CHAPTER 6 - NATURAL RESOURCES AND SENSITIVE AREAS

Introduction

Caroline County is blessed with abundant valuable natural resources that contribute to the County's pleasant quality of life. We get glimpses of the life that coexists with us just beyond our backyards when we see a fish jump in the river and deer feeding in fields at the highway's edge. These life forms have basic needs for the shelter and sustenance provided by the natural environment. Maintaining the natural components that support the area's diversity of life requires us to consider the impacts of growth and development on the area's natural resources and environmental quality – to make it an issue of public concern. The adverse effects of increased population and physical development can manifest themselves in the natural environment in many ways, including:

- Loss of trees and natural vegetation;
- Degradation of wildlife habitats and diminished plant and animal populations;
- Loss of farmlands;
- Loss of essential wetlands and aquatic habitats;
- Contamination of groundwater for drinking supplies;
- Reduced surface water quality in streams, rivers, and the Bay;
- Disruption of natural water drainage systems;
- Increased air pollution and
- Loss of scenic natural views.

Environmental deterioration does not have to be an inevitable consequence of growth and development. For example, the construction of the new homes, businesses, industries, schools, and roads necessary to accommodate growth can occur without unduly threatening the area's environmental quality if steps are taken to ensure that new development is designed and implemented in an environmentally sensitive manner.

Some areas are much more susceptible to environmental degradation than others due to the presence or proximity of sensitive natural features. Therefore, future development should be directed away from sensitive environmental areas and towards areas where environmental impacts would be less severe. Regardless of location, all future developments should be subject to minimum performance standards for environmental protection and natural resource conservation.

Goals and Objectives

Goals

- Preserve and protect the Town's most vulnerable natural features, including streams, wooded areas, wildlife habitats, and other sensitive natural areas.

- Improve water quality in the Choptank River.

Objectives

- Protect 1) Streams and stream buffers, 2) 100-year floodplain, 3) endangered species habitats, and 4) steep slopes.

- Account for the effects of climate change and sea-level rise.

- Enforce proper stormwater management and sediment and erosion controls.

- Conserve forest and woodland resources.

- Ensure that all new developments and redevelopments minimize pollutant loadings and runoff from the site.

- Work with Caroline Country to protect and preserve the most valuable remaining ecological lands (Green Infrastructure) in and around the Town.

Chesapeake And Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area

Within the Town of Denton, environmentally sensitive areas are adjacent to the Choptank River, a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay. The Environment Article of the Maryland Annotated Code and the Code of Maryland Regulations required Denton and other local jurisdictions to develop a Critical Area Program to manage these natural resources in light of their relationship to water quality and habitat in the Chesapeake Bay.

The Critical Area Law evolved out of recognition by the State of Maryland General Assembly that the effects of human activity have resulted in deteriorating water quality and productivity of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. The restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries depends on improving water quality and minimizing adverse impacts to the natural habitats along the shoreline and adjacent lands. Therefore, the primary focus of this law is to provide for more sensitive development and conservation measures for shoreline development and uses for all land within 1,000 feet of the landward boundaries of the State or private wetlands and the heads of tide (mean high tide).

The Town of Denton Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Local Program was approved in 1988 and updated in 2022. Map 6-1 shows the area included in the Town's Critical Area Program. The Denton Critical Area Program establishes criteria and standards intended to accomplish the three protective goals of the Critical Area Act, namely:

- Minimize adverse impacts on water quality that result from pollutants that are discharged from structures or conveyances or that have runoff from surrounding lands;

- Conserve fish, wildlife, and plant habitat; and

- Establish land-use policies governing development in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area that accommodate growth and address the fact that, even if pollution is controlled, the number, movement, and activities of persons in that area can create adverse environmental impacts.

Sensitive Areas

The Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act of 1992 added provisions to the Land Use Article of the Annotated Maryland Code requiring the Denton Comprehensive Plan to contain a Sensitive Areas Element. The Sensitive Area Element included herein describes how the Town will protect the following sensitive areas:

- Streams and stream buffers;
- 100-year floodplains;
- Habitats of threatened and endangered species; and
- Steep slopes.

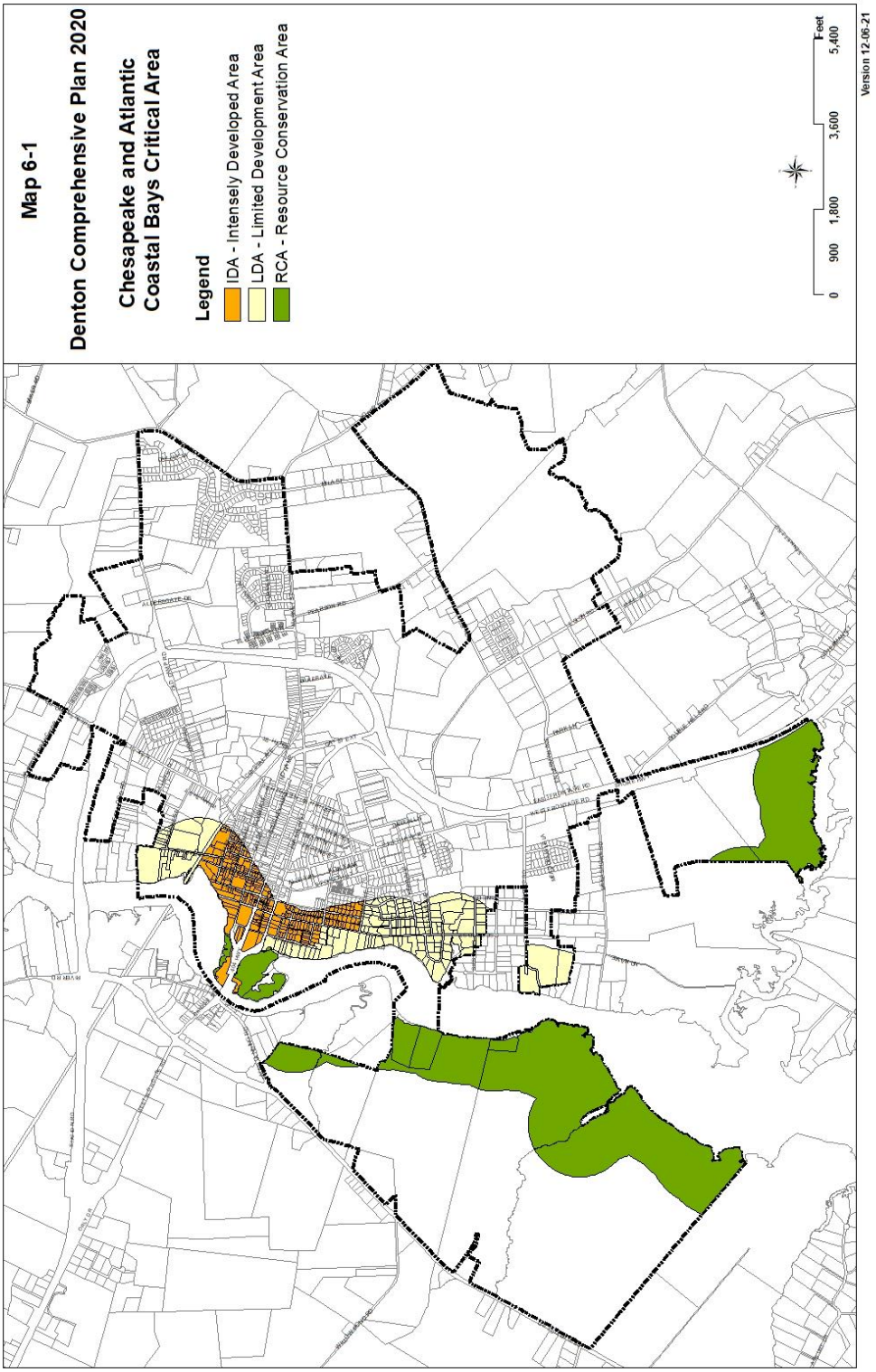
Performance standards to protect these sensitive resource areas have been included in the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations. These standards establish minimum protection levels for streams, wetlands, forests, wildlife habitats, and sensitive soils.

