

SEAGRASS

Coastal habitat an indicator of water quality, provides benefits to wildlife and economy



Seagrass overview

In the Delaware Estuary, where fresh water from the Delaware River mixes with salty water from the Delaware Bay, underwater grasses and other types of seagrasses are an integral part of the ecosystem.

Submerged aquatic vegetation or SAV, which resemble meadows on land, is found underwater in the shallows of bays, lagoons, and estuaries. Similar to corals, SAV forms structures that provide habitat for many aquatic organisms, including fish, crustaceans, shellfish and other commercially and recreationally important species.

Healthy seagrasses sustain activities that boost coastal economies, such as duck hunting, wildlife watching, and fishing.

While SAV provide a wide range of benefits, they are very sensitive to changes in water quality and act as a sentinel, indicating the overall health of an ecosystem.

SEAGRASS FACTS:

- Underwater grasses absorb nutrients, trap sediment, **buffer wave energy during storm events**, and produce oxygen.
- Disappearing around the globe at a **rate of two football fields an hour**, underwater grasses are one of the most imperiled habitats on the planet.
- Studies have estimated that underwater grasses globally can store approximately **10 percent of the carbon in the entire ocean** in the form of rich aquatic soils.
- Its estimated that a single acre of SAV can be home to as many as **40,000 fish and 50 million small invertebrates**.



The Waterways Infrastructure and Investment Network (WIIN) is a coalition of partners and stakeholders that was awarded grant funding by the National Coastal Resilience Fund (through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) to create a natural resource evaluation and management plan for the Mispillion and Cedar Creek watersheds.

To learn more, visit us at: derascl.org/wiin.

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Sources: NOAA, EPA, Pew