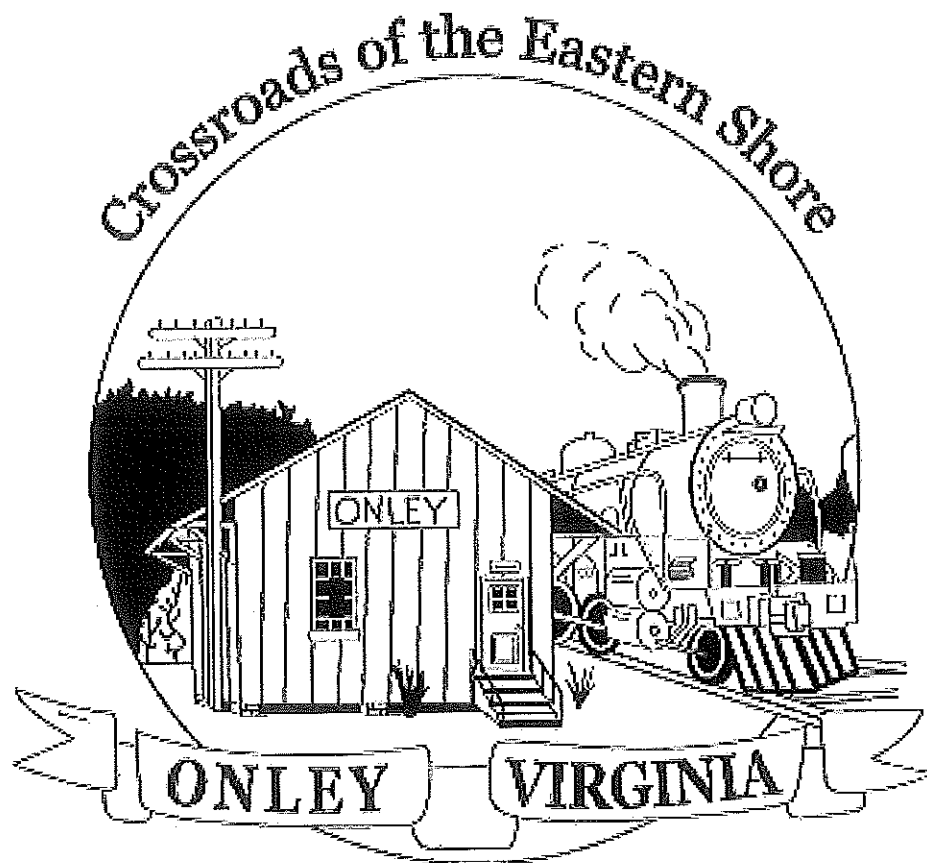


# 2017 Comprehensive Plan



## Town of Onley, Virginia

Adopted November 6, 2017

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### ***Introduction***

*The Town of Onley, with a population is 516 located in south central Accomack County, Virginia, on the Delmarva Peninsula (see Figure 1). The corporate limits of Onley encompass approximately 486 acres. The Town was first known as Cross Roads until the latter part of the nineteenth century, when the Town became known as Onley, the name of Governor Henry Wise's home, located on Onancock Creek. Governor Wise was the only governor of Virginia from the Eastern Shore. The railroad came through Town in 1885, and Onley's location as a railroad crossing contributed to a thriving downtown, including a post office, grocery and mercantile stores, a drugstore, a hardware store, a hotel, and Rogers Brothers store, which handled everything from clothing to farm implements. In addition, the headquarters of the Eastern Shore of Virginia Produce Exchange, organized in 1899 and chartered by the General Assembly in 1900, was built in Onley. This cooperative marketing organization was first organized to market the Eastern Shore's Irish and sweet potato crops and was highly successful in expanding the potato market. The Town was incorporated in 1950. Onley experienced a fire in 1971 which destroyed much of its business district. Following this loss and other fires in 1972, the Town's commercial activity began migrating westward to Route 13 and Four Corner Plaza shopping center. Today, Onley is the site of the largest concentration of commercial activity in Accomack County.*

### **Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan**

The purpose of this Comprehensive Town Plan (the Plan) is to serve as a guide for making policy decisions about the physical development and livability of the Town. The Plan is general in nature, containing goals, objectives and recommendations that can be used to guide future development decisions. All land use controls, including zoning ordinance regulations, should be in accord with the Plan. The Plan is organized into three parts. The first part includes an inventory and analysis of existing conditions, including factors that have influenced past land use trends and will influence development in the future. The second part consists of goals and objectives, as the Town looks ahead to the future. The final part of the Plan includes recommendations and strategies for future plans of action which will aid in achieving the identified goals and objectives.

The Virginia General Assembly, recognizing the need and value for local planning within each area of the Commonwealth, adopted Section 15.2-2223 - 15.2-2232 of the Code of Virginia, which requires that each city, county or town develop and adopt a comprehensive plan. Section 15.2-2223 (effective July 1 2007) states "The comprehensive plan shall be made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the

## Town of Onley Comprehensive Plan

health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants, including the elderly and persons with disabilities.

In addition to the above mandate, the Virginia General Assembly, recognizing the economic and social importance of ensuring the long term viability of state waters and in particular the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, enacted the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (Section 10.1-2109, et seq., of the Code of Virginia). The Act is a cooperative effort between the state and local governments with a water quality improvement and protection focus. Section 10.1-2109 of the Act states that "Counties, cities, and towns in Tidewater Virginia shall incorporate protection of the quality of state waters into each locality's comprehensive plan consistent with the provisions of this chapter."

To achieve these ends, the Town Council and Planning Commission of the Town of Onley have developed the following Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission, which serves in an advisory capacity to the Town Council, has the primary responsibility for developing the Plan, along with ordinances necessary to guide

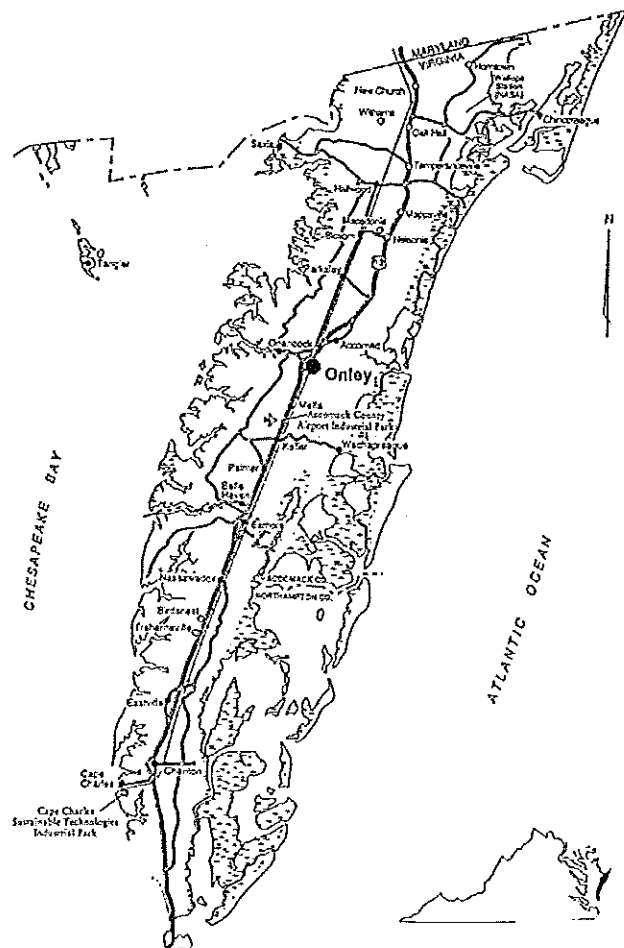


Figure 1 Location Map Town of Onley, Virginia  
Future growth in the Town. It is necessary, due to the nature of the Plan and its purpose, that the Town Council and Planning Commission regularly review the

Town of Onley Comprehensive Plan

Plan and update the goals to keep pace with events and development affecting the Town's well being. As required by the Virginia State Code, the Plan should be reviewed at least every five years.