Streams and Stream Buffers

Streams are essential components of the natural environment. Streams support recreational fishing and serve as spawning areas for commercial fish stock. Development near stream areas subject to flooding can result in the loss of life and property. Streams and their adjacent buffers are home to countless species of animals and plants. Streams also are the transport medium moving valuable nutrients, minerals, and vitamins to rivers and creeks and, in turn, the Chesapeake Bay. The floodplains, wetlands, and wooded slopes along streams are essential to the ecosystem. Maryland designates especially valuable streams as Tier II water bodies. Two Tier II streams, Saulsbury and Watts Creeks, are along the Town's current boundary within the growth area and in the Town's Greenbelt.

Stream buffers serve as protection zones adjacent to streams (see Map 6-2). These buffers reduce sediment, nitrogen, phosphorous, and other runoff pollutants by acting as filters, thus minimizing stream damage when adequately managed. However, development activity that disturbs land and/or removes forest cover and natural vegetation in stream corridors negates buffer effectiveness, adversely affecting water quality. In addition, the cumulative loss of open space and natural growth throughout the stream corridors results in accelerated stormwater runoff carrying higher sediment loadings and nutrient pollution. Ideally, an effective buffer incorporates sensitive features, including steep slopes, highly erodible soils, wetlands, and floodplains. In addition, created buffers incorporate vegetation that is most effective at nutrient uptake and slowing runoff.

Map 6-1 Chesapeake Bays and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



Buffers also provide a habitat for wetlands and upland plants, forming the basis of healthy biological communities. Various animals use the natural vegetation as a corridor that supplies food and cover. A natural buffer system often connects the remaining forest patches to support wildlife movement.

The Town of Denton has established development standards to protect sensitive environmental areas that apply to all subdivisions and developments requiring site plan approval. These standards require retaining or creating natural buffers along all perennial and intermittent streams. Perennial streams require a 100-foot natural buffer, and intermittent streams require a no-disturbance 50-foot buffer. In addition, the minimum perennial stream buffers must be expanded to include contiguous one-hundred-year floodplain and nontidal wetlands, hydric soils, highly erodible soils, and soils on slopes greater than 15% to a maximum distance of 300 feet.

The Federal Clean Water Act requires the State of Maryland to identify water bodies that are high in quality (Tier II water bodies). Denton has two Tier II streams within its jurisdiction that require a 100-foot buffer and must comply with Maryland's antidegradation policy. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources notes that both streams have no assimilative capacity.

Denton's Critical Area Program requires a minimum 100-foot Buffer (spelled with a capital B) landward from mean high tide or the tidal extent of wetlands. This Buffer must be expanded to include contiguous sensitive areas. In addition, a 200-foot Buffer is required under specific conditions within Denton's Resource Conservation Area. The Critical Ara Buffer must be expanded to incorporate the following adjoining features as follows:

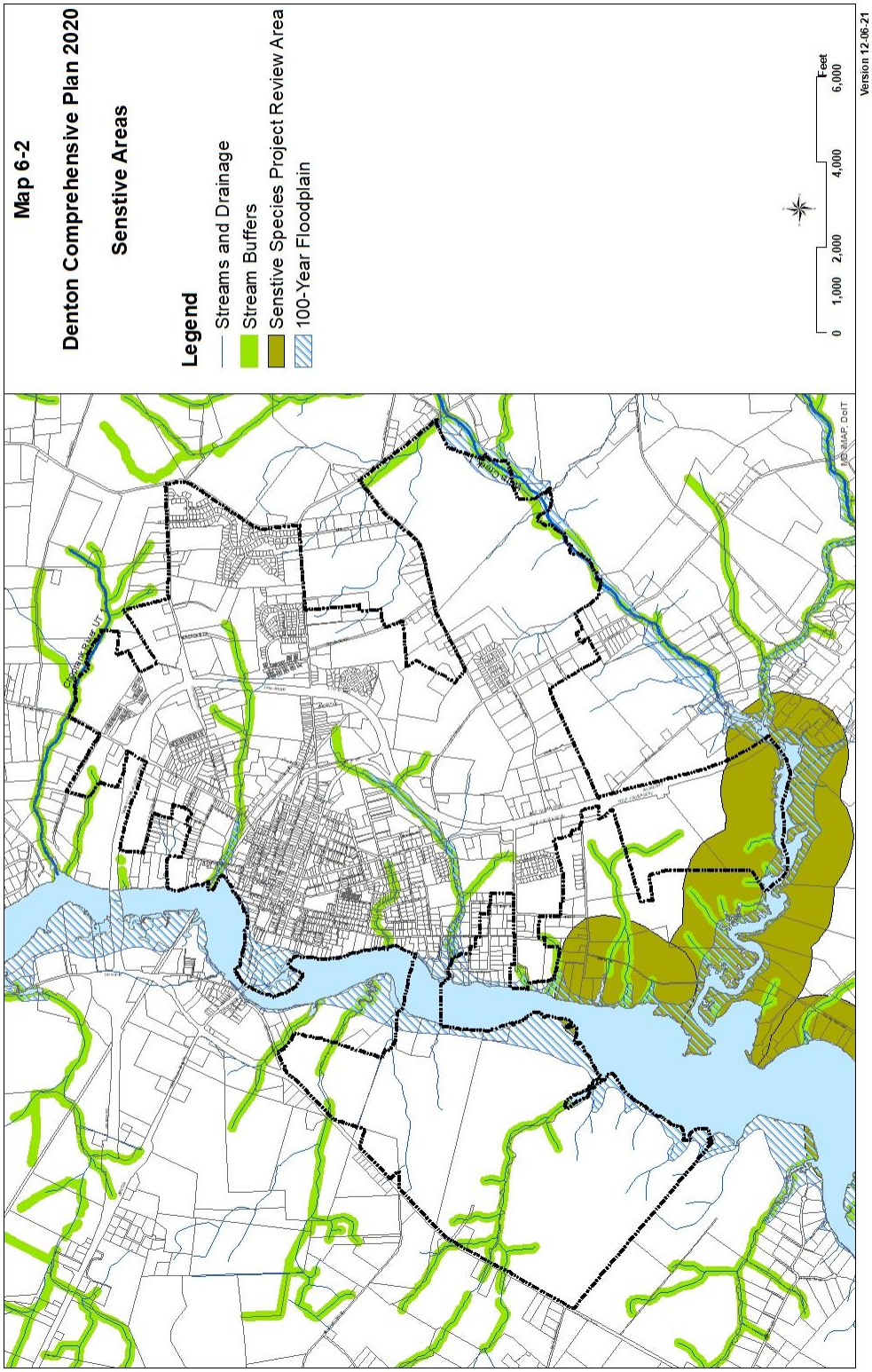
- Steep slopes at a rate of four feet for every one percent of the slope or to the top of the slope, whichever is greater,

