

PROTECTING THE CHESAPEAKE BAY

The Chesapeake Bay is the largest, most biologically diverse estuary in the United States. Our activities at Goddard Space Flight Center and at home ultimately affect the health of the Bay. As runoff from rain, melting snow, or irrigation flows over land or through the ground it can become polluted with common items, such as trash, oil, antifreeze, pesticides, or even grass before it is channeled through our local waterways into the Bay. An increase in sediment runoff clouds water and blocks vital sunlight from submerged plants. An excess of nutrient-rich phosphorus and nitrogen cause excessive algae growth. When algae decompose, they reduce or eliminate oxygen needed by aquatic life to survive.

It may seem that the pollution coming from your single household is minimal, but if you multiply that by all of the homes in your neighborhood, the impact could be significant. What can you do to help reduce storm water pollution at your home? Try to minimize storm water runoff and pollutants from your property. Here are some helpful tips:

- Don't litter. Pick up trash lying around outside your home, including in the street.
- Make sure your car is not leaking any fluids, such as oil or antifreeze.
- Create permeable surfaces, such as wood decks, bricks, and concrete lattice to soak up and filter water.
- Redirect your rain gutters to a well-vegetated area. The runoff will be less likely to stream down storm drains and pick up debris and other forms of pollution along the way.
- Sweep up dirt, grass, leaves, and twigs and put them back into your garden or into a yard waste container or compost pile instead of using a hose to clean your sidewalk or driveway.
- Limit the amount of fertilizers used and don't apply them before a rainfall. The rain could wash the fertilizer into storm drains or a local waterway.
- Collect storm water runoff and rainwater in rain barrels for use in the yard and watering the garden.
- Allow thick vegetation or buffer strips to grow along the bank of a local waterway to slow runoff and filter or soak up pollutants. This also helps to prevent erosion.

For more information, visit the following web sites:

- Maryland Department of the Environment - <http://www.mde.state.md.us>
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources - <http://www.dnr.state.md.us>
- Chesapeake Program - <http://www.chesapeakebay.net/helpbay.htm>
- Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay - <http://www.acb-online.org/>

You can help make a difference!



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