**POPULATION**

As shown in Table 1, Onley has experienced a considerable increase in population since 1960. The Town grew at a dramatically greater rate than Accomack County between 1960 and 1980, when the Town's population increased by nearly 27%, compared to a rate of only 2% for the County. The Town's rate of growth leveled off between 1980 and 1996, increasing by only 1%. In 2000 the population dropped by 8%.

Table 1 Historic Population Change 1960 -2012

Year	Accomack County		Town of Onley	
	Total Population	Percent Change	Total Population	Percent Change
1960	30635		415	
1970	29004	-5	464	12
1980	31268	8	526	13
1990	31703	1	532	1
2000	38305	18	496	8
2012	33164	13.4	516	3.8

Source 2010 US Census Bureau

Population Characteristics, **Table 2**, shows several demographic characteristics of Onley's population. In 2010, 223 households existed in Onley, with an average of 2.3 persons per household, just under the countywide average of 2.59 and the statewide average of 2.7. White residents comprised 83% of Onley's population in 2000, while nonwhite residents represented 17%. This differed substantially from the race demographics of Accomack County, comprised of 65 white residents and 36.635% nonwhite residents.

**Table 2** Population Demographics 2010

Total Households		223
Persons per household		2.3
White	428	83%
Black	72	14%
Other	16	3%

Source: 2010 US Census Bureau

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**Table 3** indicates the age group proportions for the populations of Onley and Accomack County in 2010. Onley had a slightly lower proportion of its population in the age cohorts of 0-17 and 18-64 than the County. Onley's proportion of people in the age cohort of 65 and older was slightly higher than that of the County. Onley's median age of 46.3 was also higher than the County's median age of 39.4. In general, the population of Onley is slightly older than the population of Accomack County.

Table 3 Population by Age 2010

	Accomack County		Town of Onley	
Age	Number	%	Number	%
0-18	7296	22%	97	18.8%
18-64	19898	60%	285	55.8%
65+	5970	18%	134	26%
Total	33,164	100%	496	100%

Source: 2010 US Census

The Town's age group proportions showed, relatively little change between 2000 and 2010. The proportion of people in Onley between 0-17 years old remained the same. During this same time period, the proportion of people in the age group of 18-64 remained the same at 55%. The proportion of people age 65 and older experienced a slight decrease, from 27% to 26%. The median age also showed a slight decrease, from 48.6 to 45.6.

Riverside Shore Memorial Hospital opened in February 2017. Although the Hospital is located outside the edge of the Town's limits, the Town is already beginning to experience positive changes in commercial growth with new businesses locating to both the original downtown area and the Route 13 corridor. We foresee the new Hospital as a major benefit to the Town's economic development in both the residential and commercial venues.

## ECONOMY

The Town of Onley experiences a robust retail and service oriented economy. As the site of Four Corners Plaza and adjacent shopping and commercial activity, Onley is one of the larger commercial centers of the Virginia Eastern Shore. Because of its location on Route 13, the major north-south transportation corridor which transects the entire Eastern Shore, this area is the County's hub of commercial activity. Businesses located adjacent to Route 13 include a variety of retail stores and services, restaurants, a grocery store, three banks, two motels, and professional offices. Another large shopping

center, Chesapeake Square, lies adjacent to the Town's northwestern corporate limits. Few vacant commercial buildings exist in Onley, although a limited amount of vacant land is located adjacent to Route 13 and could potentially serve as sites for new businesses. A new Wal-Mart was built on Onley's southern border in 2012. Only a small portion of the land *and building* lies within the town boundaries

The majority of the Town's commercial activity is concentrated along Route 13 and in the shopping center. Small concentrations of businesses are located on Main Street, in the Town's original business district. Many of the buildings in this downtown area were destroyed by a fire in 1971, and the majority of commercial activity in Town has migrated toward Route 13. Several of the original buildings still exist in the Town's original business district, and are occupied by approximately seven businesses and three churches. Industrial activity in the Town is limited to a block and concrete manufacturing company and a portable sanitation company, located several blocks from the original downtown business district.

**Income**

Median income is defined as the income value where 50% of a particular group has an income above a specific value, while 50% of the same group has an income below that value. As shown in **Table 5**, Onley's median household income in 2010 was \$63,212. Compared to \$36,750 in 2000. That amount is 1% higher than that of the State, at \$62,666.. Per capita income is defined as the total income received by all persons divided by the total population. Onley's per capita income in 2010 was \$25,220, as compared to \$19,115 in 2000 which is 8% higher than Accomack County's per capita income of \$23,206, but 25% lower than the State's per capita income of \$33,958

**Table 5** Income Characteristics Virginia, Accomack County & Onley 2014

	Virginia	Accomack	Onley
Median Household Income	\$64,792	\$39,389	\$63,212
Per Capita Income	\$33,958	\$23,206	\$25,220

Source: 2014 US Census, STF3

**HOUSING**

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, housing in Onley consists of 273 dwelling units, the majority of which are single family houses. As shown in **Table 6**, single family houses account for 79% of the housing stock, manufactured homes account for 11 % of the housing stock and multifamily homes make up 11% of the housing stock. In 2010, almost three times as many citizens in Onley owned homes as compared to those that rented. The U. S. Census indicates that in 2010 the median housing value in Onley was \$182,655. The majority of residential housing stock in Onley is in good condition. However, there are a few housing units scattered throughout Town that are in various states of disrepair and are in need of rehabilitation.

**Table 6** Housing Occupancy and Types 2010

Housing types		Units	Percent
Single Family		203	74.4%
Multi Family		39	14.3%
Manufactured homes		31	11.3%
	Total Units	288	100%
<b>Housing Occupancy</b>			
Housing Occupancy		Units	Percent
Owner-Occupied		166	61%
Renter-Occupied		57	21%
Vacant		48	18%
	Total Units	271	100%

Source: 2000 US Census

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Community Facilities include the services and functions provided by the Town government, in coordination with other public and private agencies. Such facilities are essential to support the Town and its development and to enhance the overall quality of life for its residents. Community facilities include necessities such as public safety services, solid waste collection, mosquito control, and street lighting.

### Public Safety

Police protection is provided by five officers employed by the Town, with back up service provided by the Onancock Police Department, Accomack County Sheriff's Department and the Virginia State Police. The existence of the Onley Fire and Rescue service has been terminated by the Accomack Supervisors July of 2017. Services are being provided by Onancock, Tasley and Melfa Fire and Rescue services.

### Solid Waste

The Town of Onley provides weekly residential trash collection services, contracted out. Private contractors *are* responsible for emptying large dumpsters within the Town that are used primarily by commercial establishments. In addition to regular trash collection, the Town normally conducts a general clean-up week for brush and leaves two times each year. Recycling and disposal centers are operated by Accomack County in Tasley and south in Painter.

### Town Office

Onley's Town Office, built in the late 1970s, houses the Town's administration services and Police Department. The Town employs a full time Town Manager, full time Clerk part time Zoning Administrator, to carry out administrative, zoning and financial functions of the Town.

### **Water and Sewer**

Residents and businesses in Onley rely on individual private wells for their water supply. All residents use private on-site septic systems for sewage and wastewater disposal, and the majority of businesses treat wastewater and sewage through mass drain-fields. Several businesses on Route 13 utilize a sewage trunk line which is connected to a wastewater treatment facility in Onancock with possible future expansion.

### **Stormwater Management**

Maintenance of roadside drainage ditches in the Town is the responsibility of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). Several areas in the Town experience drainage problems after heavy rains. The drainage problems are partially attributable to storm drains which are inadequate to handle the flow generated by heavy rain.

### **Transportation**

Onley is served by an adequate road system, with U.S. Route 13 providing north-south access, and State Routes 179 and 789 providing east-west access, making automobile traffic very convenient for Town residents. Streets in Town are maintained by VDOT and are generally in satisfactory condition. Public transportation is available through STAR Transit, with bus routes along Route 13. STAR Transit offers weekday bus service from Cape Charles to Chincoteague with stops at all major communities, shopping centers, health care facilities and government offices. The Baycoast Railroad runs through the eastern portion of Town, serving as a freight carrier connecting Hampton Roads with the Delmarva Peninsula. The Railroad right-of-way is maintained by *the* Town of Onley. An old freight station is located on the right-of-way, which is currently leased by the Town of Onley until the year 2034. The station was renovated by a civic organization, the Society for the Preservation of the Onley Train Station.