- Nontidal Wetlands of Special State Concern to include the wetland and its regulated (by MDE) 100-foot buffer,

- Nontidal wetlands to the upland boundary of the nontidal wetland and

- Highly erodible and hydric soils to the landward edge of the soil or 300 feet, whichever is less.

Map 6-2 Sensitive Areas



100-Year Floodplain

Some areas of Denton are subject to periodic flooding, which poses risks to public health and safety and potential property loss. Flood and flood-related losses are created by inappropriately located structures that are inadequately elevated or otherwise unprotected and vulnerable to floods or development, which increases flood damage to other lands or development (see Map 6-2). While protection of life and property provided the initial basis for the protection of floodplains, there has been a growing recognition in recent years that limiting disturbances within floodplains can serve various public purposes.

Floodplains moderate and store floodwaters, absorb wave energies, and reduce erosion and sedimentation. Wetlands within floodplains help maintain water quality, recharge groundwater supplies, protect fisheries, and provide habitat and natural corridors for wildlife.

The minimum requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program do not prohibit development within the 100-year floodplain. However, to adhere to the minimum federal requirements, the Town requires development and new structures in the floodplain to meet flood protection measures. Measures include elevating the first floor of structures at least two feet above 100-year flood elevations and utilizing specified flood-proof construction techniques. Moreover, where alternative building sites on a parcel are available for construction outside the 100-year floodplain, construction in the floodplain is prohibited. These requirements are found in Chapter 58 of the Town code.

Habitats of Threatened and Endangered Species

Habitat destruction and degradation threaten an estimated 400 native Maryland species with extinction. The key to protecting threatened and endangered species is protecting the habitats in which they exist. The Maryland Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act (Natural Resources Article, 10-2A-01 through 06) provides definitions of threatened and endangered species. However, Maryland law and regulations do not currently define habitat. Therefore, as a basis for establishing protection measures for habitats of threatened and endangered species, habitat is defined in this Plan as "areas which, due to their physical or biological features, provide important elements for the maintenance, expansion, and long-term survival of threatened and endangered species listed in COMAR 08.03.08. Such areas may include breeding, feeding, resting, migratory, or overwintering areas".

Map 6-2 is the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) statewide vector file showing buffered areas that primarily contain habitat for rare, threatened, and endangered species and rare natural community types in and around Denton. It generally includes but does not explicitly delineate such regulated areas as Natural Heritage Areas, Wetlands of Special State Concern, Colonial Waterbird Colonies, and Habitat Protection Areas. This data layer was created to inform local jurisdictions and state agencies to assess environmental impacts and review potential development projects or land-use changes.

The Town requires that development (as described by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Natural Heritage Program) avoid rare, threatened, and endangered species habitats. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources must review proposed development projects. When a project is within a Wildlife Habitat (Sensitive Species Project Review Area or SSPRA), the developer must contact the Maryland Department of Natural Resources's Heritage and Biodiversity Conservation Program (HBCP) and address any comments and/or recommendations made by that State agency.

Steep Slopes

Slopes provide an environment that facilitates soil movement and pollutants when land disturbances occur. Steep slopes are associated with accelerated soil loss, resultant sedimentation, and pollution of streams. Control of erosion potential is usually achieved by regulation of development on steep slopes, limiting or prohibiting disturbance, and requiring stabilizing practices. For regulatory purposes, steep slopes should include at least any slope with a grade of 25 percent or more covering a contiguous area of 10,000 square feet or more.

Structure or impervious surface may not be placed on any slope with a grade of 15% or more covering a contiguous area of 10,000 square feet or more. On slopes between 15% and 25%, sound engineering practices must ensure sediment and erosion control and slope stabilization before, during, and after disturbance activities and minimize cut and fill. In addition, a minimum fifty-foot buffer must be established between the development and the crest of slopes of more than 25%. The buffer requirements are expanded within the Critical Area to incorporate steep slopes.

Other Natural Resource

In addition to the sensitive species the Land Use Article requires Denton to address, wetlands and forests are critical components of the natural systems in and around the Town that require thoughtful management to achieve the natural resource objectives (see Map 6-3). Therefore, a no-net-loss policy should apply to these natural features.

Nontidal Wetlands

Wetlands are transitional areas between permanently flooded deepwater environments and well-drained uplands. The water table is usually at or near the surface, or the land is covered by shallow water. Wetlands provide habitat for thousands of species of aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals. Tidal and nontidal wetlands are home to many fish, birds, reptiles, crabs, oysters, and other animals. In addition, they export organic matter that supports aquatic food webs in adjacent estuaries and helps protect inland areas from storm surges during tropical storms or hurricanes. They also protect and improve water quality and control flooding and erosion, benefiting people living in the watershed.

A twenty-five-foot setback from all nontidal wetlands (except for the conditions mentioned above concerning nontidal wetlands in the Critical Area) is required for all development around the extent

of the delineated nontidal wetland except as may be permitted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the State of Maryland, Department of Natural Resources, Nontidal Wetlands Division.

