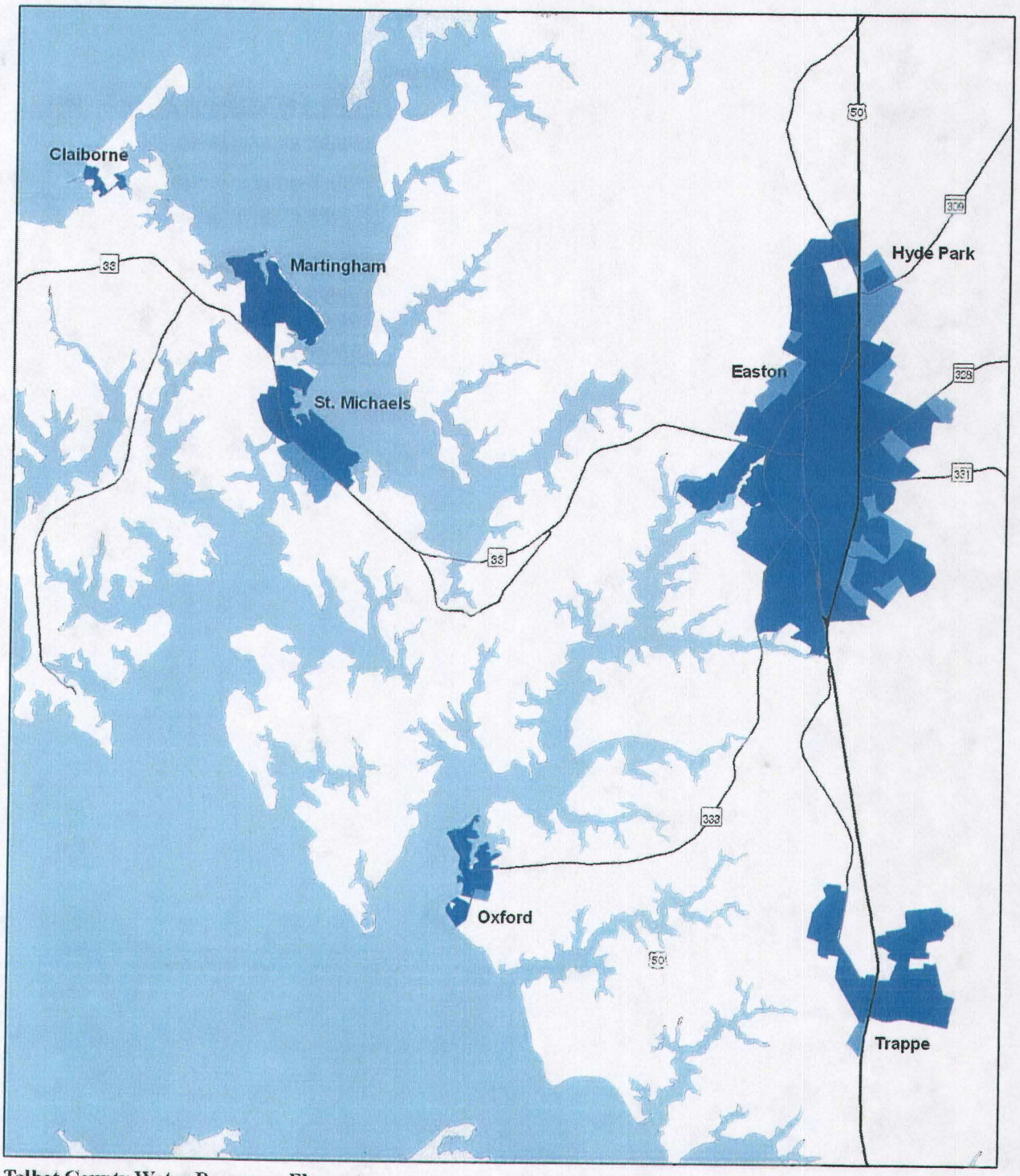



MAP 3A. Generalized areas where arsenic concentrations exceed 10 micrograms per liter in the Aquia (left) and Piney Point (right) aquifers (shaded areas). Source: *ARSENIC IN GROUND WATER IN THE COASTAL PLAIN AQUIFERS OF MARYLAND* by David D. Drummond and David W. Bolton, 2010.

**Table 3. Public Drinking Water System Characteristics**

| Water System[1] | Source Aquifer (number of wells) | Source Concerns / System Issues |
|---|---|---|
| Easton | Aquia Greensand (1), Magothy (3), Upper Patapsco (2) | Elevated arsenic levels |
| Oxford Area | Aquia Greensand (2) | Elevated arsenic levels |
| St. Michaels | Aquia Greensand (2) | Elevated arsenic levels |
| Trappe[1] | Piney Point (2) | |
| Claiborne | Aquia Greensand (2) | System size limitations, leakage. Elevated arsenic levels |
| Hyde Park | Aquia Greensand (1), Federalsburg (1) | Elevated arsenic levels |
| Martingham | Aquia Greensand (2) | Elevated arsenic levels |

*Notes:*
*1: Trappe also has groundwater allocations from the Matawan Aquifer, although there are no active production wells in this formation. Sources: 2002 Talbot County Water and Sewer Master Plan; 2009 Trappe Comprehensive Plan (WRE); 2009 Easton Comprehensive Plan (WRE).*




Talbot County Water Resources Element

## Map 2. Public Water Systems

0 1 2 Miles

**Legend**

Public Water Service Status

- Existing to 2 years
- Beyond 2 years

Table 4 shows existing and projected water supplies, demands, surpluses and deficits for these water systems. All of the major public water systems in the County have available capacity to support some additional growth and development, and may support projected growth through 2030. St. Michaels would essentially reach its capacity by 2030, while the Easton, Oxford, and Trappe Systems have available capacity beyond 2030. As described in Easton's WRE, the Town is planning for water system expansion up to nearly 4.3 MGD by 2033.

