

Outdoor Fun on the Chesapeake Bay

The Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries support thousands of plant and wildlife species, and host a breadth of recreational activities for local residents. Parks throughout the Bay area provide families a place for swimming, biking, hiking, camping, kayaking, and fishing during the summer months.

Mattawoman Creek: Clean Water for Wildlife and You

Mattawoman Creek, a 30-mile tributary to the Potomac River, flows through Prince George's and Charles Counties. It is a healthy, biologically diverse, and prime recreation spot within the Chesapeake Bay area. Out of 137 watersheds in Maryland, Mattawoman Creek ranked eighth for freshwater stream biodiversity. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources has cataloged 54 species of fish within the Mattawoman Creek's estuary, tributaries, and wetlands, and it is one of the most productive spawning areas for fish species, such as shad and herring. The largemouth bass population is so plentiful that Mattawoman Creek is a regular stop for national bass fishing tournaments.



Figure 1. Anglers fishing on the Mattawoman.

The abundance of Mattawoman Creek entices people, especially anglers, from all over the East Coast. But, increasing development in the area threatens the beauty and value of the creek to local wildlife and recreation.

Polluted Stormwater Runoff and the Chesapeake Bay

Like many areas around the Chesapeake Bay, urban growth along Mattawoman Creek has created more impenetrable hard surfaces from roads, buildings, and sidewalks. As runoff flows over these surfaces into the waterways, it picks up pollutants, such as nutrients and oil that worsen water quality and destroy aquatic habitats. Charles County is working to reduce polluted runoff, and to preserve the area's thriving aquatic ecosystem by:

1. Planting native species of plants and trees to absorb runoff, provide shade, and create natural food sources and habitat for wildlife.
2. Using porous paving to let rainwater soak into the ground and replenish groundwater and streams.
3. Protecting the stream valley vegetation and avoiding development in these areas when possible.
4. Using bioretention (gardens) to filter pollutants from runoff and let rainwater soak into the ground. Bioretention is a good way to remove common pollutants, such as heavy metals and oil.





Figure 2. American Lotus (*Nelumbo lutea*) blooms in July and August on the Mattawoman.

Help Keep the Bay Clean for Wildlife and You

Whether you like to swim, fish or boat in the Mattawoman Creek or other streams and rivers in the Chesapeake Bay region, you can take simple actions to keep the water and aquatic wildlife safe from invasive species, pollution, and toxins. On your next outing, remember to:

- Put your trash in a trash can, not on the ground, down a storm drain, or in the water.
- Pick up after your pets.
- Use fishing tackle or weights made from bismuth, steel, ceramic, or tungsten. Fishing tackle made from lead is heavy, but toxic. It will poison wildlife, such as loons and eagles.
- Clean boats, waders, and boots to avoid spreading invasive species, such as didymo, an invasive alga, to different water bodies.
(<http://www.epa.gov/region8/water/didymosphenia/>)
- Use live bait caught from same body of water that it will be used in or bait purchased from a local bait shop.
- Never transfer fish from one body of water to another.

Visit the websites below for more information.

<http://www.chesapeakebay.net/issues>

<http://www.mattawomanwatershedsociety.org/home>

http://www.charlescountymd.gov/sites/default/files/pgm/planning/mattawoman_brochure.pdf

<http://www.dnr.state.md.us/fisheries/rec/index.asp>