Forest

Protecting forests is an essential element of attaining Denton's natural resource objectives. Forested areas provide an array of benefits to the environment. For example, forest cover supports water quality protection, including sediment and erosion control, streambank stabilization, absorption of stormwater runoff, and reduction of nutrients and pollutants entering local water bodies. Forests also provide a wide range of habitats for protection and nesting and various food sources for many animals and aquatic ecosystems. In addition, tree cover helps protect the aquatic ecosystem from harmful temperature fluctuations by decreasing the amount of light that reaches the water's surface. The ability of the forest to decrease the amounts of sediments reaching surface water and the amount of erosion of banks, shorelines, and other areas also helps preserve the quality of aquatic habitats.

Forests also play a significant role in helping to reduce the levels of carbon dioxide (also known as a "greenhouse gas") in the atmosphere. Trees absorb carbon dioxide from the air and replace it with oxygen as they grow. The carbon is stored in tree trunks, branches, and leaves. While young, actively growing re-growth forests take in the most extensive amounts of carbon dioxide from the air, older and mature forests are an essential carbon storehouse.

The Forest Conservation Act of 1991 (Natural Resources Article, § 5-1601, et. seq.) was enacted to protect the forests of Maryland by making forest conditions and character an integral part of the site planning process. It is regulated by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources but implemented and administered by local governments. The Forest Conservation Act seeks to maximize the benefits of forests and slow the loss of forest land in Maryland while allowing development.

The Denton Forest Conservation Ordinance requires applications for subdivision and site plan, a grading permit, or a sediment control approval on units of land 40,000 square feet or greater to submit a forest stand delineation and a forest conservation plan. A qualified professional reviews forest stand delineation and forest conservation plans for the Town to ensure accuracy and compliance with the Town code.

The Ordinance establishes forest conservation thresholds for all land use categories. The forest conservation threshold sets the percentage of the net tract area. The reforestation requirement changes from 1/4 acre planted for each acre removed above the threshold to a ratio of 2 acres planted for each acre removed below the threshold. Each acre of forest retained above the applicable forest conservation threshold will be credited toward the total number of acres required to be reforested.

After reasonable efforts to minimize the cutting or clearing of trees and other woody plants have been exhausted, the forest conservation plan must provide for reforestation or payment into the forest conservation fund based on the following forest conservation thresholds:

Table 6-1 Forest Conservation Threshold Requirements	
Category of Use	**Threshold Percentage**
Agricultural and resource areas	50 percent
Institutional development areas	20 percent
High-density residential areas	20 percent
Mixed-use and planned unit development areas	15 percent
Commercial and industrial use area	15 percent
Source: Forest Conservation & Critical Area Program, Town of Denton	

If little or no forest exists on the site, the applicant must conduct afforestation on the lot or parcel. An agriculture or resource area tract having less than 20 percent of the net tract area in forest cover must be afforested up to at least 20 percent of the net tract area. Institutional development areas, high-density residential areas, mixed-use and planned unit development areas, and commercial and industrial use areas with less than 15 percent of net tract area in forest cover must be afforested up to at least 15 percent of the net tract area.

In 2009, Maryland enacted a "No Net Loss of Forestry Policy" and modified several provisions of the Forest Conservation Act, including:

- limiting the exemptions for forest clearing associated with a single lot, a linear project, and a dwelling house to a maximum disturbance of 20,000 square feet of a forest.

- limiting the exemption for constructing dwellings for owners and their children and eliminating authority for an owner's grandchildren.

- eliminating an exemption for previously developed areas covered by paved surfaces.

- authorizing the use of an off-site protective agreement that applies to temporarily protected forests as a mitigation practice for meeting afforestation or reforestation requirements.

- broadening the acceptable uses of State and local Forest Conservation Funds to include maintenance of existing forests and achieving urban tree canopy goals and

- requiring that priority be given to specified trees, shrubs, plants, and areas for retention and protection unless a variance is granted.

Related regulation altered the fee-in-lieu contribution rate to State and local conservation funds required under specified circumstances from 10 cents per square foot to 30 cents per square foot of the area of required planting until September 30, 2014. After September 30, 2014, the rate must be adjusted for inflation as determined annually by DNR via regulation.

Habitat Areas for Plant and Wildlife Diversity

The following are essential environmental areas for maintaining plant and wildlife diversity whose importance is related to their coverage extent. Man-induced impacts on these features are not strictly regulated except for those parts collocated with sensitive areas. Unlike forest conservation, for example, there are no threshold conservation requirements, even though most are valuable for the extent of the intact feature. The Department of Natural Resources provides the coverage shown on each map.

