

# Communities Taking Action for Weathering Change

Out of Harm's Way Forum  
August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012

*The Partnership for the Delaware Estuary would like to recognize and commend the following communities for signing on to 'Take Action for Weathering Change!'*

## **LEWES, DELAWARE**

Lewes, Delaware was the first community to sign on to 'Take Action for Weathering Change.' Lewes had already undergone an extensive natural hazards and climate change adaptation process. Since it is a coastal town, Lewes is familiar with natural hazards—in particular, with flooding and storms. A 2000 study reported that one-third of all Lewes parcels are within the FEMA 100-year floodplain, and that such an event could cause \$23.8 million in damages in the town. As a result of its experiences with natural hazards, and with help from FEMA's Project Impact, Lewes developed a mitigation planning team in 2002 to look into hazard mitigation options and develop a strategy to address issues. Incorporating climate change risks was a logical extension of the process. In August 2011, with guidance from Delaware Sea Grant, Lewes completed a Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Action Plan, a document whose planning process engaged the entire town. The Action Plan explored how climate change would exacerbate natural hazards, assessed the town's vulnerability to different impacts, and considered how to integrate its results into Lewes' planning and zoning strategy. In order to determine the impacts of greatest concern to Lewes, the community used a prioritization process to determine the resources that Lewes felt were most important to protect. The entirety of Lewes' Hazard Mitigation and Adaptation Action Plan can be found at <http://www.ci.lewes.de.us/Hazard-Mitigation-Climate-Adaptation-Action-Plan/>. Work on the action plan is ongoing, and is reported on quarterly through the town's hazard mitigation team, which is led by Mayor Jim Ford.

## **WILMINGTON, DELAWARE**

Wilmington, Delaware is literally a Cool City—it was designated in 2007 by a national Sierra Club effort as a city striving to use clean energy and reduce carbon emissions. Mayor Baker and city staff are invested in making Wilmington sustainable and green, and lowering the city's carbon footprint. The City even has special webpages dedicated to helping residents and business 'live green.' So it should come as no surprise that Wilmington stepped up to 'Take Action for Weathering Change!' Reducing our carbon footprint is of paramount importance for our future; however, addressing climate change impacts is imperative to the immediate health and well-being of our communities. The Wilmington water and wastewater utility has already recognized this by participating in an EPA pilot on Climate-Ready Utilities' Climate Resilience Evaluation and Awareness Tool (CREAT) in April 2012. The CREAT tool demonstrated how to obtain up-to-date information on rainfall and

temperature in a given location, and how to apply scenarios to planning efforts for vulnerable resources. You can learn more about Wilmington's 'Green City' efforts at <http://www.wilmingtonde.gov/government/greencity>.

## **CHESTER, PENNSYLVANIA**

Chester, Pennsylvania agreed to 'Take Action for Weathering Change' by resolution of city council on June 27, 2011. Chester is currently engaged in a risk assessment and climate adaptation process facilitated by Pennsylvania Sea Grant and a host of partners. Chester is no stranger to the devastating impacts of storms—in 1971, a flood ravaged the city, killing eight people and destroying over 130 businesses and 700 homes. As a result of its past experiences, Chester is uniquely sensitive to flooding and the need for stormwater management, and recognizes that climate change will exacerbate existing threats (as well as pose new threats for the community). Climate change will also intensify other community well-being issues in Chester, whose population is already vulnerable due to poverty, lack of services, and other social and economic stresses. Chester's commitment to adaptation planning should stand as a model to other underserved communities interested in envisioning a better and more resilient future.

## **MAURICE RIVER TOWNSHIP, NEW JERSEY**

Maurice River Township (MRT) is a community on the South Jersey Bayshore that is bounded by the Maurice and Delaware Rivers, and shares over two-thirds of its land with the Pine Barrens. MRT recently embarked on an adaptation planning project with The Nature Conservancy to discern its greatest vulnerabilities and learn about managing climate change impacts. As a result of its close economic and cultural ties with the Maurice and Delaware Rivers, MRT is very aware of the value of its natural environment. MRT has both an environmental committee and a Sustainable Jersey Green Team. Mayor Kathy Ireland signed on to 'Take Action for Weathering Change' in the summer of 2012.