



Chesapeake Residents Unaware of Bay Pollutant Sources

Nutrient enrichment from farm- and home-based fertilizers elude survey respondents as key sources of Chesapeake Bay Pollution

In a recent study conducted by the University of Maryland and the Alliance for Chesapeake Bay, Chesapeake Bay area residents identified farming as one of the least serious pollution problems facing the Bay, when it is, in fact, one of the most serious. This misconception, however, was not based on a lack of concern for the health of Chesapeake Bay. On the contrary, the survey found strong support for cleaning up the bay from local residents as well as those living as far as 100 miles away. Survey respondents cited protecting aquatic life as the most important reason for cleaning up the Chesapeake - ahead of eating seafood and swimming.

This survey has identified some extremely important information for those of us concerned about protecting coastal fish habitat. First of all, people care about protecting our marine resources. However, these same people seem to be unaware of the role they play in marine resource health. Based on survey responses, Chesapeake residents don't understand the extremely negative impact that the cumulative actions of individuals have on the bay ecosystem. Respondents were also unaware that the water quality of Chesapeake Bay has improved over the last ten years; while they felt that state governments were not putting enough

effort into bay restoration.

The second important take home message from this survey is that we, as educators, are not getting the word out that water quality in a degraded marine ecosystem *can* be improved, and that the cumulative impacts of individuals can be extremely harmful to marine environments. Since people already care about these resources, perhaps they would be more likely to take actions that minimize their impacts if they were aware of the effects of their actions, and had the knowledge that restoring these resources is not a hopeless task.

The cumulative impacts of individuals can be extremely harmful to marine environments.

To learn about some simple things you can do to reduce water pollution, get a free copy of *Baybook: A Guide to Reducing Water Pollution at Home* by calling 1-800-662-CRIS or write Chesapeake Regional Information Service (CRIS), P.O. Box 1982, Richmond, VA, 23216. Please Note: even though this information is focused on the Chesapeake region, most principles apply coastwise.



KILLERS FROM THE OOZE:

Nutrient Rich Polluted Effluent Implicated in Fish-Killing Algae Attacks

It's hard to imagine. A species of phytoplankton which can lay dormant at the bottom of an estuary for years, changes itself into a toxic, self-propelled cell and releases poison to temporarily stun or kill a fish. It then transforms itself into a hungry amoeba and dines on the carcass. We didn't know any organism existed that could *do* that.

But according to Dr. JoAnn Burkholder of North Carolina State University, these organisms do exist, and have probably been around for millions of years. Recent surveys have documented their presence in Atlantic coast estuaries from Delaware to Florida.

Dr. Burkholder reasons that environmental conditions are shifting increasingly in favor of this "Killer Algae," explaining recent fish killing episodes in the Pamlico River, North Carolina. Her studies show that reproduction is heightened in the presence of phosphate, a nutrient found in commonly used fertilizers, sewage, and some industrial waste.

The Pamlico River is 4 to 5 times higher in phosphate than other estuaries because of polluted

effluent from a phosphate mining operation. Field studies in New River, North Carolina seem to show that organism concentrations are highest around sewage outfall pipes, areas also high in phosphate.

"My prediction," says Dr. Burkholder, "is that we're going to see a definite increase in harmful algae blooms unless some serious pollution prevention measures are taken."

You can help reduce nutrient pollution by taking the following steps at home or on your boat:

- ◆ Make sure your septic tank is working properly;
- ◆ Use detergents without phosphates;
- ◆ Handle trash and waste properly at sea; and
- ◆ Reduce or eliminate your use of fertilizers and pesticides.

Fisheries, Wetlands, and Jobs: The Value of Wetlands to America's Fisheries

A report recently released by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, Southeastern Fisheries Association, East Coast Fisheries Federation, Clean Water Network, and other fishery and environmental organizations documents the critical role of wetlands as the cradle of the nation's \$111 billion fishing industry. The report was prepared as part of a campaign to preserve and protect wetlands,

and the livelihood of the people who depend upon these resources.

The author of the report, William Kier, stated "This report makes clear that the future of our nation's most valuable fisheries, including salmon, crab, shrimp, striped bass, lobster, and others, depends on protecting healthy abundant wetlands. Roughly half of our nation's wetlands have already been destroyed, and we can't afford to lose any more."

For a free copy of the 24 page, easy to read, report call or write Dianne Stephan, Habitat Coordinator, ASMFC, 1776 Massachusetts Ave., #600, NW, Washington, DC, 20036; Phone (202) 452-8700.

EPA Seeks Ban on Lead Fishing Sinkers

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing a rule that will prohibit the manufacture or sale of all lead or zinc containing fishing sinkers that are one inch or under in dimension.

This rule will help prevent these small sinkers from entering the environment where they may be ingested by and poison wildlife. Banning their use and manufacture will also reduce the health threat to the fishing public. Sinkers that are owned before the rule goes into effect may still be used once the rule is promulgated. For further information or to receive a copy of the proposed rule, call EPA at (202) 554-1404.

Along the Coast

New York - Ralph Pastore of the United Fishermen's Association of New York (UFNY) reports that the Army Corps of Engineers has released a Record of Decision designating a new dumpsite for highly contaminated material dredged from the New York/New Jersey Harbor. Unfortunately, the new dumpsite is less than 1/2 mile from Coney Island beaches. Negative impacts to fisheries habitat, local recreation, and public health are anticipated.