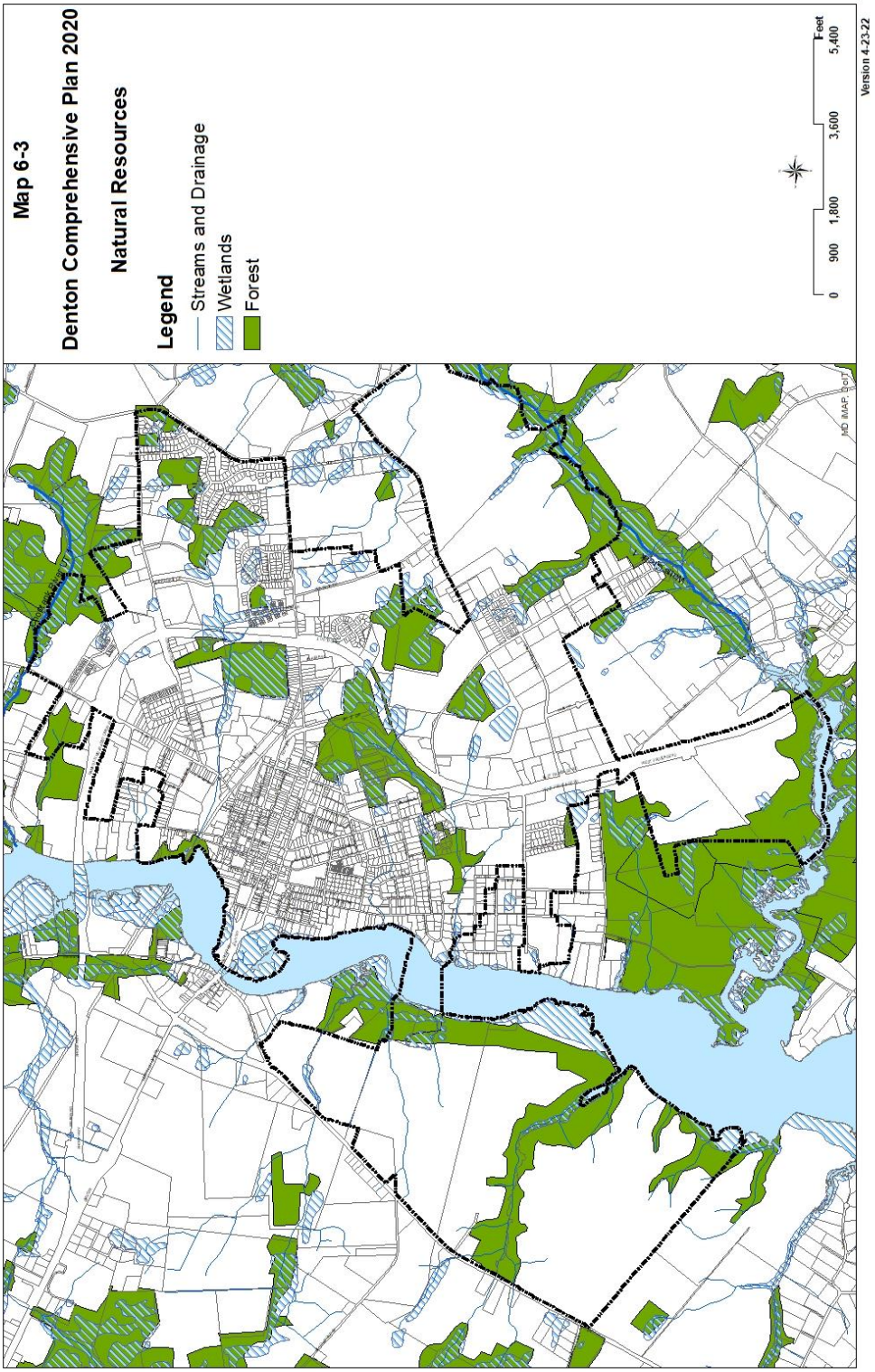
Green Infrastructure

"Green Infrastructure" is defined as lands critical to long-term ecological health. These lands provide the natural foundation needed to support a diverse plant and animal population and enable valuable natural processes, like filtering water, to take place. Maryland's green infrastructure has been mapped using sophisticated satellite imaging technology, with the results being reviewed by scientists, local government officials, and conservation groups. The first step in the mapping process identified the heart of green infrastructure, called "Green Hubs" (see Map 6-4). These are typically broad areas, hundreds of acres in size, vital to maintaining the County's vibrant and unique ecology. The second step is connecting hubs with "corridors" - linear remnants of natural land such as stream valleys that allow animals, seeds, and pollen to move from one area. They also protect the health of streams and wetlands by maintaining adjacent vegetation. Preserving linkages between the remaining habitat blocks will ensure the long-term survival and continued diversity of Maryland's plants, wildlife, and environment.

Protecting green infrastructure is vital in preventing the shrinking and fragmentation of undeveloped open space. Fortifying and restoring the green infrastructure can maximize the ecological potential of the landscape. In Green Hubs, distinctive wildlife will have access to a full range of habitats, enabling animals to flourish amidst vast stretches of protected lands. Green Hubs also reduce the stress placed on forests, helping to renew woodlands and prevent their collapse into isolated pockets of trees. Preserving linkages between the remaining significant habitat areas will help ensure the long-term survival and continued diversity of natural resources and the environment.

Natural systems do not follow political boundaries. Consequently, any efforts to manage adverse impacts on the natural environment must recognize the regional context for protection efforts and involve coordinated efforts at all levels of government to have any hope for success. State, County, and town strategies for environmental protection, including land acquisition and protective easements, should be based on coordinated resource protection strategies focusing on green infrastructure.

Map 6-3 Natural Resources



Biodiversity Conservation Network (BioNet)

The BioNet of Maryland layer systematically identifies and prioritizes ecologically essential lands to conserve Maryland's biodiversity (i.e., plants, animals, habitats, and landscapes). This dataset aggregates numerous separate layers hierarchically according to the BioNet Criteria Matrix (see Map 6-5).

Forest Interior Dwelling Bird Species (FIDS) Habitat

Many Forest Interior Dwelling Bird species (FIDS) populations are declining in Maryland and the eastern United States. The conservation of FIDS habitat is strongly encouraged by the Department of Natural Resources. Map 6-6 shows potential habitat for Forest Interior Dwelling Species in Maryland. These data are only the results of a model depicting where FIDS habitat might occur. This file was created for planning and analysis to conserve a group of species called Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS), known to require habitat conditions in the interior of forests for optimal reproduction and survival.

Targeted Ecological Areas (TEAs)

TEAs are lands and watersheds of high ecological value identified as conservation priorities by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for natural resource protection (see Map 6-7). These areas represent the most ecologically valuable areas in the State. Therefore, TEAs are preferred for conservation funding through Stateside Program Open Space.