### **Sidewalks and Crosswalks**

Sidewalks in Onley are maintained by VDOT, and many of the sidewalks are in various states of disrepair. Approximately 25% of the streets in Town are serviced by sidewalks. Some Town residents have expressed interest in the installation of additional sidewalks. There is a pedestrian crosswalk at Route 13 and Main Street.

### **Recreation**

Although no public recreational facilities exist in Onley, the Town is fortunate to be located adjacent to the site of the Eastern Shore Family YMCA. The recreational center is located on land just south of Onley's corporate limits. The facility includes an indoor pool, fitness center, youth/activity gym and day care facilities. The YMCA offers exceptional recreation opportunities to Onley residents. Also located within the Town is the Onley Recreation Association consisting of an outdoor pool, tennis courts, volley ball, and a Bocce Court. Within two tenths of a mile is Nandua High School whose facilities can be available upon request.



**Other Community Services**

The railroad right-of-way, and several other public areas in Onley, is regularly mowed by the Town during the summer months. Mosquito control is provided by the Town. All town streets are provided with street lighting.

**Schools**

No public schools exist in Onley; school age residents attend Accawmacke Elementary School, Nandua Middle School, Nandua High School, and Badger Vocational Education Center – South.

**Medical Facilities**

Eastern Shore Rural Health facility is located on the west side of town with an entrance within the Route 13 town limits -. Riverside Shore Memorial Hospital has relocated adjacent to the west town limits. Dental facilities are located both in town and near by. Chiropractic and optometric services are also available in town. Veterinary services are also available just south of the Town limits.

**NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Topography**

Land in Onley is very flat, with slopes ranging from 0% to 1 %. The highest elevation in Onley is approximately 45 feet above sea level. Onley is not located in the Accomack County 100-year floodplain. The Town's location is classified as an area of minimal flooding, Zone C, on the Flood Insurance Rate Map published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

## Soils

As shown in **Figure 3**, all of the soils in Onley are highly permeable and approximately



40% of the soils are hydric soils, with a depth to groundwater of 0-36 inches. Highly permeable soils are extremely susceptible to pollutant leaching and have a high potential for groundwater pollution. Hydric soils are primarily wet and poorly drained. Onley is composed of seven individual soil types as shown in **Figure 4**, and discussed below:

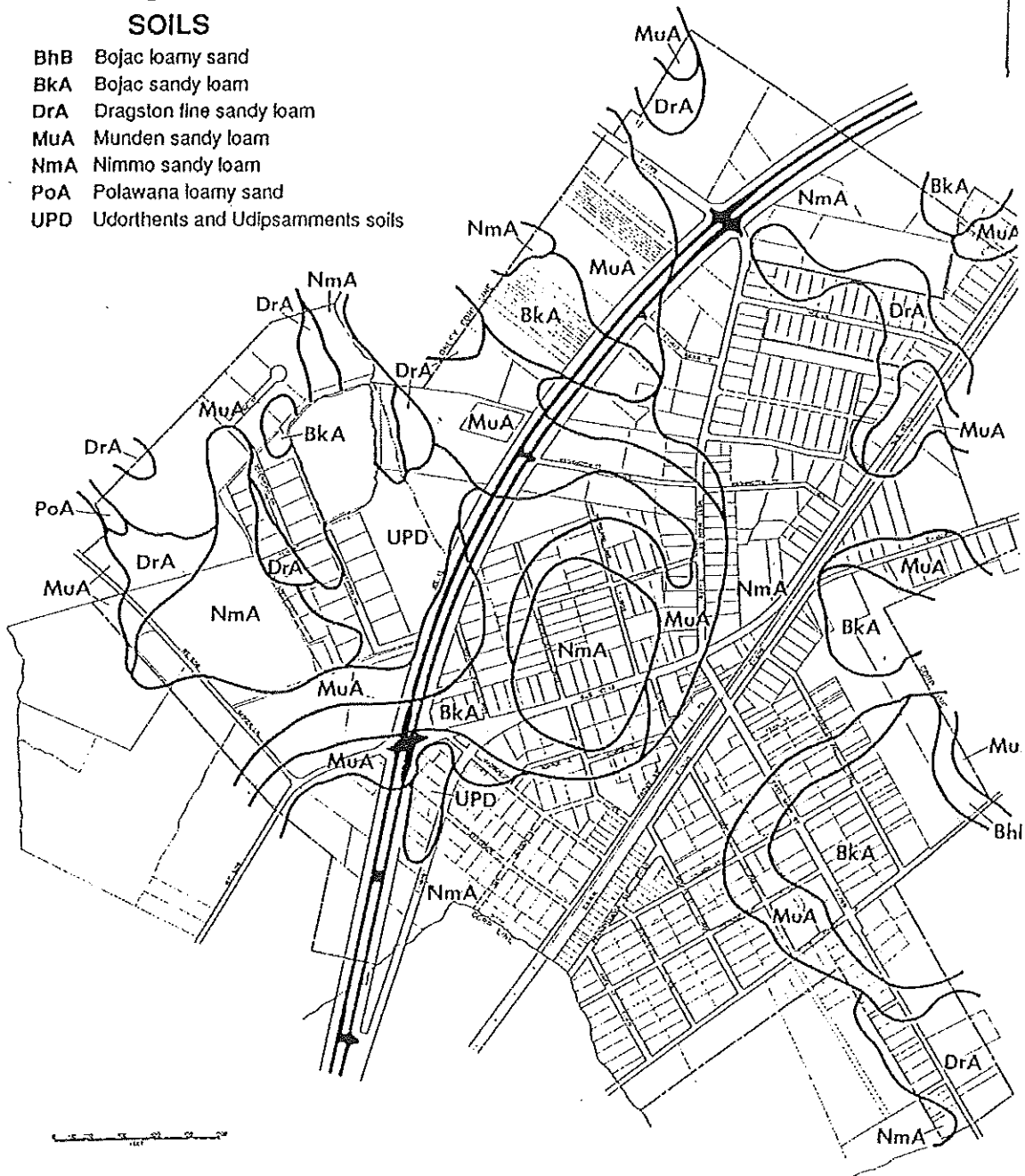
# Town of Onley Comprehensive Plan

## TOWN OF ONLEY

Figure 4

### SOILS

- BhB Bojac loamy sand
- BkA Bojac sandy loam
- DrA Dragston line sandy loam
- MuA Munden sandy loam
- NmA Nimmo sandy loam
- PoA Polawana loamy sand
- UPD Udorthents and Udipsamments soils



*Bojac Loamy Sand (BhB), 2-6% slope:*

Gently sloping, very deep and well drained farmland. Moderately rapid permeability and soil instability limit community development and cause a hazard of groundwater pollution when used for septic systems.

*Bojac Sandy Loam (EM), 0-2% slope:*

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Nearly level, very deep and well drained farmland. Moderately rapid permeability and instability of the soil are limitations to community development and cause a hazard of groundwater pollution when used for septic systems.

*Dragston Fine Sandy Loam (DrA), 0-2% slope:*

Nearly level, very deep and somewhat poorly drained. Used mainly for cultivated crops and some woodland. Seasonal high water table, rapid permeability, poor filtering capacity and hazards of seepage limit this soil for community development.

*Munden Sandy Loam (MilA), 0-2% slope:*

Level, deep and moderately well drained. Seasonal high water table and rapid permeability are limitations for community development and result in hazard for groundwater pollution when used for septic fields.

*Nimmo Sandy Loam (NmA), 0-2% slope:*

Nearly level, deep and poorly drained. Used for farmland when drained. Seasonal high water table, seepage, and rapid permeability are limitations for community development and cause a hazard of groundwater pollution when used for septic fields. Limited for roads and streets.

