

The Chesapeake Bay A Valuable Resource



Bay Facts

Water

- The Bay is the largest estuary (where fresh and salt water mix) in the United States.
- Approximately 51 billion gallons of water flow into the Bay each day from its freshwater tributaries and surrounding watershed.
- There are more than 700 public access points on the Bay and its tributaries.

Geography

- The Bay's 64,000 square mile watershed is home to more than 18 million people, all of whom live within a few miles the Bay or one of its tributaries.
- The Bay and its tributaries have over 11,600 miles of shoreline – more than the entire west coast of the United States.

Wildlife and Habitat

- The Bay supports more than 3,600 species of plants and animals.
- About a third of the Atlantic coast's migratory birds spend winters on the Bay.
- The Bay produces about 500 million pounds of seafood each year.
- The Bay watershed loses about 70 acres of forest a day to development.



Protecting the Bay

The plants and algae that inhabit the Chesapeake Bay need critical nutrients such as **carbon, nitrogen and phosphorus** in order to grow, and natural levels of these elements are good for the Bay.

However, human activities in the Chesapeake Bay watershed (including **development and agriculture**) can result in excessive amounts of these same nutrients entering the Bay. The additional nutrient load from human activities can cause rapid growth of algae, which blocks sunlight and uses up oxygen in the water as the algae decompose. This process is called **eutrophication** and is a threat to the health of the Bay.

The **Leonardtown Wastewater Treatment Plant** utilizes advanced treatment technologies to remove thousands of pounds of carbon, nitrogen and phosphorus every year from the water entering the Chesapeake Bay. This helps reduce eutrophication so the plants and animals that call the Bay home can thrive.

★ Leonardtown, MD