**Table 4. Public Water System Demand and Capacity, 2030 (Major Systems Only)**

| | | Easton | St. Michaels | Oxford | Trappe[3] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Current System Capacity | MGD | 3.40 | 0.33 | 0.57 | 0.35 |
| | EDU | 13,600 | 1,300 | 2,296 | 1,388 |
| Current Average Daily Demand | MGD | 1.68 | 0.27 | 0.13 | 0.11 |
| | EDU | 6,704 | 1,080 | 512 | 440 |
| Current Net Available Capacity | MGD | 1.72 | 0.06 | 0.44 | 0.24 |
| | EDU | 6,896 | 220 | 1,784 | 948 |
| System Capacity, 2030[1] | MGD | 3.40 | 0.32 | 0.57 | 0.65 |
| | EDU | 13,600 | 1,300 | 2,296 | 1,388 |
| Total Projected New Demand, 2008-30[2] | MGD | 0.44 | 0.04 | 0.01 | 0.15 |
| | EDU | 1,776 | 162 | 51 | 581 |
| **Total Demand, 2030** | **MGD** | **2.12** | **0.31** | **0.14** | **0.26** |
| | **EDU** | **8,480** | **1,242** | **563** | **1,021** |
| **Net Available Capacity, 2030** | **MGD** | **1.28** | **0.01** | **0.43** | **0.39** |
| | **EDU** | **5,120** | **58** | **1,733** | **1,571** |

*Notes:*
*1: Incorporates all ongoing or planned capacity upgrades.*
*2: Source: Maryland Property View 2007, 2002 Talbot County Water and Sewer Master Plan, 2009 Trappe Comprehensive Plan (WRE), 2009 Easton Comprehensive Plan (WRE). Includes new residential and non-residential demand, as well as infill and system extensions to existing development.*
*3: The future capacity of the Trappe system reflects allocation of 347,500 gallons per day (gpd) from existing Piney Point wells, and the Town's 300,500 gpd allocation from the Matawan.*

Additional water demand through 2030 in the Claiborne, Hyde Park, and Martingham systems is expected to be minimal, if any.

## B. Other Water Use

In 2002, there were 329 active groundwater appropriation permits in Talbot County, drawing a daily average of 6.4 MGD. All residential units and businesses in Talbot County outside of the above public water systems rely on individual or community wells. These wells are drilled in a variety of water-bearing formations, particularly the Columbia (or surficial aquifer), Miocene (typically the Calvert formation), Piney Point, and Aquia aquifers.[2]

Table 5 shows the distribution of Countywide water use in 2000. Although not a precise representation of current water use, Table 5 does highlight the County's major water users: public systems, private residential users, and agricultural irrigation. The remainder of this section discusses those major categories of non-public water users in greater detail.

[2] Source: MGS. 2005. Hydrogeology of the Coastal Plain Aquifer System in Queen Anne's and Talbot Counties. Accessed at http://www.mgs.md.gov/hydro/qatalsum.html

**Table 5. Freshwater Withdrawals in Talbot County, 2000**

| Type of Withdrawal | Total Withdrawals (MGD) | | | Percent of County Withdrawals |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Surface Water | Groundwater | Total | |
| Commercial | 0 | 0.36 | 0.36 | 6% |
| Industrial | 0 | 0.64 | 0.64 | 11% |
| Mining | 0 | 0.01 | 0.01 | < 1% |
| Livestock Watering | 0.03 | 0.21 | 0.24 | 4% |
| Aquaculture | 0 | 0.01 | 0.01 | < 1% |
| Irrigation | 0.40 | 0.44 | 0.84 | 14% |
| Residential self-supplied | 0 | 1.58 | 1.58 | 26% |
| Public Supply | 0 | 2.32 | 2.32 | 39% |
| **Total** | **0.43** | **5.57** | **6.00** | **100%** |

*Source: USGS MD-DE-DE Water Science Center http://md.water.usgs.gov/freshwater/withdrawals/*

## Private Residential Wells

Approximately 10,500 residential units in Talbot County rely on individual wells (or, in a few cases such as mobile home parks, community wells) for drinking water supply, as do most businesses in rural portions of the County. These residential and small commercial uses accounted for approximately 1.58 MGD of groundwater withdrawal in 2000. Private residential wells typically draw water from the Miocene, Piney Point, and Aquia aquifers. The Piney Point aquifer is most frequently used in the western and southern portions of the County, while the Aquia and Miocene aquifers are most frequently used in the central portion of the County. Some older residences, particularly in the northern and eastern portions of the County, continue to draw from the Columbia (surficial) aquifer.

The "Total Projected New Demand" row of Table 4 includes expansion of public water systems and the transfer of some homes and businesses from private wells to the Easton, Trappe, Oxford, and St. Michaels public systems. Countywide, these connections would add nearly 600 EDU (approximately 146,000 gpd) to the demand for public water service. Easton's expansions would connect approximately 442 EDU (110,000 gpd), while other public systems would take on much smaller demand. Adequate capacity exists in all four of these public systems to accommodate such connections.

## Major Commercial and Industrial Users

As shown in Table 5, commercial and industrial activities outside of municipal systems account for approximately one-fifth of all water used in Talbot County. The largest concentrations of such water use are found in Cordova (including the Allen Family Foods facility), and in areas adjacent to (and scheduled to receive future public water service from) Easton and Trappe. The majority of non-municipal commercial/industrial water use is scattered throughout the County's rural areas, typically along US 50 and other major roads.

## Irrigation

The irrigation category combines agricultural and residential uses and is both seasonally and annually variable. As is the case throughout the Eastern Shore, Talbot County's farmers employ irrigation using surface water and groundwater. Agricultural irrigation is most prevalent in areas to the north and east of Easton.

Most surface water used for irrigation is drawn from Tuckahoe Creek. Groundwater for irrigation is drawn in almost equal proportion from surficial and confined aquifers. Residential irrigation water may also be drawn from household wells or municipal water systems. Deep water irrigation wells can also be tapped for residential use.

