

Analysis of Governance and Policy Initiatives in the Delaware Estuary Watershed

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The proposed topic is to assess the progress of governance and policy initiatives in restoring the Delaware Estuary watershed. The 4 – state watershed of the Delaware Estuary is governed by a web of Federal, state, and local governments. Delaware Estuary watershed governance structures include the Delaware River Basin Commission, Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, and the Delaware Coastal Zone Act. Water quality and fisheries have improved in the Delaware Estuary over the last 3 decades since initiatives were mandated by the DRBC and USEPA. I propose to trace the history of water quality change in the Delaware Estuary and examine the historic role of watershed governance and policy structures in protecting the estuary. An estuary restoration target will be developed given the 400 years of European influence and the 16 million people who draw water from the watershed . I plan to evaluate the performance of governance structures in meeting the Clean Water Act standards in the estuary. An ecosystems services economic model will be developed to price watershed services accordingly to acquire economic value for the estuary. Based on a policy and economic evaluation of the governance organizations in the estuary, future governance policies will be recommended to restore the estuary