

## Introduction to the Integrated Guidance Concept

Tidal shorelines are the site of complex interactions between terrestrial and aquatic systems. These areas have values that far outweigh their relative size in the larger ecosystem. They are exceptionally important habitat for a wide variety of organisms, some living primarily on land, others that live in water, and a few that are found only in the intertidal zone between land and water. Tidal shoreline systems provide important filtration capacity for materials carried in runoff and groundwater. They are uniquely valued by human users of coastal systems.

In Virginia, tidal shoreline systems are managed in small segments, rather than as a whole unit. Local governments implementing the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act manage the riparian zone, intertidal areas fall under the purview of local wetland boards, and the subaqueous environment is the responsibility of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission. Each of these programs tends to seek avoidance of impacts in areas under their jurisdiction. This preference for the status quo can be in conflict with shoreline management that optimizes the tradeoffs in public and private benefits.

Recognition that particular shoreline management options may not be uniformly desirable from different regulatory perspectives means coordination among management agencies will be essential. The basis for coordination is logically the rationale for establishment of the various regulatory programs – sustaining public benefits from environmental services. The desire to maintain the capacity of the natural system to do things that are important and valuable to the general citizenry of the Commonwealth underpins the riparian, intertidal and subaqueous lands management programs operating in Virginia. These programs uniformly seek to accommodate private development interests within the broader goal of sustaining ecological services.

There are currently a variety of guidelines developed by local and state programs managing shoreline development activities. These include the Virginia Marine Resources Commission guidelines for tidal wetlands, subaqueous lands and coastal primary sand dunes. In addition, the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Division and Shoreline Erosion Advisory Service have both issued guidelines for riparian land management. There are, however, no comprehensive guidelines that synthesize the objectives of all these programs.

It has become increasingly apparent that in order to reduce the cumulative and secondary impacts of activities within the multiple jurisdictions and multiple management programs affecting the littoral and riparian zones, better coordination and integration of policies and practices is necessary. It may be possible to address the gap of the jurisdictional limitations of the various programs that manage the shoreline by providing enhanced technical guidance to promote integrated management decision-making.