

Oriole Focus Area Factsheet

Boundaries of the Focus Area:

The Oriole Focus Area extends from Deal Island Road south to the Manokin River. It includes the community of St. Stephens, as well as residences along Oriole Back Rd., Jerusalem Rd., Crab Island Rd., Oriole Rd., Champ Rd. and the County Wharf, and the village of Oriole.

Description and Uses:

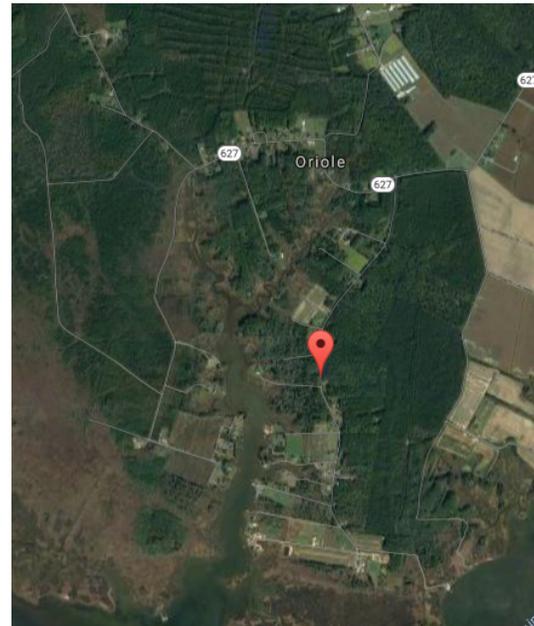
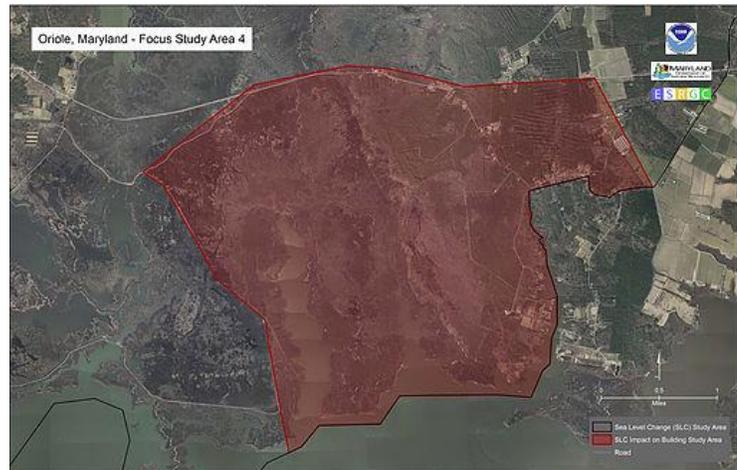
Much of this focus area consists of residential properties with interspersed agricultural operations, particularly on the east side of Oriole. St. Peter's United Methodist Church is located in Oriole, which serves residents in Oriole, Champ, and St. Stephens. There are also two historic churches that are no longer in operation: St. Stephen's United Methodist in St. Stephens and the historic African American church of St. James Methodist Episcopal in Oriole. The County Wharf on Champ Rd. is used by commercial watermen as well as recreational boaters. The surrounding forestland and marsh areas are also popular hunting locations of residents and visitors to the area.

Important Historical/Heritage Features:

Historically, many of the skipjack boat building operations were located in Oriole and in Champ, and the community supported an extensive watermen community, with shops, general stores, blacksmith shops, and active harbor areas located throughout the villages of Champ, Oriole, and St. Stephens. Many of these once prominent community features are no longer part of the local landscape. The area also has a rich agricultural history, a lot of which still persists today. Much of the marsh area to the west of St. Stephen's and Oriole was once used as cattle pasture.

Socio-Demographics:

We do not have specific socio-demographic information for Oriole. We do know that there has been significant population decline over the past 50 years and that several businesses formerly located in the community no longer exist. The population seems to be aging, like other areas of the Deal Island Peninsula area, with little of the younger generation replacing the aging population. Many people are employed outside of the community in Princess Anne or Salisbury.



Information from Risk Assessment Worksheets:

**Not enough risk assessment worksheets completed to provide an overview for Oriole.*

Targeted Areas of Vulnerability:

- **County Wharf on Champ Road:** Shoreline erosion at the County Wharf is impacting one of the last remaining crab processing and distribution businesses in Oriole/Champ. Flooding also occurs along the roadway because the ditches located here have been filled in at their endpoint.
- **Crab Island:** Erosion of Crab Island is decreasing storm protection to the Champ harbor area, and poses a threat to public infrastructure, surrounding agricultural lands, and residential areas should it persist. In addition, it is causing the Champ inlet to fill in. Some have suggested the need for a jetty off of Crab Island to slow erosion rates, which have only worsened since Sandy.
- **Crab Island Road and Oriole Back Road:** This section of Oriole is particularly low-lying and prone to flooding due to overflow from both roadside and off-road ditches. Ditch maintenance is a big concern for residence in the area; many of the ditches in the area no longer provide proper drainage due to infill. This not only creates flooding hazards, particularly during storm events and full-moon high tides, but it is also reportedly contributing to severe mosquito problems. At least two houses were destroyed on Oriole Back Rd. due to flooding during Hurricane Sandy, and have since been rebuilt on elevated foundations using Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds. The large numbers of surrounding non-elevated houses in this area, however, remain vulnerable to future storm flood impacts.
- **St. Stephen's:** If any flooding occurs along Deal Island Rd., it occurs at St. Stephen's. This creates a hazard not only for residents in St. Stephen's, but also for those further down the Peninsula, given that Deal Island Rd. is the only access road to Dames Quarter, Chance, Deal Island, and Wenona from the mainland. During full moon-high tides and heavy rain events, many yards in St. Stephen's are flooded. The area is also experiencing extensive marsh migration, particular on the western side of St. Stephen's, where marsh is encroaching on properties and causing forest dieback due to saltwater intrusion.

Select Focus Area Photos:



Above left: Eroding natural shoreline area at the Champ public wharf. The shanty to the right of this photo (just outside of frame) is increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of this erosion; **Above right:** Oriole Rd. ditches. Roadway flooding frequently occurs here due to ditch overflow; **Left:** ditch overflow along Oriole Rd near intersection with Crab Island Rd.; **Below:** Sunny day flooding in St. Stephens. Flooding frequently occurs here during full-moon high tides and following rain events.

