Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)
Citizen's Cafe — *Minutes*

DATE & TIME

February 12, 2026, from 6:00 – 8:00 pm

LOCATION

Option 1: In-person

Delaware Center for the Inland Bays office
39375 Inlet Road
Rehoboth Beach, DE 19971

Option 2: Zoom

Join Zoom Meeting
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83174379002
Meeting ID: 831 7437 9002

One tap mobile
+16469313860,,83174379002# US
+19292056099,,83174379002# US (New York)

Dial by your location
Meeting ID: 831 7437 9002
Find your local number: https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kcEQnCJBLu

ATTENDEES (35)

- Meeting called to order by: Richard Watson
- CAC members (8):
  - Attending (8): in-person (4); virtual (4)
    Dennis Bartow, Lee Bunting, Irene Legiec, Cheryl Rehrig, Ken Sigvardson, Claire Simmers, Richard Watson, Cheryl Winston
  - Absent (6): Gail Dubowe, Tianyin (Tia) Ouyang, Ken Silverstein, Jay Headman, Frank Piorko, Mary Kunst
- Public (21): 5 in person; 16 virtual
- Center staff (6): 6 in person; 0 virtual

AGENDA
Topic: *Resilience in the Inland Bays Watershed: Adapting, Protecting, and Thriving*

Executive Summary
The quarterly meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee focused on coastal resilience and impacts of a changing climate in Delaware's Inland Bays. Danielle Swallow, a Coastal Hazards Specialist with Delaware Sea Grant, presented on new Delaware climate projections while Megan Noe Fellows shared findings from the Southern Delaware Coastal Resilience Project. The meeting highlighted the need for both individual property resilience measures and community-scale solutions. The Center also shared its developing a new strategic plan that emphasizes resilience.

6:00-6:20 pm — Welcome and Introductions
The meeting began with introductions from Lisa Swanger, Director of Outreach and Education, who explained the committee's role at the Center. Richard Watson introduced the theme for the year, focusing on resilience in the Inland Bays watershed and shared how each meeting will explore resilience at different scales, recognizing that meaningful progress comes from the combined efforts of individuals, organizations, and decision-makers. This meeting focused on the individual scale—exploring what "resilience" means and the environmental changes in the Inland Bays, while highlighting key resources for individuals.

6:20-7:10pm — Guest Speaker
Building Climate Resilience into Our Way of Life
Danielle Swallow - Coastal Hazards Specialist, Delaware Sea Grant
dswallow@udel.edu
(302) 645-4258

Delaware Sea Grant, based at the University of Delaware, is a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration partnership program focused on science-based conservation, sustainable use, and management of Delaware's coastal resources. It supports coastal communities through research, education, and extension, particularly in areas of hazard resilience (e.g., flooding), aquaculture, and healthy ecosystems.

A Changing Climate
Danielle explained the difference between weather and climate, emphasizing that while weather refers to short-term conditions, climate represents long-term patterns. She discussed the impact of global warming, driven by increased greenhouse gases since the Industrial Revolution, leading to rapid Earth warming. Danielle also described the process of climate projections, highlighting the use of sophisticated models and scenarios to predict future climate conditions, acknowledging the uncertainty due to unpredictable human actions on greenhouse gas emissions.

Delaware Climate Projections Overview
Danielle presented climate projections for Delaware, highlighting temperature increases

of 3-4 degrees by mid-century and 5-9 degrees by 2100, with winter showing the strongest warming trends. She noted that precipitation has increased by 3 inches since 1895, with 2-4 more inches expected annually by mid-century, while sea level rise has accelerated since 2000, projecting over a foot of rise by 2050. Danielle emphasized that current observations align closely with intermediate-low scenarios, suggesting more optimistic planning ranges than previously projected, though she advised that actual rates could shift toward intermediate-high scenarios after 2050.

Climate Change and Delaware Flooding
Danielle presented on the impacts of climate change on Delaware's flood regime, highlighting projections of increased high-tide flooding days and the potential for a new flood regime by the end of the century. She emphasized the importance of maintaining healthy wetlands as a natural defense against flooding, while also discussing the need to consider saltwater intrusion, groundwater table rise, and compound flooding in future planning. Danielle concluded by emphasizing the importance of resilience, particularly in terms of recovery time, and the need to actively maintain wetlands and infrastructure to reduce impacts and speed up recovery from future events.

Community Resilience and Adaptation Strategies
Danielle discussed personal and community resilience strategies, focusing on individual homeowner perspectives and adaptation measures. She emphasized knowing local hazards, elevation, and drainage patterns, as well as maintaining stormwater infrastructure and trees for flood protection and temperature regulation. She highlighted the importance of community-wide adaptation and preparedness efforts, including supporting emergency responders, expanding CERT training, and participating in the FEMA Community Rating System to reduce flood insurance premiums.

Climate Visualization for Coastal Planning
Danielle discussed her partnership with Climate Central to bring Flood Vision to Delaware, which involves capturing photorealistic images of flood risk around the coast. She emphasized that these images are intended for municipal, county, and state agency use to support planning, not for individual homeowners. She highlighted the importance of using visual aids to communicate the impact of sea level rise and storm surges, as they can be more impactful than discussing climate change abstractly. She also mentioned her work on evacuation planning for older adults and her involvement in a statewide climate network focused on resilience and sustainability.

Sussex County Coastal Resilience Planning
The presentation also included coastal resilience and emergency preparedness in Sussex County. Danielle discussed the need for emergency response planning, particularly for unincorporated areas.

7:20 -7:50 pm — Center Speaker
Growing Coastal Resilience
Meghan Noe Fellows Director, Estuary Science and Restoration, Center for the Inland

Bays. mnoefellows@inlandbays.org (302) 226-8105 ext. 723

Meghan highlighted the Southern Delaware Coastal Resilience Plan and community conversations about resilience which identified key stressors such as habitat loss, water quality, flooding, and erosion as top community concerns. The project aims to gauge public sentiment and plan for future resilience efforts, though Meghan noted community engagement was somewhat limited due to competing plans and events.

Meghan also presented findings from a community poll showing high concern about climate change and identified flooding, habitat, and water quality as key stressors.

The attendees discussed the need to better define and communicate coastal resilience. There is a need to develop a webpage and educational materials. Irene (CAC member) raised questions about building codes in flood zones, highlighting the need to balance development with environmental protection.

7:50-7:55 pm — Public Comment

Richard Watson asked if there were any public comments either from those attending in person or those attending virtually. There were no public comments from either in person attendees or virtual attendees.

7:55-8:15 pm — CAC Discussion & CIB Updates

- Approval of CAC meeting minutes - October 23, 2025. Approved as written and circulated
- Center Updates

  Aligning resilience focus in the Delaware Center for the Inland Bays' 2026-2028, Christophe Tulou, Executive Director. Christophe updated the group on the Center's strategic plan, which has a major emphasis on resilience.

2025 CAC Meeting Schedule

6:00 - 8:00 PM

Thursday, February 12, 2026
Thursday, April 16, 2026
Thursday, August 27, 2026
Thursday, October 22, 2026