*Polawana Loamy Sand (poA), 0-2% slope:*

Nearly level, very deep and very poorly drained floodplain soil. Found in drainage ways along small freshwater streams. Rapid permeability, ponding, flooding and high seasonal water table are limitations for community development.

*Udorthents and Udipsammments (UPD), 0-30% slopes:*

Mainly fill and spoil materials and sandy materials in excavated areas. Characteristics are so variable that on-site investigation is necessary to determine suitability for most uses.

Soil types within Onley are a major limiting factor for development. Most of the soils in Onley have limitations with respect to their capacity to support on-site septic systems. Due to the predominance of hydric soils and shallow depth to groundwater, the majority of the soils are unsuitable for septic tank filter fields, due to wetness and poor filtering capability. The presence of groundwater near the surface can cause septic system failure, resulting in groundwater contamination and a danger to public health. Because all residents in Onley are served by private on-site septic systems, this is a major limitation, but improvements have been made in septic technology. A Building Site Development Limitations Summary, shown in **Table 7**, indicates the limitations of the soil types in Onley for development.

**Table 7** Building Site Development Limitations Summary

Soil Type	Dwellings without basements	Dwellings with basements	Small commercial buildings	Septic Systems	Roads
Bojac BkA, BhB	Slight	Moderate: wetness	Slight	Moderate: wetness	Slight
Dragston DrA	Severe: wetness	Severe: wetness	Severe: wetness	Severe: wetness poor filter	Moderate: wetness
Munden MuA	Moderate: wetness	Severe: wetness	Moderate: wetness	Severe: wetness	Moderate: wetness
Nimmo NmA	Severe: wetness	Severe: wetness	Severe: wetness	Severe: wetness poor filter	Severe: wetness
Polawana PoA	Severe: wetness	Severe: wetness	Severe: wetness	Severe: wetness poor filter	Severe: wetness

Source: Accomack County Soil Survey, Tables 10,11

**Surface Water**

Surface water in the Town is limited to the end segment of Joynes Branch, and Rat Trap Creek. Joynes Branch, a small tributary stream which extends approximately 700 feet into the Town. Joynes Branch drains into Onancock Creek and then into the Chesapeake Bay. Within the Town limits, Joynes Branch is shallow and narrow, and connects with a small, non-tidal lake. Land use adjacent to Joynes Branch is residential, with woodland vegetation bordering the shoreline.

Rat Trap Creek is a perennial stream which begins on the west side of Route 13 and forms the southern boundary of the Town. This creek receives most of the stormwater drainage from the Town, and drains to the seaside. Land use adjacent to Rat Trap Creek is mostly vegetated non tidal wetlands.

Approximately 35% of the Town lies within the Chesapeake Bay watershed, located west of Route 13. The Chesapeake Bay has played an important role in the history and identity of the Eastern Shore, serving as the nation’s largest and most productive estuary, providing both commercial and recreational fishing for Eastern Shore residents and tourists. The economic, commercial and recreational values of the Bay are threatened by pollution. One of the greatest threats to the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay is non-point source pollution, which occurs from a variety of diffuse sources such as stormwater runoff and atmospheric deposition. Pollutants, such as phosphorous and nitrogen from fertilizers, oil, sediments, pesticides, metals and other toxic substances, accumulate on land during dry weather and are carried into surface water by rainfall. These contaminants are washed into ditches and streams and eventually into the Chesapeake Bay or seaside bays. Under natural conditions, stormwater running off the land soaks into the ground and is filtered by the soil and root

systems of plants. However, when land is developed, the natural groundcover vegetation is replaced by concrete, asphalt and other impervious materials which provide no filtering capacity. This stormwater runoff is carried into the Chesapeake and seaside bays without being filtered, and carries with it pollutants from roads, parking lots and other impervious surfaces. Contamination from non-point source pollution can cause fish kills and degrade the quality of life in the Chesapeake and seaside bays.

The Commonwealth of Virginia enacted the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (Bay Act) in 1988, which established a program to protect and improve the waters of the Chesapeake Bay through the reduction of non-point source pollution. The Bay Act is administered by the Department of Conservation and Recreation, through the Division of Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance in Richmond, and provides local governments in the Bay watershed with the legal authority to protect water quality through local land use regulations which are implemented and enforced at the local level. Local land use regulations can reduce water pollution by requiring development setbacks from shorelines, and allowing natural vegetation to prevent erosion and filter stormwater. Certain lands that are next to the shoreline have intrinsic water quality value due to the ecological and biological processes they perform. Other land areas have severe development constraints as a result of flooding, erosion and soil limitations. With proper management, these lands offer significant environmental benefits by providing water quality maintenance and pollution control, as well as flood and shoreline erosion control.

The citizens of Virginia are dependent upon the economic benefits derived from the seaside bays and Chesapeake Bay, and the Town recognizes the importance of the Bay Act in maintaining the integrity of State waters and the Chesapeake Bay. The Town has adopted a Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (CBPA) Area Overlay District as part of its zoning ordinance. The Overlay District delineates Resource Protection Areas (RPAs) and Resource Management Areas (RMAs), as illustrated in Figure 5, and requires that certain development standards be applied to these areas. RMAs and RPAs consist of the most ecologically sensitive lands, including tidal shorelines and wetlands, which have important value to the water quality of the Bay. RPAs also include a 100-foot vegetated buffer area landward of these features. Information used to delineate the Town's CBPAs includes United States Geological Survey maps, National Wetland Inventory maps, Soil Conservation Service Survey Maps, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute Geographic Information System Soil Inventory Maps. In Onley, the RPA is limited to land extending 100 feet landward of the shorelines of Joynes Branch. The Town's RMA includes land contiguous to RPA, generally extending from 200 to 800 feet beyond the RPA and its associated lake. Land within the RMA is made up of highly permeable soils with a high water table. If these sensitive land types are improperly developed, they have the potential for causing significant water quality degradation. Development normally allowed by the Town's existing zoning ordinance is allowed in RMAs as long as it conforms to the requirements outlined in the Town's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area Ordinance. The requirements include specific land development practices, such as preserving natural vegetation, minimizing land disturbance, minimizing impervious cover and controlling stormwater runoff. Regulations for

development in RMAs should lead to reduced water pollution and a reduced likelihood that post-development stormwater runoff will contribute to water quality problems such as pollution and sedimentation.

## STORMWATER

Stormwater in Onley is handled by a series of roadside ditches and swales. These ditches are to be maintained by VDOT. East of Route 13 the ditches eventually lead to Rat Trap Creek which forms the southern border of the Town. Rat Trap Creek follows a course that is abutted by designated wetlands except at its head waters located on the west side of Route 13 on the Wal-Mart tract. Rat Trap Creek handles approximately 75% of the stormwater runoff from east of Route 13. West of Route 13 most stormwater drains to Joynes Branch, which is within the CBRMA, a tributary of Onancock Creek and empties into the Chesapeake Bay.

## WETLANDS

A number of areas of the Town are designated wetlands and are shown on Accomack County's Acco-Map site. These areas are within residential zones and have not been developed. Two areas of wetlands are adjacent to Rat Trap Creek and aid in the filtering of stormwater runoff. Two other areas are located in the CBRMA. Another area is located between Coastal Boulevard (Business Route 13) and West Main Street (Route 179) north of Washington Street.



Map 1 Source: Acco-Map 2008

TOWN OF ONLEY  
Figure 5  
Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area  
Overlay District



### Groundwater

The entire Eastern Shore of Virginia depends solely on groundwater for its potable water supply. Residents of Onley obtain their drinking water through individual private groundwater wells. Protection of groundwater is a priority for The Town as well as the Eastern Shore. Groundwater on the Eastern Shore is made up of a series of aquifers, consisting of the Columbia aquifer (also known as the water table), and the Yorktown-Eastover aquifer system, where most residential and commercial wells are located. The Yorktown-Eastover aquifer system is separated from the Columbia aquifer by confining layers of clay, which help protect the aquifer system from contamination, but also impede the amount and rate of recharge.



