



Chesapeake Bay Facts

- Major Rivers/Watersheds that feed the Chesapeake Bay:
 - Susquehanna River
 - Potomac River
 - Patuxent River
 - Choptank River
 - Severn River
 - Magothy River
 - Patapsco River
 - Gunpowder River
 - Back River
 - Middle River
 - Bird River
- The Chesapeake Bay holds more than 18 trillion gallons of water.
- One inch of rain that falls on a one mile, two-lane highway produces approximately 90,000 gallons of water.
- Half of the Bay's water volume is from the Atlantic Ocean. The rest is drained from the 64,000-square-mile watershed.
- The Bay is approximately 200 miles long, stretching from Havre de Grace, Maryland, to Virginia Beach, Virginia.
- The Bay's width ranges from four miles near Aberdeen, Maryland, to 30 miles near Cape Charles, Virginia.
- The Bay and its tidal tributaries have 11,684 miles of shoreline.
- The Bay supports more than 2,700 species of plants and animals, including 348 species of finfish and 173 species of shellfish.
- The Bay produces about 500 million pounds of seafood per year.

(More)

What pollutants affect the Chesapeake Bay and tributaries?

- **Sediment** - Soil particles carried by storm water runoff from commercial, agricultural, residential, construction and highway sources. Sediment/silt deposits obscure water clarity and damage aquatic life habitat. Sediment build-up displaces water and leads to further stream bank erosion. Sediment deposits change underwater habitat and affect aquatic life reproduction. In addition, recreational and commercial boats/vessels are cut-off from previously accessible areas of water due to new shallows that are created as a result of sediment deposits. Sediment carries with it nutrients that create unwanted algae growth. In more urbanized areas, as water moves rapidly across impervious surfaces such as roofs and roadways, it enters streams and significantly erodes their banks, creating mass sediment to enter a water way (see photo below).



Photo of Chesapeake Bay after heavy rain.

- **Nitrogen** – Mostly found in agriculture runoff from fertilizers and/or animal waste, nitrogen levels are blamed for increasing algae blooms that deplete water of essential oxygen. This creates “dead zones” where aquatic life cannot be sustained.
- **Phosphorus** - Phosphorus is an essential element for plant life, but when there is too much of it in water, it can speed up growth of algae causing algal blooms that block sunlight to submerged aquatic vegetation. When the algal blooms die back, their decomposition causes a reduction in dissolved oxygen (which is needed by aquatic organisms).

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