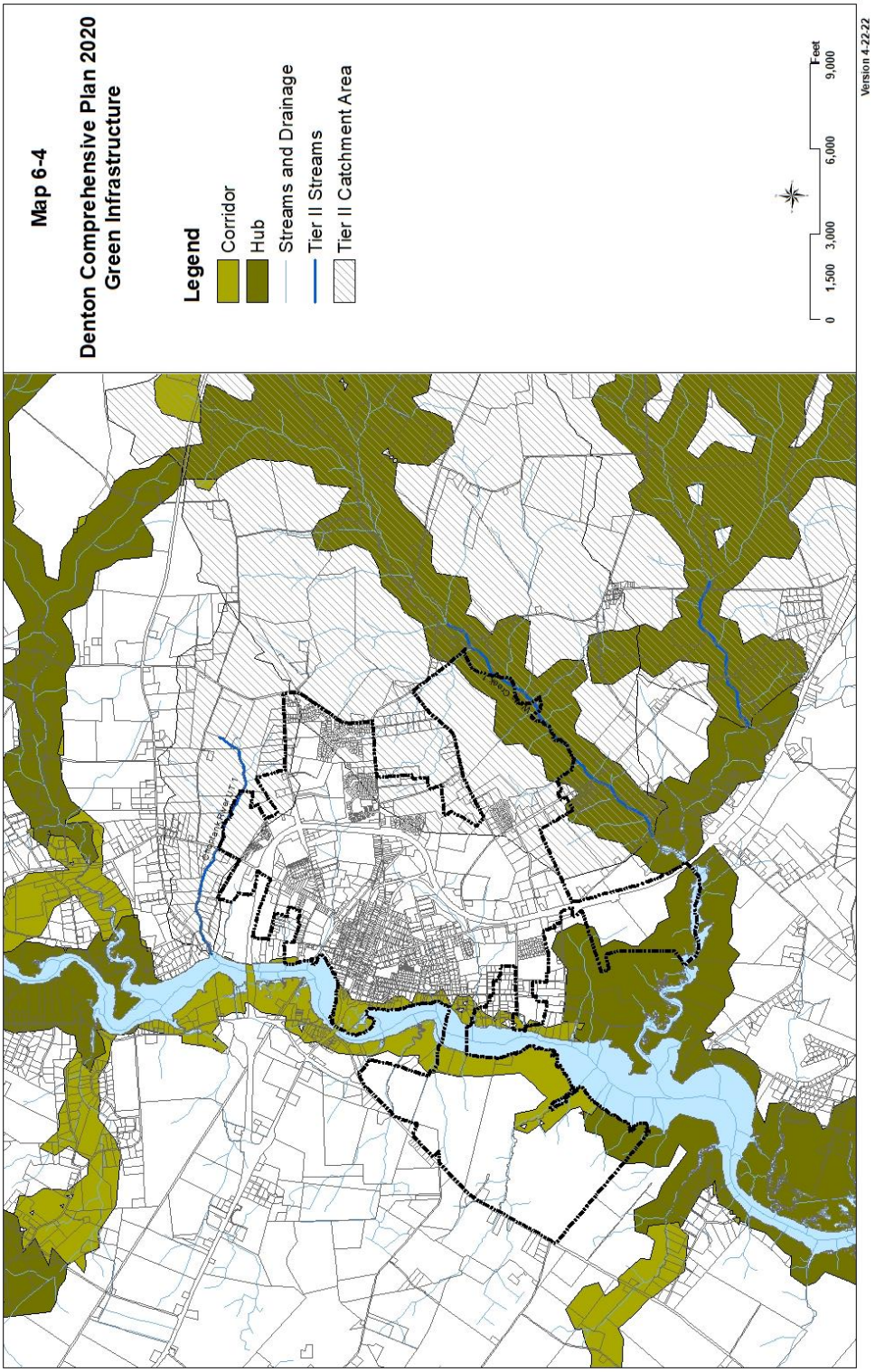
The first component is the updated Green Infrastructure Assessment (circa 2010), which identifies large, contiguous blocks (hubs) of significant forests and wetlands and their connecting corridors. The Green Infrastructure's habitat hub and corridor network allows plant and animal migration, reduces forest fragmentation if protected, and provides essential ecosystem services, such as biodiversity, cleaning air and water, storing nutrients, and protecting areas against storm and flood damage.

The rare species and wildlife habitat component identifies areas that support Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species, rare plant and animal communities, species of Greatest Conservation Need, and wildlife concentrations.

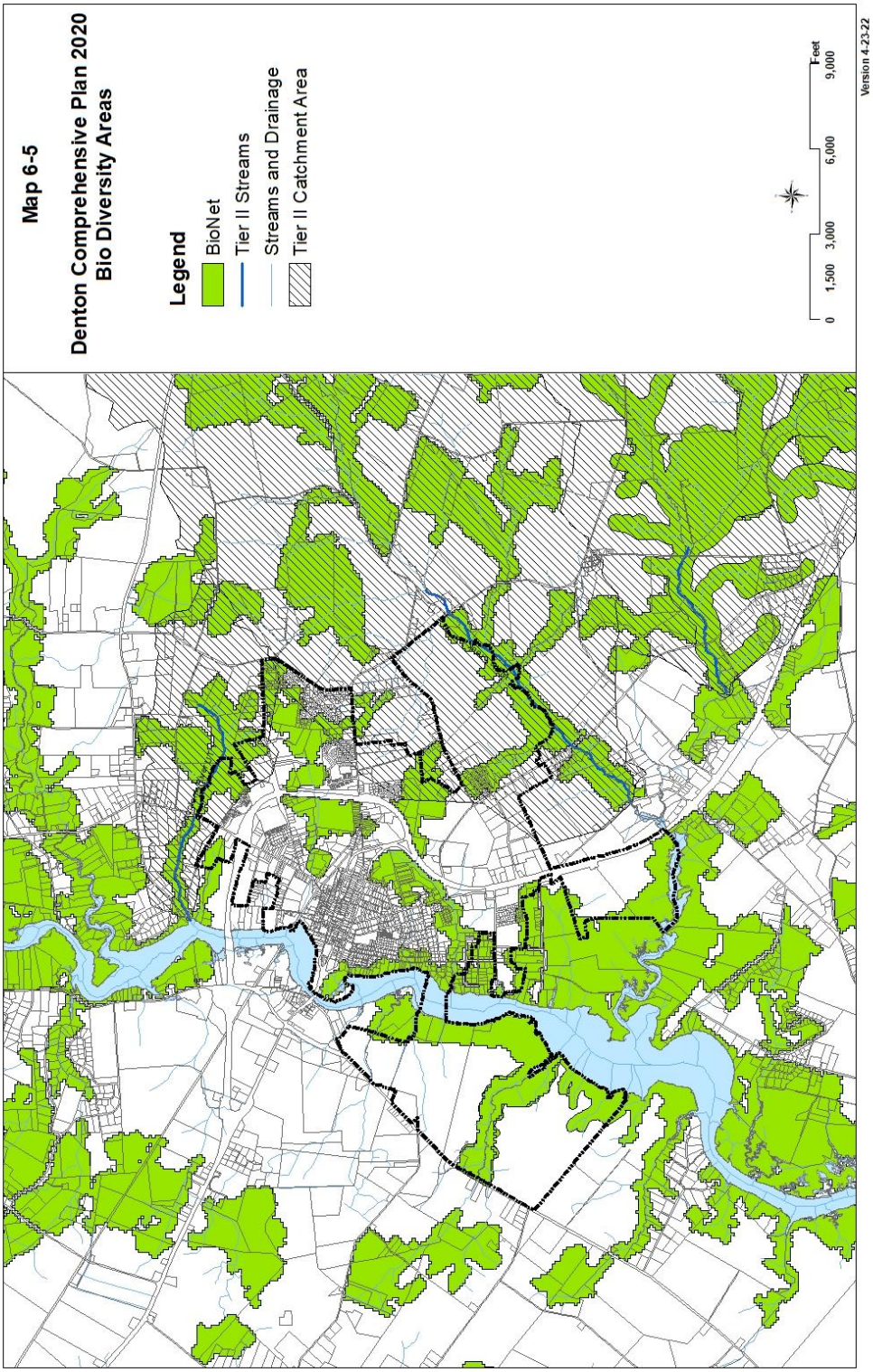
The aquatic life hotspots component identifies watersheds supporting freshwater stream ecosystems. Conservation is needed to protect and restore areas of high aquatic biodiversity, Tier II regulated streams, and brook trout streams.