Many migratory species such as striped bass, bluefish, fluke and flounder pass through and feed in this area, which supports a diverse benthic community. The New York legislature responded with *Bill #1372A* after UFNY brought the issue to their attention. For further information, contact Ralph Pastore, United Fishermen's Association of New York, (718) 317-1582.

Washington, D.C. - A full meeting of the Clean Water Network will be scheduled in November or December of this year if reauthorization of the Clean Water Act does not occur in this session of Congress. For further information, contact Network Coordinator Robyn Roberts (202) 624-9357.

Gulf of Mexico - Alabama Attorney General Jimmy Evans has petitioned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to require "Fisherman's Right-to-Know" postings for toxic discharges into our waterways. This petition would require facilities with discharge permits to post a sign near discharge pipes clearly identifying the facility's name, the toxic pollutants being discharged, and a name and number to call for more information.

The benefits of this program will be to recognize the right to know of fishermen and the general public about toxic discharges in local areas; help inspectors identify discharge pipes and enforce laws; provide accountability for water pollution, and educate the public about toxic threats to our waterways.

ACTION: You can become a co-petitioner by sending a short letter to EPA Administrator Carol Browner. All you need to do is cite Alabama's petition, identify the interest of your organization's members (fishing, swimming, etc.), and assert your right to know about all toxics being discharged. For a copy of a sample letter contact Dianne Stephen, ASMFC Habitat Coordinator (202) 452-8700, or write directly to: Honorable Carol Browner, Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, 401 M Street, SW, Washington, DC, 20460.

Florida - Harvesting live rock (that is hard marine substrate with living organisms attached to it) for the aquarium trade was big business in Florida, but is becoming strictly regulated because of the damage it causes to reef fish habitat. However live rock aquaculture may be the next best thing. For more information on this growing industry, write to Florida Sea Grant to obtain a copy of the brochure, *Live Rock Aquaculture: A Guide to Getting Started*. Florida Sea Grant, University of Florida, P.O. Box 110409, Gainesville, Florida, 32611.

Clean Water Act Reauthorization

The shifting sands of Congress seem to have lowered the priority of reauthorizing the Clean Water Act this year, but then again maybe not. It is still important to let your representatives in Washington know what you want to see in an updated Clean Water Act.

In the Senate, Senators Kerry (MA) and Jeffords (VT) worked hard to seek improvements to and postpone a vote on S. 2093. Further action will probably not occur before the House of Representatives votes on it's bill, H.R. 3948.

In the House, H.R. 3948 has not even been formally reviewed and commented on in Committee yet. Many members of the Clean Water Network oppose this bill because it weakens current law. Two days of hearings on the bill were held in late May, which included testimony from Ralph Pastore of the United Fishermen's Association of New York (good work, Ralph!). However, there is no promise the bill will be strengthened since Representatives Schuster (PA) and Hayes (LA) have led a big effort to gut the bill even further.

Representative Mineta, Chairman of the Public Works Committee, has stated he wants to pass the bill out of committee this session. The Clean Water Network reports that it is concerned that he would have to weaken H.R. 3948 even further in order to do this. Representatives on the Public Works Committee need to continue to hear from people back home about what they want in the Clean Water Act.

Atlantic Coast Representatives on the House Public Works Committee are: Mac Collins, Nathan Deal (GA); Peter Blute (MA); Wayne Gilchrest (MD); Tim Valentine (NC); Dick Swett, Bill Zeffiff (NH); Bob Francis, Robert Menendez (NJ); Sherwood Boehlert, David Levy, Lucien Blackwell, Robert Borski, Susan Molinari, Jerrold Nadler, William Clinger, Bud Schuster (PA); Jack Quinn (NY); James Clyburn (SC); Leslie Byrne (VA).

If you see your representative on this list, write to him/her at:

Representative _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC, 20515

Cooperative Program Unites Forces to Improve the Peconic Bays

Save the Peconic Bays' new Habitat Restoration Program was officially 'unveiled' at a reception June 25 in Cutchogue, New York. The program is a cooperative effort between commercial and sport fishermen, environmental and marine science organizations, citizens, businesses and local governments to restore the Peconic Bays, which have suffered dramatic declines in fishery resources because of brown tides and habitat degradation/loss.

The program includes projects for restoring degraded or destroyed wetlands, planning environmentally friendly Golf Courses, developing native plantings, improving fish habitat, and educating the public. The Fishermen Involved in Saving Habitat Education Program of the ASMFC has participated by working with local fishing groups to prepare and distribute educational information to local fishermen.

The cooperative Bay Habitat Restoration Program, along with the continued valuable work of Save the Peconic Bays and recent involvement of the National Estuary Program, promises to soon deliver improved water quality and fish habitat for eastern Long Island. For further information on the program, contact Gayle Marriner-Smith, Save the Peconic Bays, Inc., 1035 Hobart Road, Southold, NY, 11971 Phone/FAX (516) 765-1766.

Action Items

- ☛ Call or write your Congressperson and express your desires for the Clean Water Act (see p. 3).
- ☛ Reduce nutrient pollution from your home or boat by taking the simple steps on Page 2.
- ☛ Learn more about reducing pollution from your home by ordering a FREE copy of Baybook (p. 1).
- ☛ Become a co-petitioner for "Fishermen's Right to Know" about toxic discharges (p. 3, under Gulf of Mexico).

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1775 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20036

Habitat Institute

Atlantic

Dianne Stephan,

Editor

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