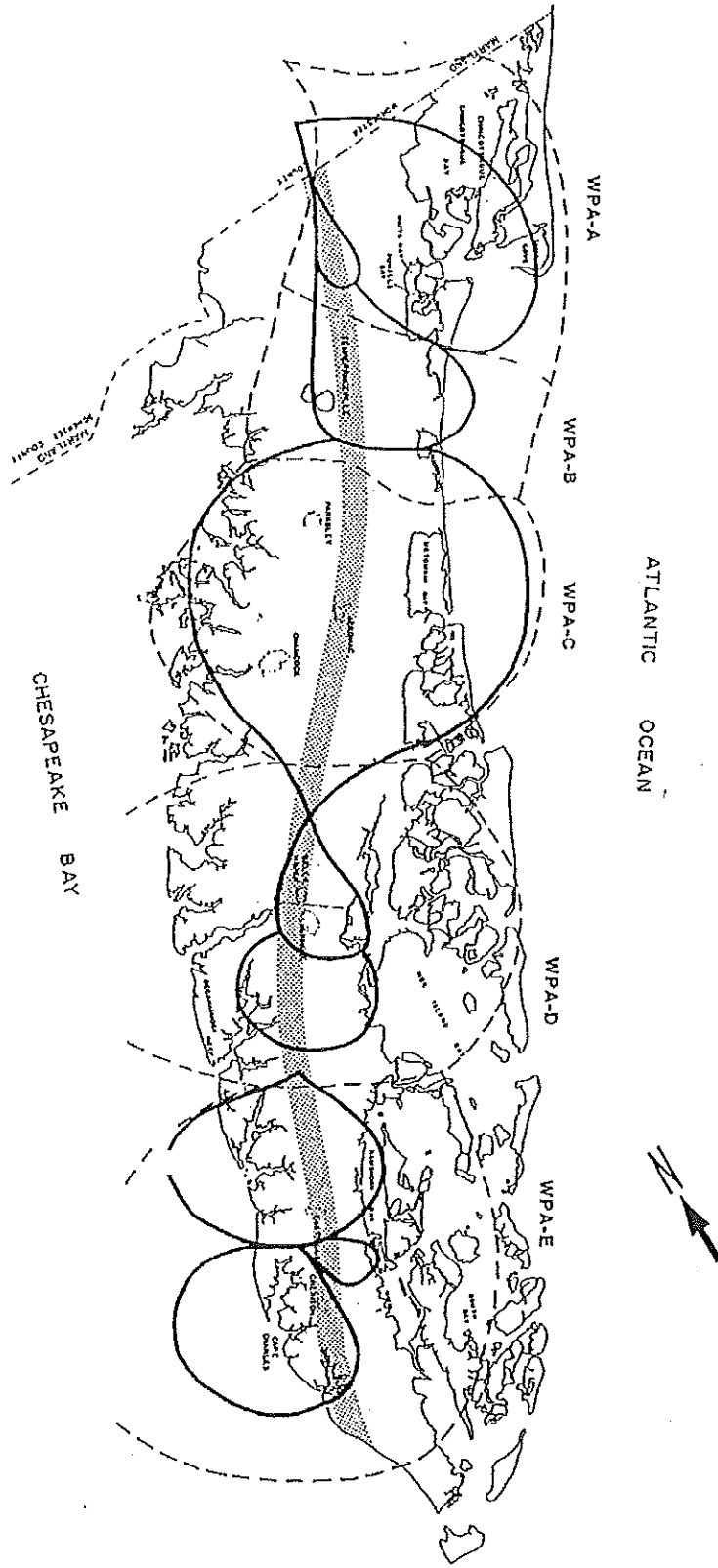
Freshwater is supplied into the aquifer system by rainfall, which penetrates the soil and recharges the groundwater aquifers. Most water in the Columbia aquifer flows laterally from the center of the Eastern Shore peninsula, discharging into the Atlantic Ocean and Chesapeake Bay. A much smaller portion of water flows down through the clays and silts that separate the Columbia aquifer from the underlying Yorktown-Eastover aquifers. Recharge into the Yorktown-Eastover aquifers is limited to a narrow strip of land running along the center, or spine, of the Eastern Shore peninsula, known as the recharge spine. In order to ensure the continuance of good quality and large quantities of groundwater on the Eastern Shore, it is important to protect the recharge spine.

According to the Groundwater Supply Protection and Management Plan for the Eastern Shore of Virginia, 83 acres of land within Onley lie within the recharge spine, generally located east of Business Route 13. The majority of land in Onley's recharge spine is already developed as residential land use, and is designated on the Town's future land use map as residential. The Accomack County Comprehensive Plan promotes the Town of Onley as a future growth area. The County Plan's policy is to concentrate future growth around existing population centers, in order to protect agricultural land and preserve the County's rural character. This policy promotes protection of the Eastern Shore's groundwater supply by reducing development pressures along the length of Route 13 and the recharge spine. Low density residential land uses which are planned for the area would contain moderate amounts of impervious cover, allowing a greater amount of rainfall to penetrate the recharge spine than higher density land uses.

The Eastern Shore of Virginia is divided into four wellhead protection areas, based on groundwater divides created by pumping patterns of the major groundwater with drawers on the Eastern Shore (see **Figure 6**). Onley is located in Wellhead Protection Area C - Perdue Area. Major water withdrawers in this area are the Perdue Poultry Processing Plant, Pacific Tomato Growers packing facilities, Helena Chemical in Tasley, the towns of Onancock and Parksley, and the Riverside Shore Life Care Nursing Home, *Nandua* High School, and *Nandua* Middle School. Because of the large amounts of industrial water withdrawals, this wellhead protection area is the largest on the peninsula. The current pumping rates, dominated by Perdue, show a very large drawdown area. Because of the large withdrawals of groundwater in this wellhead protection area, there is an increased possibility of problems including well interference, salt water intrusion, and a deterioration of water quality. In the Town, water conservation is probably the best contribution that can be made to avoid these water quality problems.

Town of Onley Comprehensive Plan

Figure 6  
Groundwater Pumping Patterns



### **Groundwater Contamination Threats**

Groundwater quality is threatened by contaminants that are discharged, leached or disposed into the ground. The major contamination threats to groundwater in Onley's vicinity are on-site septic systems, underground storage tanks and above ground storage tanks. In Onley, all residential treatment of wastewater and sewage is done through on-site septic systems, with approximately 238 on-site septic systems in the Town limits. The majority of commercial sewage and wastewater is treated through mass drainfields. Four mass drainfields exist in or close to the Town, located at Nandua High School, Sage Restaurant, Chesapeake Square Shopping Center, and Four Corners Plaza Shopping Center. Soils in Onley are generally unsuitable for on-site septic systems due to high permeability, wetness and shallow depth to groundwater. The presence of groundwater near the surface can cause septic system failure, resulting in groundwater contamination and a danger to public health. These factors indicate an increased potential for septic effluent to contaminate the Town's groundwater. Possible contaminants from septic effluent include nitrates, bacteria, viruses, and a variety of organic and inorganic chemicals from household products. If septic tanks are not pumped out every few years, solids may pass to the drainfield, causing backups into the dwelling, or effluent migration to the land surface. The Town's Zoning Ordinance specifies that all existing septic systems in zoning districts west of Route 13 (the Bay watershed) are to be pumped every five years, which should reduce the risk of groundwater contamination. Four Corners Plaza and Riverside Memorial Hospital are tied into the Onancock sewer system extending the line up to A&N Electric and Chesapeake Square.