The water quality protection component identifies sensitive lands such as forests, wetlands, and steep slopes where preservation is vital for water quality.

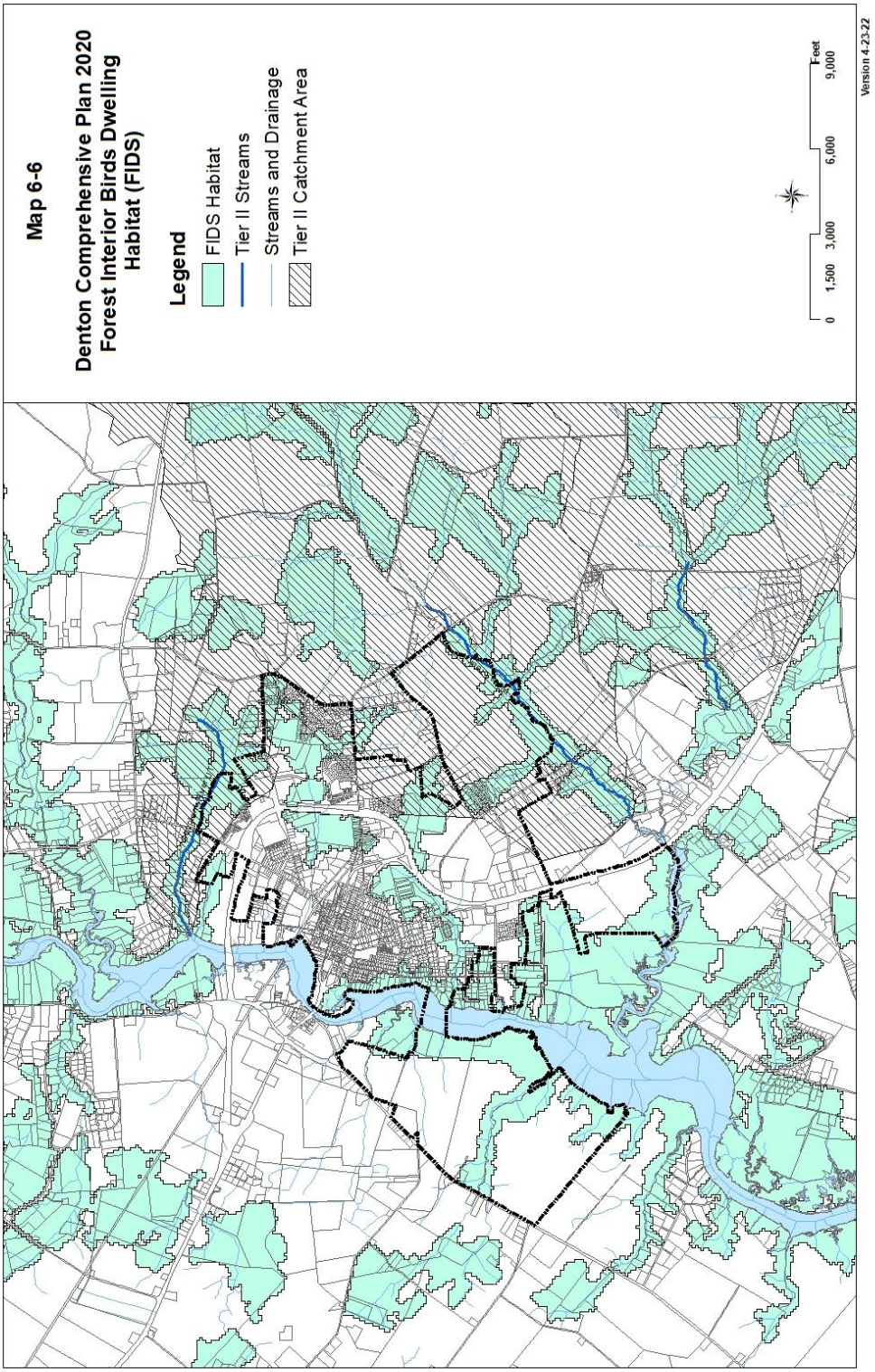
Map 6-4 Green Infrastructure



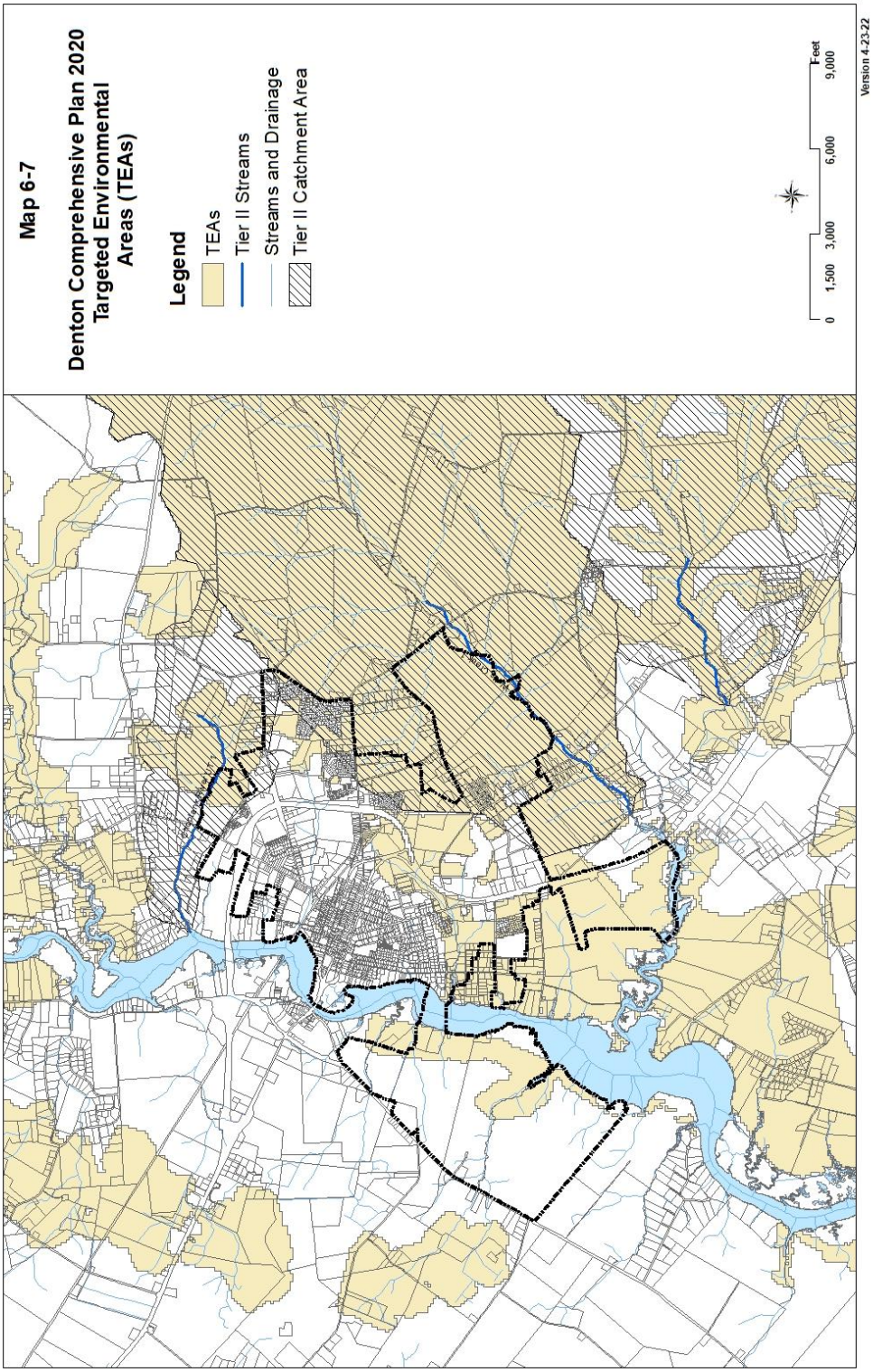
Map 6-5 Bio-Diversity



Map 6-6 Forest Interior Dwelling Bird Habitat



Map 6-7 Targeted Environmental Areas



The coastal ecosystems component identifies Blue Infrastructure shoreline and watershed protection priorities. These are important for sustaining coastal and tidal ecosystems and identifying land areas essential for sustaining spawning and nursery areas for important commercial and recreational fisheries.

The climate change adaptation component identifies areas essential for sustaining wetlands ecosystems that change and move landward in response to sea-level rise.

The purpose of TEAs is to define areas that present opportunities for multiple land conservation efforts to work together by leveraging Stateside Program Open Space (POS) resources. Land trusts, conservancy organizations, and other government programs can use this map to identify cooperative projects that meet Stateside POS ecological criteria. TEAs can help local governments identify areas suitable for resource conservation that support state land conservation investments and complement these designations with suitable zoning. Since TEAs represent the most ecologically valuable areas in the State, additional consideration should avoid environmental impacts within these areas.

Recommendations

Watershed Management

Along with the County, the Town recognizes the importance of natural resource protection. Many of the most sensitive or fragile natural resources are present in the Rural Buffer discussed in the Municipal Growth Element. Because natural systems, including the most sensitive, are not confined to the corporate area, the Town and County share responsibility for their protection and thoughtful management. Consequently, any efforts to manage adverse impacts on the natural environment must recognize the regional context for protection efforts and involve coordinated efforts at all levels of government to have any hope for success.

State, County, and town strategies for environmental protection should be based on sound watershed management principles and coordinated resource protection strategies. Two components of regional strategies for natural resource protection are based on the region's geographic components: watersheds and green infrastructure.

Impervious surfaces strongly influence watershed quality. Accordingly, critical analysis of the degree and location of future development (and impervious cover) expected in a watershed is essential to the long-term health of the land and receiving waters. Planning at the watershed and sub-watershed level presents the opportunity to comprehensively address land use and environmental protection as intricately related topics. It enables decision-makers to understand better the potential impacts of land use on stream health, water quality, and wildlife diversity and devise strategies to offset or address potential adverse results. The Environmental Protection Agency's Watershed Web Academy, under the topic of watershed planning importance, makes the following points:[8]

[8] https://www.epa.gov/watershedacademy/online-training-watershed-management

