From My Backyard to Our Bay

A Talbot County Homeowner’s Guide:
Actions to Improve the Water Quality of the Chesapeake Bay
The Chesapeake Bay Needs Your Help

What is Threatening the Bay?

Nitrogen. Phosphorus. Sediment. These are the major factors responsible for the decline of water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, and main focus for current efforts to restore the Bay.

Nitrogen and Phosphorus are essential to the growth of living organisms in the Bay, however, too much nitrogen and phosphorus stimulate a cycle of algae blooms leading to dangerously low oxygen levels that in turn, accelerates marine animal and plant death and threatens the delicate ecosystem.

Sediment is soil that washes into the Bay with runoff and shoreline erosion. Excess sediment particles in the Bay block the sunlight required for plants to grow and smother oyster beds.

In our daily routines, we continue to add nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment and other pollutants to the Bay. Lawn and crop fertilization, animal waste disposal, poorly maintained septic systems, soil disturbance, and tail pipe emissions, all contribute to the growing pollution in our Bay, making it impossible for the Bay to use effectively its own defense systems to maintain its health.

Who is Responsible?

Every one of us. Each man, woman and child can make a difference. First, we must understand what impact our actions have. Second, we must take responsibility for changing our activities which contribute to the degradation of the Bay. EACH OF US CAN TAKE ACTION.

What Can You Do?

From My Backyard to Our Bay offers solutions for living in harmony with the Bay. It describes the basic mechanics of how we pollute, and provides specific “Bay-Wise” directions to reduce the nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment and other pollutants that flow into the Bay. Through the University of Maryland’s (UME) Talbot County Master Gardener Bay-Wise program, over 100 volunteers teach Bay-Wise methods to County residents. Please take the time to read this short publication from cover to cover, and you will be surprised at how easy it can be to carry out Bay-Wise best practices!

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- Talbot County Department of Environmental Health
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Managing Pollution. This conceptual diagram illustrates pollution sources and their associated Best Management Practices. Diagram courtesy of the Integration and Application Network (www.ian.umces.edu) University of Maryland Center for Environmental Sciences.
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