## C. Issues and Discussion – Water

### Groundwater Recharge

Talbot County's public and private water users draw drinking water from several major confined groundwater aquifers, many of which (particularly the Aquia and Piney Point) are widely used throughout the Eastern Shore. The capacity of these confined aquifers is increasingly strained by new development throughout the Delmarva Peninsula. The US Geological Society (USGS) reports that "withdrawals from Maryland Coastal Plain aquifers have caused ground-water levels in confined aquifers to decline by tens to hundreds of feet from their original levels. Continued water-level declines could affect the long-term sustainability of ground-water resources in agricultural areas of the Eastern Shore."[3] In most cases, the recharge areas for these aquifers (particularly the Piney Point and Aquia), are not necessarily found on the Eastern Shore.

Groundwater and surface water resources are also linked. Water from surficial aquifers can comprise a significant amount of the base flow of streams and rivers. While groundwater withdrawn through wells is typically returned to the ground or surface via point source discharges, septic systems, and absorption of runoff from outdoor water uses (such as watering of lawns), large withdrawals can potentially impact the quality and quantity of flows in nearby surface water bodies.

There exists no comprehensive study of the water-bearing formations used by Talbot County residents and businesses. Individual (e.g., project-specific) groundwater studies do not take into account the cumulative impacts of heavy demand on the Aquia and other formations from both the Eastern and Western Shore. In addition, the Water Balance methodology recommended by *Models and Guidelines #26* (the state's official guidance for preparation of the Water Resources Element) is not applicable for the Coastal Plain. Thus, while the County understands that its groundwater supplies are limited and declining, there is no reliable measure of water supply against which to compare current and especially projected water demands.

MDE, the Maryland Geological Survey (MGS), and the US Geological Survey (USGS) have begun work on a Coastal Plain Aquifer Study, but that study remains incomplete. The County should use the data and recommendations of the Coastal Plain Aquifer Study (once completed) to shape its own water use policies and ordinances. However, the County also recognizes the need for and supports the development of broader regional water policies to protect already scarce resources.

Talbot County supports the commitment by the MGS and USGS to complete this study, followed by a management plan to steward our shared water resources. Implementation of a management plan will require effective inter-jurisdictional coordination and management. Local resources are inadequate to undertake either of these efforts.

For purposes of this Water Resources Element (and lacking specific evidence to the contrary), this Water Resources Element presumes that the MDE groundwater permit issued for each public drinking water system reflects the maximum safe yield of the aquifer(s) used by that system.

### Water Quality

Elevated levels of naturally-occurring arsenic are known to be present in the Aquia aquifer, the primary aquifer used by the County's public drinking water systems. Treatment of water to remove arsenic is costly for public utilities. Saltwater intrusion in the Aquia is a known problem on Kent Island (in Queen Anne's County), and may also be a concern in coastal areas of Talbot County. This problem will only increase as the aquifer is drawn down.

[3] Source: USGS. 2006. Sustainability of the Ground Water Resources in the Atlantic Coastal Plain of Maryland. USGS Fact Sheet 2006-3009

In addition to these concerns about water quality in the Aquia, individual wells in the surficial aquifer are at risk for elevated nitrate levels due to cross-contamination from failing or inadequate septic systems, or agricultural fertilizer.

## Groundwater Protection

The Talbot County Groundwater Protection Plan (GPP) was developed in 1987, and identifies areas where septic systems may be allowed. The GPP establishes the design criteria and construction requirements for all septic systems, and divides the County into two management areas. Management Area A designates areas that require maximum protection of shallow groundwater aquifers, while Management Area B designates areas where the aquifers used for septic system disposal are separated from drinking water aquifers. The GPP is adopted as an appendix to the County's Water and Sewer Master Plan, and is enforced by the Talbot County Health Department.

## Water Conservation

The County and its municipalities actively implement the Maryland Water Conservation Plumbing Fixtures Act (MWCPFA), which requires that new plumbing fixtures sold or installed as part of new construction are designed to conserve water. In addition, the Water and Sewer Master Plan enumerates several benefits of water conservation, and encourages water conservation as an official policy. The County and its municipalities actively encourage water conservation through education and water use monitoring.

## Potential New Water Supplies

To accommodate long term growth, the County and its municipalities should begin to investigate the limits of existing capacity and the feasibility of other sources of drinking water, including different aquifers and surface water bodies.

Although not widely used for water supply, the Matawan, Patapsco, and Upper and Lower Patuxent formations are present under Talbot County. The Town of Easton draws some of its water from the Matawan, while the other aquifers listed above are not widely used for water supply.[4] More detailed investigation is necessary to determine whether the water in these aquifers is of sufficient quality (particularly with relation to hardness, dissolved solids, and iron) and can produced in sufficient quantity for human consumption. The aquifers listed above also occur at significantly greater depths than the Aquia and Piney Point, adding to the cost of wells for new development (or new wells to serve existing systems).

Surface water impoundments are not currently used for drinking water in Talbot County. Although the County has access to the Choptank and other moderate-sized rivers, preparing surface water for public consumption can also be costly and difficult. All of the County's major rivers are impaired by nutrients, and several are also impaired by a variety of other pollutants, including biological material, bacteria, and sediments. Surface water cannot be ruled out as a potential new source of drinking water, and should be included in any comprehensive study of new drinking water sources. However, the County acknowledges that surface water will not likely be the preferred new source.

To address concerns about water supplies, many Maryland counties have begun to investigate the feasibility of withdrawing and treating brackish tidal waters for public water supplies. The desalinization technology necessary for such systems is expensive and energy-intensive. However, it should also not be ruled out over the very long term.

[4] Source: MGS. 2005. Hydrogeology of the Coastal Plain Aquifer System in Queen Anne's and Talbot Counties. Accessed at http://www.mgs.md.gov/hydro/qatalsum.html

# IV. Wastewater Assessment

This section describes existing conditions and projected future demand for public wastewater treatment capacity in Talbot County.