Leaking underground storage tanks (USTs) are a primary source of groundwater contamination in Virginia. On the Eastern Shore, most USTs contain petroleum products stored in tanks constructed of steel. The average life of a steel tank is approximately 15 years, although many are much older. Older tanks are being replaced by new tanks made of material resistant to corrosion to eliminate leakage. The threat that USTs pose is primarily because the tanks are not visible. Leaks of USTs may not be detected until a substantial amount of pollutants have seeped into the surrounding soil. Corrosion of the tanks over time produces pin-hole type leaks resulting in discharge of many gallons over a short period. Gasoline contains benzene, toluene and xylene, all of which are detrimental to health. It has been estimated that one gallon of gasoline is sufficient to contaminate one million gallons of groundwater. The State Water Control Board as of April 1 2008 lists 15 UST owned by 8 registered users. Of these, 3 are still in operation; 9 are permanently out of use, 2 are temporarily out of use, and one has been removed. The DEQ list appears to have left off 2 retail gasoline stations. Further investigation is needed. None of the tanks which are currently in use were reported leaking. Gasoline is stored in the tanks. The average age of the USTs currently in use in Onley is 22 years. **Table 8** presents information about the USTs in Onley.

Above ground storage tanks are a potential threat to the groundwater supply in Town, where the majority of homes rely on individual fuel tanks for heat. There is one bulk storage facility located on Pennsylvania Avenue operated by Floyd Energy. These tanks

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have been thoroughly cleaned and inspected and are no longer in use. The State Water Control Board estimate that about 90% of spills or releases from individual above ground storage tanks are a result of overfilling the tank or tipping it over. While one residential fuel tank may not pose a great environmental hazard threat, the total number of tanks in Town may pose a substantial threat. The risk of accidental spills can be reduced through inspection of the tank by the homeowner or Fuel Company before filling, to ensure that the tank is sturdy and not corroded, and the capacity of the tank is clearly marked.

Owner ID	Facility ID	Name	Address 1	City	State	Capacity	Contents	Tank Status	Type
33833	5026789	SHORE BANK	BOX 920	ONLEY	VA	NULL	GASOLINE	PERM OUT OF USE	UST
43231	5010161	Theodore F Cathey or Jill Ann Cathey	25537 Coastal Blvd	Onley	VA	550	GASOLINE	TEMP OUT OF USE	UST
						550	GASOLINE	TEMP OUT OF USE	UST
						120	KEROSENE	PERM OUT OF USE	UST
26882	5010757	R.C. EVANS & SON	P.O. BOX 7	ONLEY	VA	500	GASOLINE	PERM OUT OF USE	UST
27983	5016465	FOUR CORNER TIRE AND AUTO INC	NULL	ONLEY	VA	1000	USED OIL	PERM OUT OF USE	UST
35107	5010127	T&W BLOCK; INC	RT 1615	ONLEY	VA	4000	GASOLINE	PERM OUT OF USE	UST
						550	GASOLINE	REM FROM GRD	UST
30831	5004581	BILLY DAVIS	P.O. BOX 538	ONLEY	VA	NULL	KEROSENE	PERM OUT OF USE	UST
43344	5036827	Cheers				6000	GASOLINE	CURR IN USE	UST
			25188 Lankford Highway	Onley	VA	6000	GASOLINE	CURR IN USE	UST
						12000	GASOLINE	CURR IN USE	UST
41552	5002761	Rt 13 Texaco(closed)				NULL	UNKNOWN	PERM OUT OF USE	UST

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40064	5009871	Wine Rack			20000	GASOLINE	CLS IN GRD	UST
		ExxonMobil Corporation c/o Gilbarco Veeder Root	7300 W Friendly Ave MS F76	Greensboro	NC	4000	GASOLINE	CLS IN GRD UST
						4000	GASOLINE	CLS IN GRD UST
						1000	GASOLINE	REM FROM GRD UST
40394	5039845	Floyd Terminals and Equipment Inc	36310 Lankford Hwy	Belle Haven	VA	20095	KEROSENE	NOT IN USE AST
		inactive				10836	GASOLINE	NOT IN USE AST
						11394	GASOLINE	NOT IN USE AST
						19595	DIESEL	NOT IN USE AST
						14100	DIESEL	NOT IN USE AST
						20121	FUEL OIL	NOT IN USE AST

Table 8(new) Fuel storage tanks in Onley

Source: VaDEQ. "VaDEQ does not certify this data to be all inclusive or complete. This data is provided to the citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia free of charge for informational purposes only."

**LAND USE**

The total land area of the Town is 486 acres. Of this, approximately 32% is used for residential land use. Residential land uses primarily consist of single-family dwellings located in neighborhood settings which provide a quiet and stable environment for residents and families. The family oriented character of Onley's neighborhoods is an important factor in the quality of life of the Town's residents. Commercial land use accounts for 20% of the acreage in Onley. The majority of the Town's commercial activity is concentrated along Route 13, including a large shopping center which serves a regional customer base. Recently enacted legislation has put extensive conditions on new commercial septic systems.

Approximately 46% of the land in Town is undeveloped, including both vacant land and agricultural land. Vacant land in Town consists of woodlands and undeveloped parcels. The majority of undeveloped land in Town is unsuitable for septic tank use, due to the predominance of sensitive soil types and a shallow depth-to-groundwater table. This

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causes physical limitations to future development in Town. The new Hospital is located just outside the Town's western border behind Four Corners Plaza Mall. The facility is tied to the Onancock Sewage Treatment facility as are many businesses.

Accomack County's Comprehensive Plan recommends directing future growth toward existing population centers and towns along Route 13. The Plan specifies concentrating future growth around existing population centers, where services and facilities may be most economically provided with the least damage to the environment of the area. The County's future land use map designates the land adjacent to Onley's southern boundaries as rural residential, which constitutes low density residential development. As development of the land around Onley increases, the opportunity and need for services now being provided to Onley residents may be extended to outlying areas. Land use controls of the surrounding areas will become an increasingly important issue to the Town. Expansion of the Town boundaries may be pursued as an option to ensure that compatible development occurs adjacent to the Town.

Existing land uses in the Town of Onley are shown in **Figure 7**. The use of each parcel was classified and recorded using the categories discussed below. **Table 9** lists the amount of land in each category.

Residential:	This land use category includes single-family homes. Duplexes, manufactured homes and apartments are allowed by Special Use Permit only.
Commercial/Industrial:	This land use category includes business activities, service oriented structures, offices and industrial uses.
Public/Semi-public:	This land use category includes churches, institutions and structures used by local government, and parks.
Agricultural:	This land use category includes agricultural and farming activities
Vacant:	This category includes vacant land, excluding agricultural land and parks.

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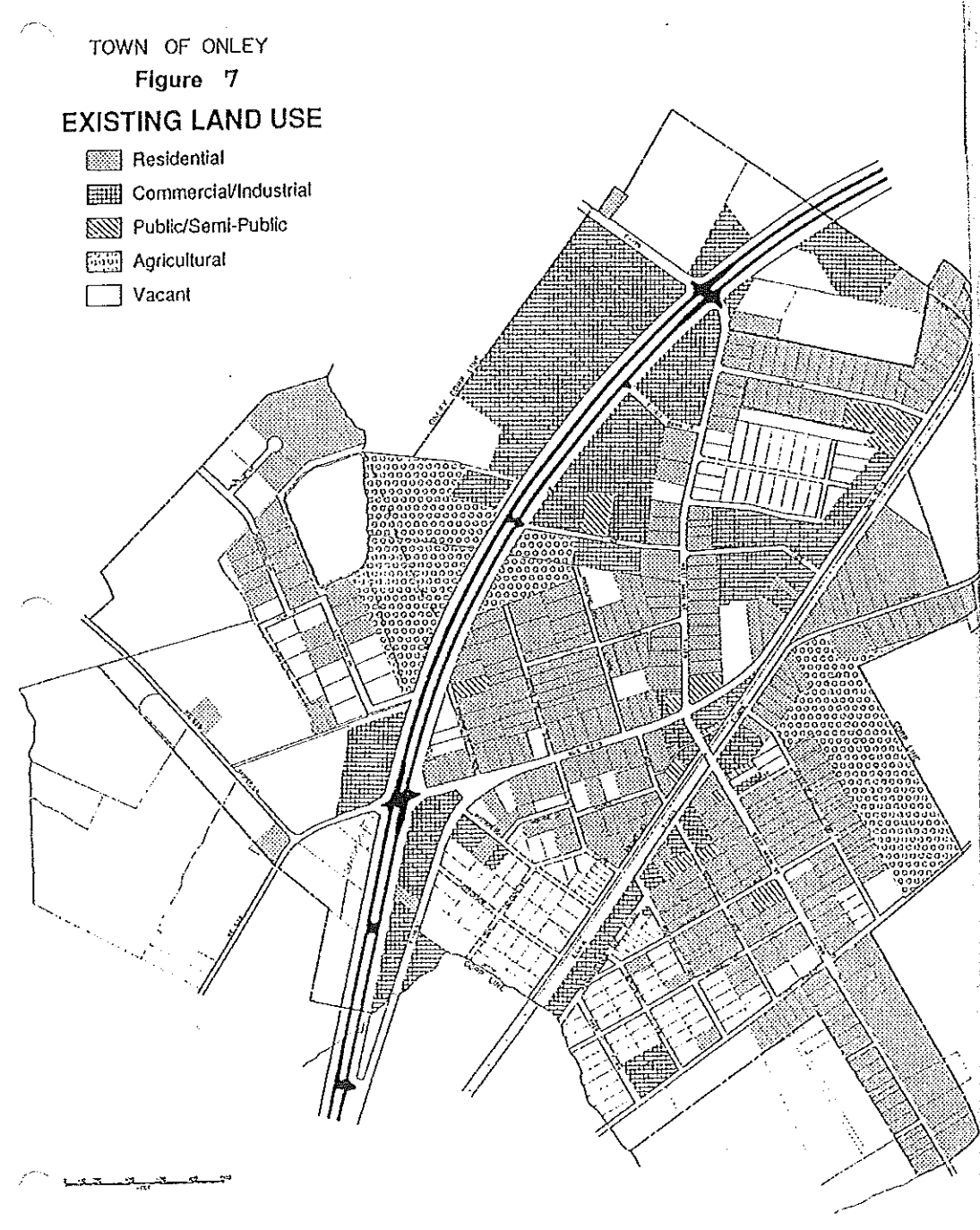


