On the Road to Hooper Island

Alan Weltzien

Days of rain puddle the shoulders southwest of the refuge. Mist thickens above the tidal swamps. Loblolly pine stands give way to Fishing Creek, narrow finger between Chesapeake Bay and Hongo River, fat estuary.

Water pools in yards. Bay and river lap the roadbed. Through the gauze the arch of bridge emerges, bow strung from water to water. We rise, cross to Hooper Island, pass a scarce string of houses, temporary islands, where the road ends. Inches separate land from sea as in the Everglades or Amsterdam without dikes. The sea level rises twice as fast in the Chesapeake as elsewhere. The SUV’s tires splash through pavement under water and Hooper Island settles in mud, an illusion pausing on its way to Atlantis, its stand of trees like the road a momentary buffer before the next hurricane adds to the rising oceans, the slide of subsidence.

I blink and it disappears in the rain.