## A. Public Sewer Systems

Approximately 10,500 dwelling units in Talbot County (slightly more than half of all dwelling units in the County) and a considerable share of businesses discharge wastewater to one of the nine County, municipal, or private (community) wastewater treatment plants (WWTP) described in Table 6. Map 3 shows the location of public sewer service areas as of 2008 (the most recent year for which mapping is available), as well as the areas that are expected to be served within ten years. The future sewer service areas in Map 3 are expected to be provided by County or municipally-owned facilities. The Hyde Park service area will likely be connected to Easton, while the Martingham service area will remain unchanged.

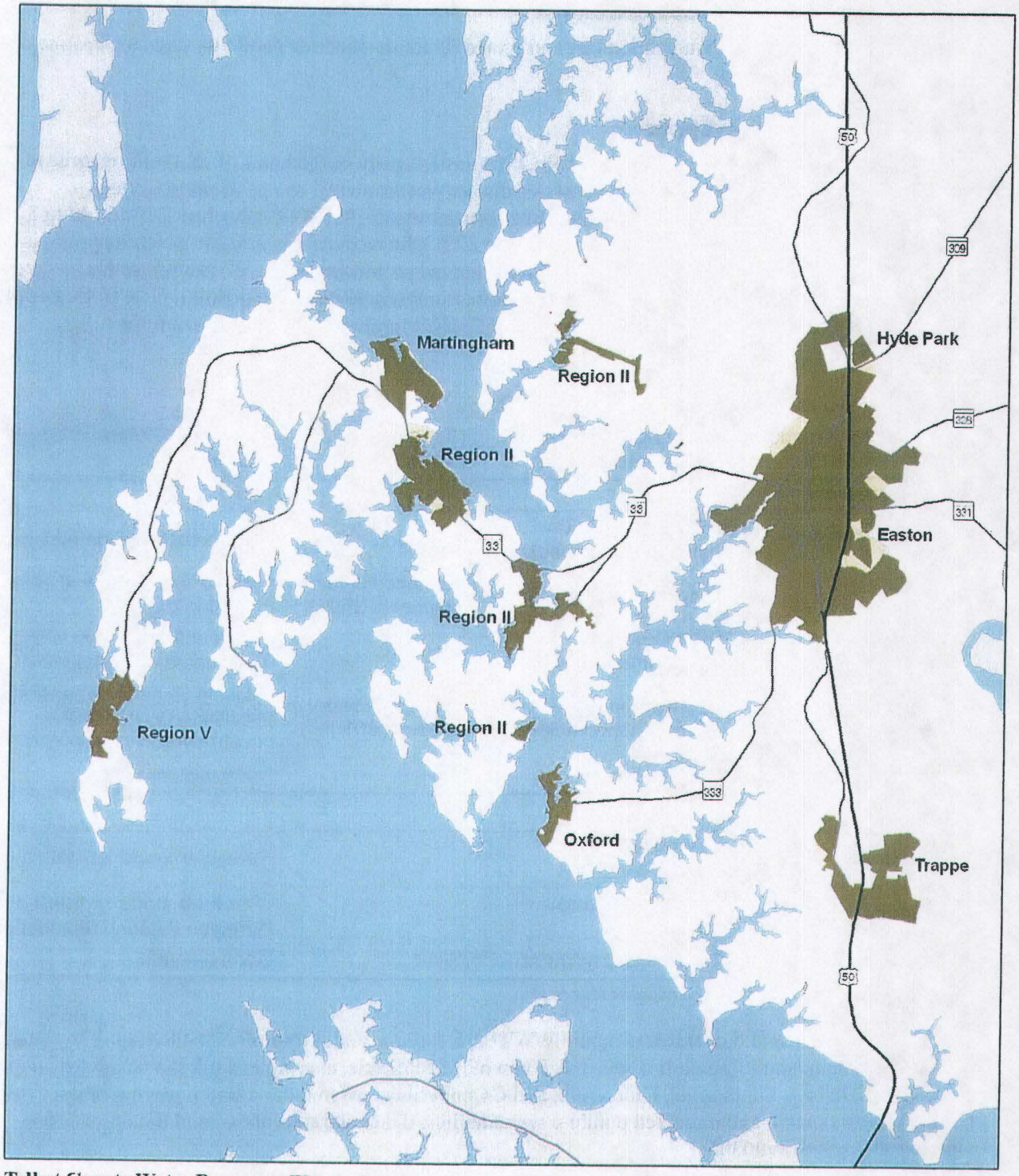
**Table 6. Public Sewer System Characteristics**

| Wastewater Treatment Plant | Discharge Location (Watershed) | Treatment Technology | Planned/Potential Upgrades or Expansions |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Public Systems* | | | |
| **Region V (Tilghman)** | Chesapeake Bay (Lower Chesapeake) | Lagoons | Potential upgrade/expansion |
| **Easton** | Upper Choptank River | Enhanced Nutrient Removal (ENR) | Service to additional areas around Easton |
| **Oxford** | Town Creek (Lower Choptank River) | Lagoons | Potential phosphorus upgrade, relocated discharge point. |
| **Trappe** | La Trappe Creek (Lower Choptank River) | Biological Nutrient Removal (BNR) | Likely upgrade/expansion of existing WWTP and/or construction of new WWTP. |
| **Region II (St. Michaels)** | Miles River | ENR | None planned |
| *Private/Community Systems* | | | |
| **Hyde Park** | Onsite Bermed Infiltration Pond | | Repairs to failed infiltration pond. |
| **Martingham** | Lagoons and spray irrigation | | Flow temporarily diverted to Region II during repair/upgrade. |
| **Preserve at Wye Mills** | Onsite Spray Irrigation | BNR | None planned |

*Source: 2002 Talbot County Water and Sewer Master Plan*

Talbot County owns and operates two public WWTPs, Region V and Region II. The Region V system serves Tilghman Island. Region II serves the Town of St. Michaels, as well as the Rio Vista, Royal Oak, Newcomb, Bellevue, Tunis Mills, Unionville, and Copperville areas in the western portion of the County. Table 7 shows existing and projected public sewer supplies, demands, surpluses and deficits for these wastewater systems in 2030.

