

Is St. Mary's County sinking?

Posted by [Martin Fairclough](#) On 09/05/2017

Leonardtown, MD - I have recently been having the recurring thought that St. Mary's County maybe sinking.

Given the apparent pace of new development in St. Mary's County, lots and lots of new homes, shopping centers, in fact on certain days one can imagine while stuck in traffic on 235 that we have become Northern Virginia, the SUVs and trucks are growing exponentially it seems, in size, weight and numbers. Maybe it is just too much.

I have been feeling under siege and fearful that we are actually placing so much weight on this little peninsula that we may sink. When I moved to the "Land of Pleasant Living" two decades ago there was no rush hour.

As my worries increased, I decided to pay a visit to a fine gentleman who might be able to alleviate my fears. Bill Hines who is the St. Mary's County director of Land Use and Growth Management.

After expressing my concerns, Bill assured me that we are well organized and governed in such way so the county is developed with mandates detailed in a [Comprehensive Land Use Master Plan](#) which has taken all of my concerns of a disappearing rural environment into consideration. The plan guarantees that we will maintain a balance in the development of the county. A balance between development and open space. I asked if there was any danger by sheer weight and concentration of development in designated areas if we could be sinking. He assured me I should not worry, however, if I lived in the Norfolk-Hampton Roads area in Virginia I would be sinking and having a double whammy of rising sea levels.

The problem in the Norfolk area is due to a fateful convergence of lousy luck. First, the seas are generally rising as the planet warms. Second, the Gulf Stream is circulating more slowly, causing more water to slosh toward the North Atlantic coast. In 2012, the U.S. Geological Survey declared a 600-mile stretch of coastline, from North Carolina's Cape Hatteras to Boston, a "sea-level rise hotspot," with rates increasing at three to four times the global average.

Third, the land around Norfolk is sinking, a phenomenon called "subsidence," due in part to continuing adjustments in the earth's crust to the melting of glaciers from the last ice age. Plus, the city is slowly sinking into the crater of a meteor that slammed into the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay 35 million years ago.

Now I have removed one of the worries from my worry bucket I can focus on the guy with the funny haircut in North Korea.

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