

## Overview

Basic awareness of issues facing the Delaware Estuary is often not enough to motivate the general public to take personal steps to help improve the estuary. A healthy estuary depends, in part, on convincing watershed residents to "turn education into action." We attempted such an approach with an interactive exhibit at Delaware's Coast Day on October 5, 2008.

## Coast Day

Coast Day is held every year on the first Sunday in October at the University of Delaware's Hugh R. Sharp Campus in Lewes, Delaware. The 32nd annual event hosted nearly 11,000 visitors who enjoyed hands-on exhibits, lectures, ship and laboratory tours, crab races, seafood cooking demonstrations and contests, and a boat show. The theme for the 2008 edition of Coast Day was Coastal Challenges — Coastal Solutions.



2008 Coast Day Logo

## Special Exhibit

At the heart of each Coast Day is an educational exhibit that follows the event's main theme for that year. The 2008 exhibit was titled "Are You Up to the Challenge?" It was designed to help visitors learn more about how their actions affect the environment. In addition to educating visitors, the exhibit was aimed at motivating them to take specific actions in their daily lives to reduce their environmental impacts.



We elected to take the passport approach in response to advice from social marketing experts who indicate that people who pledge to take specific actions are more likely to actually implement those actions than if they simply learned about actions they could take.

## Coastal Challenge Stations

The exhibit was set up in a room (see diagram at right) where visitors passed through four stations that focused on different coastal challenges. After learning about each challenge, visitors could choose a few actions in their passport that they were willing to take to help address the challenge. They also could write their own ideas in the passport. After pledging to take action, visitors could get their passport stamped before moving on to the next station.

## Passport Checkpoints

After visiting each of four stations, visitors pledged in their passport to take personal actions related to the station. They then could decorate their passport with stamps provided. Each passport checkpoint featured a different stamp.

## Results

The exhibit area was continuously inundated with visitors during the six-hour event. Visitors — especially children — appeared to enjoy the passport/pledge approach. The passport offered several simple actions that could be taken, potentially removing perceptions that some environmental issues are too big for one person to solve.

## Next Steps

We did not incorporate a way to determine whether visitors actually took the actions to which they agreed. We hope to continue testing this approach, perhaps with local teachers who might be able help us track whether the passport/pledge approach motivates people to act upon what they learn.

# Passport to Personal Action in Delaware Bay

Lisa Tossey, Ron Ohrel, Tammy Beeson, Elizabeth Boyle, and Kimberly Doucette

University of Delaware College of Marine and Earth Studies and Delaware Sea Grant College Program  
222 S. Chapel Street, Room 103, Newark, DE 19716; marinecom@udel.edu

COLLEGE OF  
MARINE & EARTH STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF  
DELAWARE

Sea Grant  
Delaware