As of 2009, effluent from the Martingham system was temporarily being diverted to the Region II facility while repairs and upgrades to the Martingham system are made. (These flows are not included in Table 7, which is intended to convey standard operating demands and capacity).




**Talbot County Water Resources Element**

## Map 3. Public Sewer Systems

0 1 2 Miles

**Legend**

**Public Sewer Service Status**

- Existing - 2 years
- Beyond 2 years

**Table 7. Public Sewer System Demand and Capacity, 2007**

| | | Region II (St. Michaels) | Region V (Tilghman) | Easton[4] | Oxford | Trappe[5] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Current System Capacity | MGD | 0.66 | 0.15 | 4.00 | 0.10 | 0.20 |
| | EDU | 2,640 | 600 | 16,000 | 416 | 800 |
| Current Average Daily Flow | MGD | 0.37 | 0.09 | 2.65 | 0.09 | 0.15 |
| | EDU | 1,460 | 368 | 10,596 | 360 | 582 |
| Current Net Available Capacity | MGD | 0.30 | 0.06 | 1.35 | 0.01 | 0.05 |
| | EDU | 1,180 | 232 | 5,404 | 56 | 218 |
| System Capacity, 2030[1] | MGD | 0.66 | 0.15 | 4.00 | 0.10 | 0.20 |
| | EDU | 2,640 | 600 | 16,000 | 416 | 800 |
| Total Projected New Demand, 2008-2030 | MGD | 0.16 | 0.06 | 0.39 | <0.01 | 0.13 |
| | EDU | 648 | 256 | 1,577 | 23 | 520 |
| **Total Demand, 2030** | **MGD** | **0.53** | **0.16** | **3.04** | **0.09** | **0.28** |
| | **EDU** | **2,108** | **624** | **12,173** | **383** | **1,102** |
| **Net Available Capacity, 2030** | **MGD** | **0.13** | **(0.01)** | **0.96** | **< 0.01** | **(0.08)** |
| | **EDU** | **532** | **(24)** | **3,827** | **33** | **(302)** |

*Notes:*
*1: Incorporates all ongoing or planned capacity upgrades.*
*2: Estimated. Assumes that new nonresidential development in Towns is 15% of residential development. See note in Table 4.*
*3: Source: Maryland Property View 2007 and Talbot County Water and Sewer Master Plan. Based on acreage of active non-residential properties, using 0.892 EDU per acre, the default value in the MDE nonpoint source model.*
*4: For Easton, 2007 Average Daily Flow includes existing flow, plus capacity committed to future development, based on the Town's WRE. Future demand assumes that effluent from the Hyde Park system will eventually be directed to the Easton WWTP.*
*5: For Trappe, future system capacity does not reflect the construction of a new 540,000 gpd WWTP for the Lakeside district, as described in the Town's WRE. Waste from this new facility would be discharged via spray irrigation.*

All of the County's major public sewer systems have available capacity to support some additional growth and development. The Region V WWTP does not appear to have adequate capacity to accommodate projected growth through 2030. The Trappe system would not have adequate capacity to support projected development, unless the proposed 540,000 gpd WWTP (and spray irrigation system) is built to support development in the Lakeside district.

## B. Nutrient Discharges

Nitrogen and phosphorus (more generally referred to as "nutrients") from WWTPs and from stormwater and other "non-point sources" are the primary contributors to degraded water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Local governments are required to identify suitable receiving waters for the discharge of additional stormwater and wastewater. One measure of suitable capacity is the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), a series of calculations required by the Clean Water Act. A TMDL is the maximum amount of pollutant that a water body, such as a river or a lake, can receive without impairing water quality. Water bodies are classified as "impaired" when they are too polluted or otherwise degraded to support their designated and existing uses. The TMDL is typically expressed as separate discharge limits from point sources such as WWTPs, as well as non-point sources such as stormwater or agricultural runoff.

The impaired waters list is called the 303(d) list, named after the section in the Act that establishes TMDLs. All of Talbot County's major watersheds are impaired for nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus and/or other impairments) and so are by definition not suitable receiving waters. Completed nutrient TMDLs are

not available for any of these watersheds[5] as of this writing, but are anticipated by the end of 2011 under an agreement between the US EPA and the State of Maryland.

## Point Source Caps

To address nutrient loads from point sources such as WWTPs, the state has established Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy point source caps. These caps are numerical limits on the amount of nitrogen and phosphorus that WWTPs can discharge to the Bay and its tributaries (expressed as pounds per year of nitrogen and phosphorus). Nitrogen and phosphorus point source caps have been established for the Region II and Easton WWTPs. A phosphorous cap has been established for the Trappe WWTP and a nitrogen cap has been established for the Oxford WWTP.

## Point Source Discharges

Table 8 lists nutrient caps (either Tributary Strategy Point Source Caps or TMDLs), as well as existing and projected future nutrient discharges for the County's major WWTPs. This Water Resources Element assumes that by 2030, the Region V and Oxford WWTPs will both be upgraded to BNR technology, and that the Trappe WWTP would be upgraded to ENR. Such upgrades are not yet planned, but will likely be necessary to support projected growth.