> "Because watersheds are defined by natural hydrology, they represent the most logical basis for managing water resources. The resource becomes the focal point, and managers are able to gain a more complete understanding of overall conditions in an area and the stressors that affect those conditions. Traditionally, water quality improvements have focused on specific sources of pollution, such as sewage discharges, or specific water resources, such as a river segment or wetland. While this approach may be successful in addressing specific problems, it often fails to address the more subtle and chronic problems that contribute to a watershed's decline. For example, pollution from a sewage treatment plant might be reduced significantly after a new technology is installed, and yet the local river may still suffer if other factors in the watershed, such as habitat destruction or polluted runoff, go unaddressed. Watershed management can offer a stronger foundation for uncovering the many stressors that affect a watershed. The result is management better equipped to determine what actions are needed to protect or restore the resource."

Denton and Caroline County share jurisdiction in the sub-watersheds, where cooperative planning benefits the natural resources and presents an opportunity to strengthen the comprehensive plans of both jurisdictions. Coordinated strategies should include regulations that support new development design that minimizes impervious surfaces and loss of existing resource values in green infrastructure hubs and corridors to the maximum extent possible. Strategies should also emphasize the land's restoration to a condition supporting its natural resource protection values.

Resource Conservation

Finding a balance between protecting natural resources and water quality in receiving waters, resource utilization (e.g., agriculture and forestry), and development will challenge both jurisdictions. An essential first step is identifying priority focus areas to preserve and areas to apply best management practices that minimize destructive change. Environmental features include wetlands, the Choptank River, tributary streams, and priority preservation areas. In addition, key management areas include forests, the 100-year flood plain, stream buffers, the Resource Conservation Area (RCA), and Critical Area Buffer, where existing protective regulations apply. Finally, adding fragile environment features such as threatened and endangered species and habitat areas for wildlife diversity defines conservation areas where maximizing protective values and minimizing loss take precedence in land management and development design.

These features comprise natural resource protection areas within the Town that should be managed to preserve the functions that implement the objectives of this chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. Accordingly, Denton has defined natural resource areas that will be protected (see Map 6-8). These are areas where the Town will apply best management practices that focus on minimizing impacts on and losing resources with the added benefit of lessening the potential impacts of climate change sea-level rise. Natural Resource Protection Areas should be managed similarly to Denton's Resource Conservation Areas (RCA). Principle structures should be located outside the area to the maximum extent possible. For example, forest removal should be prohibited except in a demonstrated hardship situation. Stormwater management measures should be outside conservation corridors except when no alternative exists. Standards should strictly apply in

preservation areas and may be modified in conservation areas when strict adherence creates hardship.

The Town should work with Caroline County officials to extend similar natural resource protection areas along Saulsbury, Watts Creeks, and Poor House Run. Managing impacts from current land use and changes to the land from sea level rise are significant in the catchment areas of the Tier II streams.

Map 6-8 Conservation Corridor