Table 9 Land Use Categories Town of Onley

Existing Land Use	Acreage	Percent of Total Area
Water	5	1%
Residential	155	32%
Commercial	95	20%
Public/Semi Public	6	1%
Agriculture	40	8%
Vacant	185	38%
<b>Total</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Land use survey, A-NPDC, 1998

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### EXISTING LAND USE

The goals and objectives in this section are based upon the inventory and analysis of existing conditions within the Town, and form the framework for public and private decision-making in Onley. Within the context of comprehensive planning, a goal is defined as a general statement about a future conditions which is considered desirable for the Town; an end towards which actions are aimed. Objectives are statements of measurable activity to be accomplished in pursuit of a goal. The goals and objectives stated below are not listed in order of priority, but rather reflect the sequence of subject headings from previous sections.

### STRUCTURES AND PROPERTIES

**Goal** Provide safe and adequate structures and properties for the residents of Onley.

**Objective** Maintain and protect existing buildings in Onley.

*Objective* Develop, approve and enforce consensus standards for properties.

**Objective** Encourage new construction that promotes and preserves the historical integrity of Onley's residential and commercial neighborhoods.



## COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Goal Maintain and improve community facilities in Onley.

- Objective Ensure that adequate facilities exist to carry out police activities and administrative functions of the Town.
- Objective Ensure that drainage facilities in Onley are adequately maintained.
- Objective Communicate with VDOT regarding maintenance and expansion of sidewalk infrastructure in the Town.
- Objective Promote town beautification through landscaping and routine maintenance.
- Objective Assess potential traffic hazards in Town and work with VDOT to minimize those hazards. Assess possibilities of installing crosswalks at controlled intersections along Route 13.
- Objective Consider the possibility of a public water and sewer system for Town residents and businesses.
- Objective Develop a community park for the use of residents.
- Objective: Encourage business development that ties in with the new Hospital.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal Facilitate new businesses and environmentally friendly industry locating within Town limits.

- Objective Encourage the development of a Business Association.
- Objective Encourage business development that ties in with the Hospital.
- Objective Promote the town businesses through the Eastern Shore Tourism Commission.
- Objective Encourage new broadband services within the town.
- Objective Encourage the development of an artist, artisan, and/or farmers market.

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- Objective Improve and maintain the Bay Coast Railroad property that has been leased by the Town of Onley.

### NATURAL RESOURCES

Goal Protect the groundwater and surface water resources of the Commonwealth from an increase in pollution.

Objective Ensure adequate implementation and enforcement of the Town's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act Program.

Objective Protect the quality and quantity of the underlying aquifers.

Objective Achieve a reduction in existing pollution sources.

Objective Promote the protection of existing wetlands.

### LAND USE

Goal Permit orderly, well planned development to meet the Town's physical and economic needs, while protecting the existing character of the Town.

Objective Promote and preserve the character of Onley's neighborhoods.

Objective Support commercial activities which are compatible with residential land use.

Objective Consider the possibility of expanding the Town's corporate limits, if future conditions warrant such expansion.

### PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION

This section of the comprehensive plan serves as a general guide, based upon the goals and objectives, and factors discussed in the Existing Conditions section. It includes recommendations of plans and actions which can be used to achieve the stated goals and objectives. The recommendations outlined in this plan should be viewed as targets, not as firm commitments or mandates. If desired results are not achieved, an evaluation should be conducted to determine the reasons so that the

Town can decide whether to continue to pursue the goals and objectives or to modify them.

## **HOUSING**

### **Encourage maintenance of all structures and properties.**

The Town has identified providing safe and adequate structures and properties for residents of Onley as a goal. The majority of residential housing stock in Onley appears to be in good condition, although numerous houses in the Town appear to be in various states of disrepair. It is important to preserve and protect the existing housing stock in Town to ensure that adequate housing, structures and properties are available to meet the needs of the residents. The Town should encourage maintenance of all existing housing, structures, out buildings and properties so that substandard conditions are reduced or eliminated. Several federal and state funding sources are potentially available to assist low-to-moderate income residents with building rehabilitation. Interested homeowners should be encouraged by the Town to apply for available funding sources. The Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission is the regional government agency which administers housing assistance funding on the Eastern Shore.

The Town should review Volume II of the State Building Code, which establishes regulations to enforce the repair or clearance of dilapidated structures. The Town may wish to consider developing such an ordinance in the future, if conditions warrant such enforcement.

Encourage new housing that promotes and preserves the character of Onley's residential neighborhoods.

Recommend that the Town Council adopt ordinances that discourage derelict structures and/or properties.

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

### **Provide adequate facilities for police activities and administrative functions of the Town.**

It is important that Onley's Town Office be of sufficient size to accommodate the Police Department and the administrative functions of the Town. The Town Office was constructed over 65 years ago and may not meet the current needs of the Town.

**Work with VDOT and Accomack County to maintain and improve drainage facilities in Town.**

Maintenance of drainage ditches in the Town is the responsibility of VDOT and Accomack County. It is important that the Town maintain a working relationship with VDOT and Accomack County to ensure that the ditches are properly maintained so that drainage problems are reduced after periods of heavy rain. The town should continue monitoring problem areas and reporting them promptly to VDOT and Accomack County.

**Ensure the maintenance of existing sidewalks and explore the possibility of additional sidewalks.**

The Town should continue working with VDOT to ensure that the existing sidewalks in Onley are maintained in a satisfactory condition. The Town should also consider expanding its sidewalk infrastructure through a combination of grants, assessments, and appropriations. Several Town residents have expressed interest in additional sidewalks. The Town should pursue this possibility through public meetings with Town residents to assess needs and potential sites of additional sidewalks, and through coordination with VDOT to clarify development and maintenance issues.

**Improve the appearance of the Town through landscaping, and regular maintenance of vegetation.**

The appearance of the Town could be improved by landscaping and routine maintenance of existing vegetation. The Town should ensure that public areas, such as the railroad right-of-way, are mowed and maintained on a regular and frequent basis during the summer months, to ensure that overgrowth does not occur. The Town has been made more attractive through the utilization of landscaping in several public areas. The Town erected attractive entrance signs, which could be greatly enhanced through low maintenance shrubbery, such as low growing juniper and holly bushes. Perennials which are carefree and dependable, such as lilies, could be used to add seasonal color.