**Table 8. Projected Point Source Nutrient Discharges, 2030**

| | | Region II | Region V | Easton[3] | Oxford | Trappe |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Existing Nutrient Loads | TN[1] | 5,000 | 5,000 | 23,800 | 4,900 | 4,900 |
| | TP[1] | 603 | 1,700 | 2,400 | 1,600 | 183 |
| Likely Nutrient Caps, 2030 | TN | 8,040 | 4,406 | 48,729 | 5,621 | 6,100 |
| | TP | 603 | 457 | 3,655 | 457 | 183 |
| Projected ADF, 2030 | MGD | 0.53 | 0.16 | 3.00 | 0.10 | 0.28 |
| Assumed Treatment Technology, 2030 | | ENR | BNR | ENR | BNR | ENR |
| Estimated Nutrient Discharges, 2030[2] | TN | 4,810 | 3,794 | 27,415 | 2,330 | 1,328 |
| | TP | 481 | 948 | 2,742 | 583 | 251 |
| **Remaining Discharge Capacity** | **TN** | **3,230** | **612** | **21,314** | **3,291** | **4,772** |
| | **TP** | **122** | **(491)** | **913** | **(126)** | **(68)** |

*Notes:*
*1: TN = Total Nitrogen (lbs/year); TP = Total Phosphorus (lbs/year)*
*2: Assumes discharge concentrations of 3 mg/L TN and 0.3 mg/L TP for ENR; 8 mg/L TN and 2 mg/L TP for BNR. Assumes that only flows to the existing Trappe WWTP would discharge to surface water. New development in the Lakeside district would discharge via spray irrigation.*
*3: Assumes that the Hyde Park system will be connected to the Easton system by 2030*

Upgrade of the Region V WWTP would trigger the establishment of a nutrient cap for that facility. As shown in Table 8, the default cap for minor facilities (those that discharge less than 0.5 MGD) is 6,100 lbs/year of nitrogen and 457 lbs/year phosphorus, although MDE's discharge permit may reflect a lower cap, based on the agency's site-specific analysis. The Region V facility may need to go beyond BNR or consider alternative effluent disposal methods (see below) to meet the phosphorus cap. A similar situation may exist for the upgraded Oxford WWTP by 2030.

Even with ENR upgrades, it appears that the Trappe WWTP will not be able to meet the very stringent phosphorus cap imposed by the TMDL for La Trappe Creek—the WWTP's current discharge point. In evaluating WWTP upgrades and expansions to accommodate new growth, the Town of Trappe may therefore need to consider relocation of its outfall pipe, or alternative effluent disposal methods.

[5] A phosphorus TMDL has been completed for a portion of La Trappe Creek—a tributary of the Lower Choptank River—which impacts the Trappe WWTP. However, the TMDL for the Lower Choptank River as a whole has not been completed.

The Region II and Easton WWTPs have adequate nitrogen and phosphorus discharge capacity to support projected growth through 2030 and beyond.

### Antidegradation

Maryland's antidegradation policy significantly limits new discharge permits that would degrade water quality in Tier II (high quality) waters, as defined by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (MDE 2008). In these areas, new nutrient discharges can be permitted, as long as they do not degrade existing water quality. Maryland does not have any waters designated for Tier III, but MDE has identified four stretches of Tier II waters in Talbot County, as shown in Map 4: portions of Highfield Creek, Jadwins Creek, Kings Creek, and Skipton Creek. None of the WWTPs listed in Table 8 discharge to Tier II waters.

## C. Alternative Wastewater Disposal Options

A number of other opportunities exist to protect and improve water quality while still accommodating projected growth and development. This section summarizes key concepts that the County and its municipalities may wish to consider.

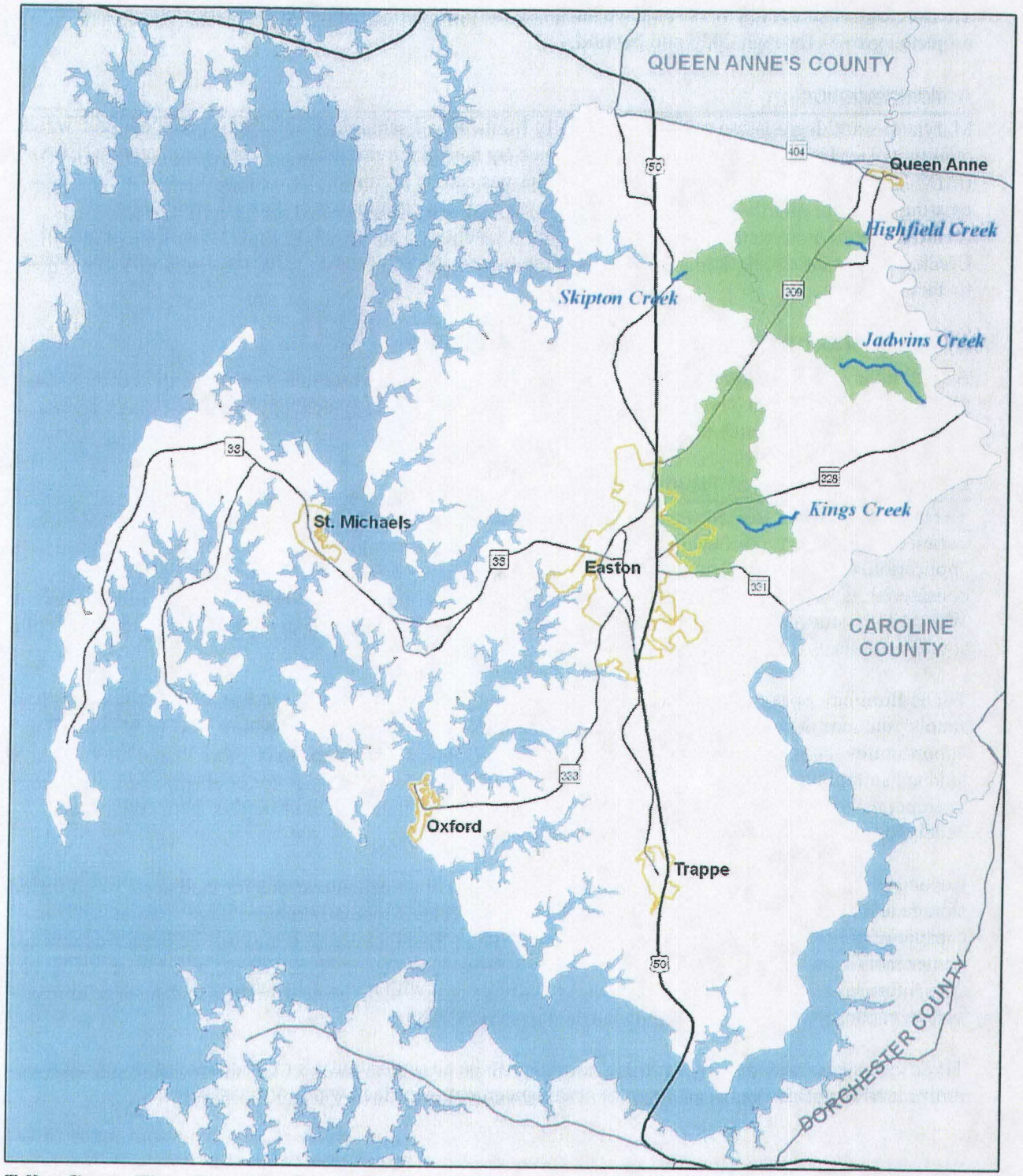
### Land Application of Treated Wastewater

