



Community Engagement with the weTable in Maryland

University of Maryland Sea Grant Extension works with local stakeholders, community leaders, and citizens on issues concerning the Chesapeake Bay. The Bay’s estuary is a national treasure, with natural and economic resources on which Marylanders depend for their livelihood and recreation. That resource is threatened by the rising sea level, changing land uses, and increasing non-point source pollution. Maryland Sea Grant Extension agents are prepared to face those challenges using participatory planning technologies. The weTable is an ideal tool for enhancing public engagement processes and creating an interactive dialogue. By transforming a tabletop into an interactive map, database, and decision making platform, Sea Grant Extension Specialists facilitate collaborative planning and conversations about resource management.

What is the weTable?

Affordable...Engaging...Easy...Collaborative...Fun
mounting the projector on a tripod, the weTable technology allows the computer screen to be projected onto virtually any surface with participants interacting with the table, wall, or floor using a “light” pen as one uses a computer mouse. A Nintendo Wii Remote™ (Wiimote) communicates the pen’s location to the



Workshop attendees at the University of Maryland learn to engage and facilitate meetings using the weTable.

laptop using a Bluetooth connection. Participants share control of the projected screen by passing the pen, marking up images of maps, adding comments, and modeling scenarios on the table with a click of the pen.

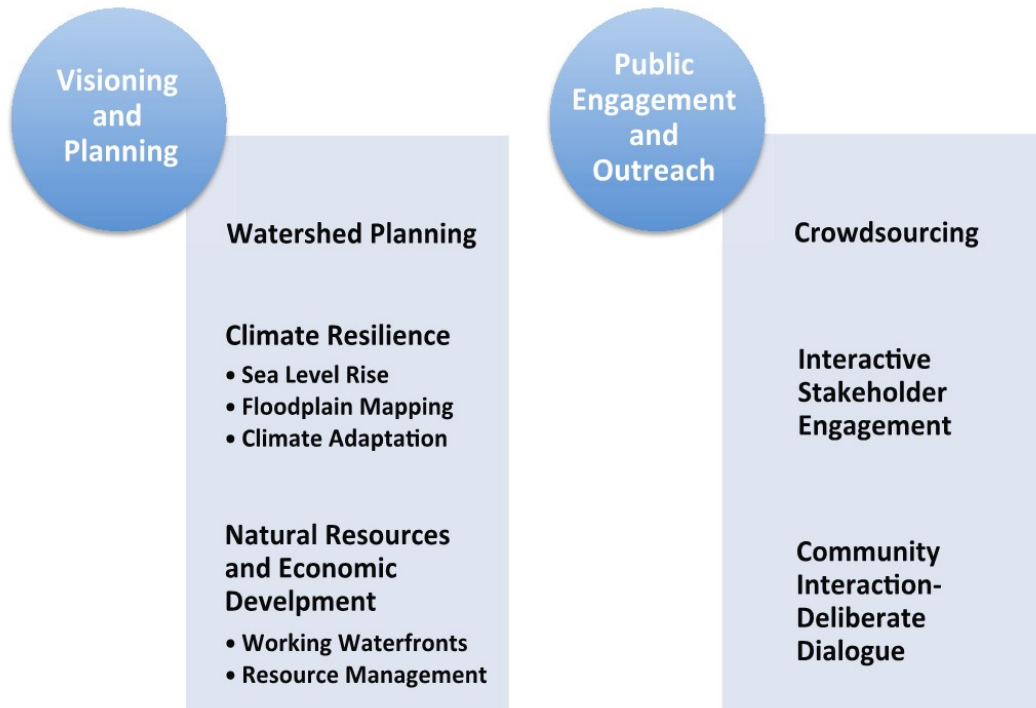


The weTable, based around the popular Nintendo Wii gaming platform, provides opportunities for individuals and organizations to share data, seek input, and support informed decision-making.

This affordable participation tool allows teams to collaboratively explore Chesapeake Bay issues and use computer-based data and programs in a workshop setting. The weTable enhances simple communication tools like maps, charts, and pens—while the supporting technology seamlessly operates in the background. Participants can easily use the interface with very little instruction and the weTable allows them to focus on what matters most in a meeting--collaboration with fellow participants.

The use of “Wiimote-whiteboard” technology for participatory Geographic Information Systems (GIS) was pioneered by Placematters, a non-profit dedicated to improving decision making at the community level. Placeways LLC, a company specializing in geographic information systems (GIS) and planning software, utilized the weTable with scenario planning applications, and the Texas Sea Grant College Program at Texas A&M University enhanced the configuration for coastal communities.

Maryland Sea Grant Extension uses the weTable to enhance:



The weTable is an Effective Planning and Outreach Tool

Maryland Sea Grant Extension agents are using weTable technology in Maryland to facilitate communication and planning for land use and sea level rise, as well as floodplain and watershed management.

Participants can turn layers on and off in mapping tools like GIS or Google Earth, while decision making software converts storm surge scenarios to dollar values based on future land uses. The weTable is also effective as an outreach tool. Since the weTable can be projected onto any surface, it can go everywhere and be used by anyone. Using drawing tools and web-based interactive games, the outreach component of the weTable is both interactive and educational for the audience. If you would like us to engage your stakeholders using weTable technology, contact us at the e-mail or phone number listed below. Visit us: www.mdsg.umd.edu/wetable



Participants can interact with the weTable images by pointing and clicking a "light" pen (just like a computer mouse), marking up maps, adding comments, and playing through various scenarios.

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