**Work with VDOT to assess and reduce potential traffic and pedestrian hazards in Town.**

Residents of Onley have expressed concern regarding a number of potential traffic and pedestrian hazards in Town, including hazardous intersections, limited sight lines and speeding. The Town should continue assessment of potential hazards in Onley, and promote the use of adequate traffic controls, street signs and other traffic facilities, if deemed necessary.

**Consider the possibility of public water and sewer for the Town.**

Most of the soils in Onley are unsuitable for onsite septic systems for sewage treatment, due to wetness, a shallow depth-to-water table, and poor filtering capability. New state

regulations require the bottom of drainfields to be 18 inches above the seasonal high water table. The majority of remaining vacant land in the Town cannot be developed because of these sensitive soil types, unless the Town gains access to central sewage or through the use of alternative systems. The County of Accomack and the Town of Onancock are researching the possibility of central wastewater treatment. The cost of a central water and sewage system would require a major capital outlay that is beyond the fiscal capability of the Town, but may be viable through state and federal grant funding sources. The Town should promote a working relationship with Accomack County and the Town of Onancock to identify and investigate potential grants and other funding sources, as they become available, which would assist the Town in studying the feasibility of developing central sewage and water in Onley. The Town should consider a municipal water system possibly starting by installing water mains for fire protection and future potable domestic use.

**Consider building a park for the use of the residents.**

The Town should study the feasibility of acquiring present vacant land within the town limits. Once acquired the land should be designed for use by various age groups. This could afford birding, walking and biking trails, playground facilities and picnic area/pavilion.

**Develop the BCRR property.**

The BCRR property which is being leased by the Town from the Bay Coast Railroad is being developed by The Society for the Preservation of Onley Train Station, (SPOTS) a private not-for-profit 501(c) 3 corporation registered in the state of Virginia. A Memorandum of Understanding exists between the Town of Onley and SPOTS Inc.

The station which was a dirt filled derelict structure with a leaking roof in 2009 was scheduled for destruction by the BCRR. However, thanks to the contributions of the Town of Onley, as well as other major contributors who have a stake in SPOTS' success, the station is now a completely refurbished habitable structure, with electricity, plumbing, heating and air conditioning. An architecturally complementary addition has been constructed on the south end of the Station containing an ADA compliant bathroom and small multipurpose meeting room. The main room in the station is filled with three different gauges of model railroads on extensive layouts with beautiful scenery. This has proven a strong draw for children and adults alike.

All major construction is now complete and usage of the station has begun. Boy Scout Merit Badge classes are currently being held in the building. Future plans revolve around raising money to operate the premises by showcasing the building, making the station and surrounding acreage a destination for the Town of Onley. Events involving the Fire Station, the Vietnam Veterans of America, the Artisans Guild and Art League are in discussion. Story time for the pre-school children is also planned.

The SPOTS Corporation is providing a valuable service in the Town of Onley. The Town should continue to encourage its efforts and aid in marketing and advertising the Station's events in our mutual benefit.

### **Economic Development**

The Town should try to attract new businesses and environmentally friendly industry to locate within the town limits by encouraging the development of a business association, promoting Town businesses through the Eastern Shore Tourism Commission, and the Chamber of Commerce. Encourage an artist and/or artisan community to draw tourism to the town.

### **NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Continue working with Accomack County to ensure adequate administrative and review procedures and reporting requirements, for implementation of the Town's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act Program.**

**Protect existing wetlands within the Town limits.**

The Town recognizes that the citizens of Virginia and of the Eastern Shore are dependent upon the economic benefits derived from the Chesapeake Bay. In acknowledging the importance of this, the Town has identified the protection of surface water and groundwater resources of the Commonwealth from an increase in pollution as one of its goals, and has adopted a Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area Overlay District as part of its zoning ordinance. In order to effectively enforce the Overlay District, it is important that the Town continue working with Accomack County to ensure adequate delineation of Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas, and appropriate administrative procedures to assure that development conforms to the requirements of the Overlay District. The use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) should be encouraged by the Town for development within the Town's Overlay District. BMPs are designed to reduce the impact of non-point source pollution resulting from stormwater runoff, and include land management techniques, such as site design which minimizes land disturbance and impervious cover, vegetated buffers along shorelines, and the preservation of existing vegetation on site. BMPs can also include structures such as wet ponds and infiltration trenches, which reduce the impacts of stormwater runoff.

**Educate and inform the Town about water quality protection and specific program requirements of the Town's Bay Act Program.**

In order to ensure adequate implementation of the Town's Bay Act program, it is

important for the citizens of Onley to be informed about the Bay Act. The Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Department has published *A Guide to the Bay Act*, which provides a general overview of the Bay Act for citizens residing in the Bay watershed. The Town keeps copies of this publication available at the Town Office so that residents can be knowledgeable of the purpose and intent of the Bay Act.

**Promote water conservation through education of the Town's citizens through the Town newsletter.**

Onley, along with the entire Eastern Shore of Virginia, depends upon groundwater as its sole source of drinking water. Groundwater is a limited resource, and water conservation should be encouraged by the Town through the promotion of public education and the encouragement of water conserving fixtures for new construction and remodeling.

**Reduce existing pollution sources in Onley.**

The Town should continue working with Accomack County to ensure that septic tanks are pumped out every five years, and to ensure that within Town limits abandoned septic tanks are properly sealed or removed. Commercial septic tanks should be pumped every two years. Although properly functioning septic systems are an effective means of treating biodegradable waste, they are not designed to treat chemical waste. Engine oil, gasoline, paints, solvents, pesticides and other chemicals disposed of in septic systems exit the system untreated and pose threats to the groundwater supply.

The Town should also work with Accomack County and the State Water Control Board to adequately assess the threat from existing underground storage tanks through the tracking of underground tanks and the identification of tanks that are at risk of corrosion and leakage.

Prohibit future siting of major polluting activities in Onley. Protecting groundwater quality in Onley is especially important because a portion of land within the Town lies within the groundwater recharge spine. It is very important to protect the spine recharge area in order to assure continued water quality and quantity of groundwater in the Eastern Shore. Future siting of major polluting activities, such as landfills and septage lagoons, should be prohibited in the Town.

## LAND USE

### **Promote orderly and well planned development in the Town of Onley.**

The Future Land Use Map, shown in **Figure 8**, is an important element of the Town's Comprehensive Plan. This map guides the physical development of the Town over the long term, and graphically portrays the desired future land use pattern based on the goals, objectives and recommendations set forth in the Plan. Together, the map and written text serve as development guidelines for public and private decisions regarding land development, and serve as the basis for the Town's Zoning Ordinance. They also serve as informational tools for the general public. The Future Land Use Map does not differ substantially from the existing land uses in the Town. In keeping with the Town's goal of protecting the existing character of Onley, the Future Land Use Map generally promotes the continuation of current land uses, and contains three land use categories which are discussed below.





**Industrial:** This land use category is limited to two small areas of land. One is adjacent to the railroad tracks, where a house moving company and a bulk petroleum depot are located. The other area is at the northern end of town between Coastal Blvd. and West Main Street where a block and concrete manufacturing company is located. The intent of this land use category is to allow for the continuation of the existing industrial activity on these sites. Activities such as noise, dust, vibration, odor, traffic and other adverse off-site impacts, should be minimal. As these businesses dissolve, this land use category should be minimized or eliminated.

**Consider expanding the corporate limits of the Town to provide areas for continued residential growth.**

Accomack County's Comprehensive Plan specifies directing future growth of the County to existing towns and population centers along Route 13, including the Town of Onley. The County Plan also specifies land adjacent to Onley's southern boundaries as an area for encouraging future residential growth. As residential development on land adjacent to Onley increases, the Town should continue to pursue expanding its corporate limits, through boundary adjustments so that it can provide for continued growth, and to ensure that new development is appropriate and compatible with the existing development of the Town and does not detract from the Town's character.