The application of treated wastewater effluent directly to the soil can allow pollutants to be absorbed before the effluent reaches receiving streams. Spray irrigation is the most common form of land application, although other options (such as drip irrigation or subsurface discharge) can also be considered. Spray irrigation is already used as a disposal method for the Martingham and Preserve at Wye Mills systems, and may be appropriate for larger public systems in addition to, or instead of point source outfalls.

The Preliminary Spray Irrigation Site Capacity Estimate tool provided in Models and Guidelines #26, the state's guidance document for the preparation of the Water Resources Element, was used to analyze opportunities for spray irrigation in Talbot County. Based on this analysis, more than 53,000 acres of land are suitable for more detailed investigation to determine suitability for land application. Factors such as slope, soil depth and granularity, water table depth and behavior, and buffers from streams and developed areas are important in determining true suitability.

Beyond soil and water table characteristics, other important considerations for land application include storage and seasonal restrictions. Land application systems typically require large storage lagoons capable of holding several months' worth of effluent. Land application may not be permitted during winter months, when frozen soil cannot accept effluent, or during other months when water tables rise. Any future land application system would likely be paired with the nearby surface discharge to maximize system capacity without exceeding nutrient caps or TMDLs.

Those caveats notwithstanding, there does appear to be an opportunity for public wastewater systems to utilize land application as an alternative or enhancement to surface water discharge.




**Talbot County Water Resources Element**

## Map 4. Tier II Waters

0 1 2 4 Miles

**Legend**

Tier II Segments

Municipalities

Tier II Watersheds

*Source: MDE*

# V. Programmatic Assessment of Nonpoint Source Policies

Nonpoint sources of nutrient pollution include agricultural run off, erosion and sediment from development, stormwater runoff from roads, atmospheric deposition, and any other source other than an outfall pipe. These sources are called nonpoint because they involve widely dispersed activities, and hence are difficult to measure. All non-point sources of pollution eventually reach the waters of the Chesapeake Bay unless filtered or retained by some structural or nonstructural technique. BayStat reports that farms are the largest contributor to nonpoint nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment loads statewide, though the pounds per year have declined precipitously since 1995. Stormwater runoff from developed land is also a significant contributor but has remained steady or increased over the same period.

Various technologies reduce nutrients from agricultural and developed lands. Nutrient reduction technologies for nonpoint source pollution are generally referred to as "Best Management Practices" (BMPs). Examples of these technologies include animal waste storage, agricultural nutrient management planning, stormwater settling ponds, and erosion controls. Natural controls or "low-impact development techniques are extremely effective in reducing the amount of pollutants that reach waterways. Woodlands and wetlands release fewer nutrients into the Bay than any other land use. For these reasons, forests, grasslands, and wetlands are critical to restoring and maintaining the health of the aquatic environment.

This section characterizes the policies and procedures in place to manage nonpoint source pollution in Talbot County.

## A. Maryland Stormwater Design Manual

The 2000 Maryland Stormwater Design Manual, Volumes I & II is incorporated by reference into the Talbot County Code, and serves as the official guide for stormwater methods, principles, and practices.

The 2007 Maryland Stormwater Management Act mandates substantial revision of the Stormwater Design Manual. The most notable provision of the 2007 Act is the requirement that new development use Environmentally Sensitive Design (ESD) techniques, which are intended to "maintain pre-development runoff characteristics" on the site.[6] ESD emphasizes the minimization and treatment of stormwater on each parcel through a variety of small-scale techniques that mimic natural stormwater absorption and dispersal processes.

As of early 2009, the revised Maryland Stormwater Design Manual and accompanying model regulations are available in draft form. The County should revise its Stormwater Management Ordinance to incorporate the forthcoming revision of the Maryland Stormwater Design Manual and other enhanced stormwater management policies recommended by MDE, pursuant to the Stormwater Management Act of 2007.

## B. Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan

Talbot County's 2005 Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) was adopted as an amendment to the 1996 Comprehensive Plan, and contains numerous goals, policies, and implementation actions, many of which address issues similar to those analyzed as part of this WRE. The overall vision of the LPPRP is consistent with the Water Resources Element:

> *Promote and maintain a well-planned pattern of compatible and efficient utilization of land and water resources which concentrates development only in areas where environmental impacts will be minimized.*

[6] Source: MDE. http://www.mde.state.md.us/assets/document/act%20-%20a%20state%20perspective.pdf

Most of the LPPRP's more specific goals, policies, and implementation strategies are reflected in other chapters of the Comprehensive Plan, particularly Chapter 6 (Rural and Agricultural Conservation) and Chapter 9 (Parks and Recreation). In addition, there are LPPRP recommendations related to land preservation that support the overall goals, policies, and implementation recommendations of this Water Resources Element.

## C. Other Nonpoint Source Management Policies and Considerations

### Septic Denitrification

As of 2009, approximately 75 residential and commercial septic systems in Talbot County had denitrification units. The County Department of Public Works' objective is to maximize use of the state's Bay Restoration Fund.

Maryland Senate Bill 554 (from the 2009 legislative session) now requires all new development on septic systems in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area to include Best Available Technology (BAT) for nitrogen removal, as defined by MDE.[7] The County does not currently require denitrification units for new septic systems, but may wish to consider similar requirements in other areas, such as near perennial waterways, or in watersheds that are impaired by nitrogen. Indeed, septic denitrification can be one approach to meeting TMDL requirements.

