

The coast attracts tourists, retirees, and is home to over 53% of the US population. Historically, coastal urban development was carried out in high density build out scenarios that increase impervious cover, reducing natural landscapes that would buffer waterways from the excess pollution. Coastal watersheds have unique ecosystems, services, and considerations compared to upland watersheds and better management tools are needed to safeguard the sensitive natural habitats, commodities, and people that live, work, and visit the coast.

Coasts are valued for their fishing, swimming, and shoreline views. These basic commodities are threatened by excess nutrients (bacteria, nitrogen, and others) that close shellfish beds, damage coral reefs, and cause beach closures. A few common coastal concerns are substantial erosion, flooding and inundation, coastal wetland loss, invasive species, salt water intrusion, and septic system failures. Additionally, managers contend with the high water table levels, flat terrain, unique soil types (e.g., well drained sand), highly altered drainage systems, and more stringent coastal regulations. Coastal watersheds experience extreme weather event stressors such as hurricanes, storm surge, land subsidence, and sea level rise that can cause catastrophic flooding and damage. Coastal watershed management must incorporate better coastal management strategies to provide protection for current and future stresses such as sea level rise and other coastal hazards.

To assist coastal watershed managers, we've developed the [Coastal Plain Watershed Information Center](#), which includes a set of tools and resources tailored to address these concerns. The Information Center was developed for the Atlantic Coastal Plain, but many of the tools are broadly applicable to all coastal areas, or to non-coastal areas with similar environmental and development characteristics.