Projections for nonpoint source analysis assumes that half of all new rural (i.e., not connected to a public sewer system) residential and commercial development will utilize denitrification units, and that denitrification retrofits will continue through 2030.

### Stormwater Retrofits

Stormwater retrofits can help to reduce nonpoint source pollution, particularly in more densely developed areas. The County should identify locations where such retrofits could address concentrations of nonpoint source pollution ("hot spots"), or where retrofits can help to protect environmentally sensitive areas. Future retrofit funds and implementation activities should be targeted to these priority areas.

### Sedimentation and Erosion

Sedimentation and other impacts resulting from construction activity, and increased stormwater flows to streams and rivers from development are also a potential threat to water quality. Most new non-agricultural development in Talbot County requires a sedimentation and erosion control plan.

### Open Section Roads

Outside of towns and populated areas where pedestrian facilities are a priority, new roads in the County should continue to be developed with open sections (i.e., without curb and gutter), to better disperse stormwater.

## A. Impervious Surface

Impervious surfaces are primarily human-made surfaces that do not allow rainwater to enter the ground. Impervious cover creates runoff that can cause stream bank erosion, sedimentation of streams, and adverse effects on water quality and aquatic life. The amount of impervious surface in a watershed is a key indicator of water quality. Water quality in streams tends to decline as watersheds approach ten percent impervious coverage, and drops sharply when the watershed approaches 25 percent impervious coverage. Table 11 summarizes existing and potential impervious coverage in Talbot County by watershed.

[7] More information is available at: http://www.mde.state.md.us/Water/CBWRF/osds/brf_bat.asp

Countywide, more than three percent of all land is impervious. Even in Talbot County's most developed watersheds—the Miles River and Lower Choptank River—impervious surface coverage is under five percent. Under the land use and development scenarios considered in this Element, countywide impervious coverage would increase slightly by 2030, with most 8-digit watersheds experiencing some increase in impervious coverage.

While none of the County's major watersheds would approach ten percent impervious—the first tipping point with regard to water quality—some smaller sub-watersheds (particularly those in and around municipalities) may already approach or exceed such thresholds. In these cases, stormwater management retrofits can help to reduce the impact of large amounts of impervious surface.

**Table 11: Impervious Coverage**

| Watershed | Total Acreage[1] | *Impervious Surface* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Existing | | 2030 | |
| | | Acres | Percent | Acres | Percent |
| Eastern Bay | 2,870 | 55 | 1.9% | 56 | 2.0% |
| Lower Chesapeake Bay | 142 | 1 | 0.4% | 1 | 0.4% |
| Lower Choptank River | 68,521 | 3,157 | 4.6% | 3,352 | 4.9% |
| Miles River | 27,368 | 1,225 | 4.5% | 1,256 | 4.6% |
| Tuckahoe Creek | 15,583 | 209 | 1.3% | 230 | 1.5% |
| Upper Choptank River | 36,371 | 717 | 2.0% | 810 | 2.2% |
| Wye River | 20,811 | 271 | 1.3% | 292 | 1.4% |
| **Total** | **171,666** | **5,634** | **3.3%** | **5,997** | **3.5%** |

*Notes:*
*1: Excludes areas of open water within County boundaries.*

# VI. Water Resources Policies and Actions

This section describes policies and implementation strategies that the County should pursue in order to achieve the goals of this Water Resources Element.

1. Work with MDE, MGS, and USGS to complete the Coastal Plain Aquifer Study, and use the results of this study to guide future decisions regarding groundwater withdrawals.
2. Work with MDE to identify new sources of drinking water, specifically by evaluating the quality and quantity of water in the County's deeper and less frequently used aquifers.
3. Review the County's building and land development codes to ensure that water conserving fixtures and appliances are required for all new development and retrofits outside of public water systems.
4. Consider requiring all new development outside of existing or planned public sewer service areas to use septic denitrification systems.
5. Continue to use the County's share of Bay Restoration Fund payments to install approximately 100 denitrification units per year on existing septic systems, concentrating on septic systems in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area.
6. Update the County's Water and Sewer Master Plan to reflect revised population and public water/sewer system data.
7. Continue to identify areas where failing septic systems or other public health concerns exist, and work with municipalities to extend public water and/or sewer service to existing lots of record. The County will work with the municipalities to identify and prioritize areas of failing septic systems and other nonpoint source pollution "hot spots".

8. Work with MDE to investigate options for upgrading the Region V WWTP to BNR or ENR technology.
9. Work with municipalities implement alternative wastewater disposal methods, such as land application of treated wastewater.
10. Amend the County's Stormwater Management ordinance to incorporate by reference the Maryland Stormwater Design manual, as revised by MDE to reflect provisions of the Stormwater Management Act of 2007—including the required use of Environmental Site Design for new development.
11. Work with MDE, DNR, and the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) to assist farmers in adopting and improving Best Management Practices to reduce nonpoint source loads of nutrients and other pollutants.
12. Continue to support land preservation activities such as MALPF and Rural Legacy, and specifically encourage activities such as easements by private conservation organizations, on land that drains to Tier II waterways and in sub-watersheds where impervious coverage approaches or exceeds 10 percent.
13. As part of future Comprehensive Plan updates, thoroughly review and update the County's population projections, and re-run the nonpoint source loading analysis, incorporating up-to-date land use data and nutrient loading rates.
14. Revise the Water and Sewer Plan to reflect the updated water and wastewater system data included in this WRE, as well as revised population and housing unit projections (as appropriate).
15. Consider participating in a regional water resources committee, along with MDE, MDP, and neighboring counties. The purpose of such a committee would be to coordinate information and decisions involving groundwater, surface water discharges (particularly to shared rivers such as the Choptank), and growth and development.
16. Encourage increases in tree canopy cover for its water quality, stormwater reduction, aesthetic and property value improvement.