Negative Population Growth

TOO MANY PEOPLE!

POPULATION AND THE CHESAPEAKE BAY

Caring for the future of the Chesapeake Bay and its wide-ranging watershed is a challenge for every person – especially young people – living within its environs. It is crucial that we work to protect this national treasure, reverse its ongoing decline and do everything possible to restore the Bay's health.

While the problems confronting the Chesapeake Bay are widespread, most lead to one source – ***TOO MANY PEOPLE.*** Nothing poses more of a threat to the Bay and its ecosystem than the prospect of millions more people settling into its surrounding areas in the next 20 to 30 years.

Population growth in the Bay watershed is a huge problem, and it is only growing worse. That is why we must find ways to stop today's harmful population growth and work toward a sustainable population that will complement, rather than destroy, the Bay's unique quality of life.

Without taking action to curb population growth in the area surrounding the Chesapeake Bay, we will not be able to make any progress in the coming years to rein in nitrogen levels, stop destruction of much-needed wetlands, farms and forests, and protect the Bay's distinctive wildlife.

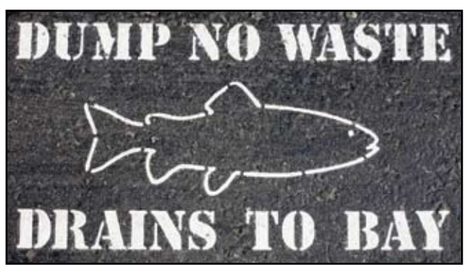
The future of the Bay in the next few decades will depend on the decisions we make today – do your part!

WETLANDS AND ANIMAL HABITAT

Thousands of vulnerable species of plants, animals and marine life reside in the Chesapeake Bay area and depend on the continuing health of the priceless wetlands for their survival. From insects to otters, ospreys to mussels, ducks to finfish, these species need a clean, healthy and extensive wetlands environment. Healthy wetlands are vital to the Bay's ability to process excess nutrients, trap sediment and intercept other pollutants that threaten the Bay's overall health. Sadly, much population-driven development is taking place along or adjacent to the shoreline creating major erosion and leading to more and more wetlands being drained, bulldozed or paved over.

FARMS AND FORESTS

We must protect the Bay area's farms and forests from overdevelopment. While a drive through much of the Bay region will reveal vast acres of farms and forests, increased sprawl and the need to accommodate huge population increases in the coming years will greatly threaten these lands. Paving over rich, valuable farmland and removing trees create major problems related to filtering pollution, halting erosion and providing a habitat for scores of wildlife. It is estimated that one hundred acres of forest within the Chesapeake Bay watershed are lost each day to development.



HARMFUL NUTRIENTS

Nitrogen and phosphorus are key nutrients which are too plentiful in the Bay and greatly contribute to its problems. Nutrients feed the increase of excessive algae that stymies the growth of critical grasses necessary to sustain many species of wildlife. Escalating nutrients also deprive water of oxygen that's necessary for bottom-dwelling life – especially crabs and oysters – to survive. Animal manure, insecticides, fertilizer, treated wastewater and air pollution are major culprits in overburdening the Bay with harmful nutrients. There are 87,000 farms in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. They comprise about 25 percent of the land but contribute about 39 per cent of the nitrogen and 42 percent of the phosphorus entering the bay. Millions more people will only create conditions for more harmful nutrient growth.

The Chesapeake Bay watershed stretches over parts of six states – Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia – and encompasses 64,000 square miles. Virtually every person living in the area resides within a half-mile of a stream or creek that flows into the Bay.

DEVELOPMENT

Rapid development in the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a giant threat to the Bay's future as the ecosystem cannot handle the human overload. Sprawl is not only taking place around the large cities such as Baltimore, Washington, Richmond and Norfolk, but also around mid-size and small cities. Development of the less-populated Eastern Shore is a major threat to that area's quality of life. Millions more people in all of these areas mean hundreds of thousands more houses, as well as more office buildings, roads, shopping malls, parking lots and other changes that will negatively impact the environment and radically alter the Bay's landscape over time.

POPULATION

The daily actions of 16.6 million people presently living in the Chesapeake Bay watershed greatly impact the Bay's environment. Projections show that by 2030, the Bay area's population will grow to almost 20 million people. More than 3 million people have moved into the Chesapeake Bay watershed since 1985 and the area is presently estimated to be growing by 157,000 people per year. Almost 70 percent of the Chesapeake Bay watershed's population resides in the states of Maryland and Virginia. "Overpopulation" is defined as when the demands on the environment are higher than the environment can support. It can occur well before it is evident. We long ago passed that point in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

CLEAN WATER

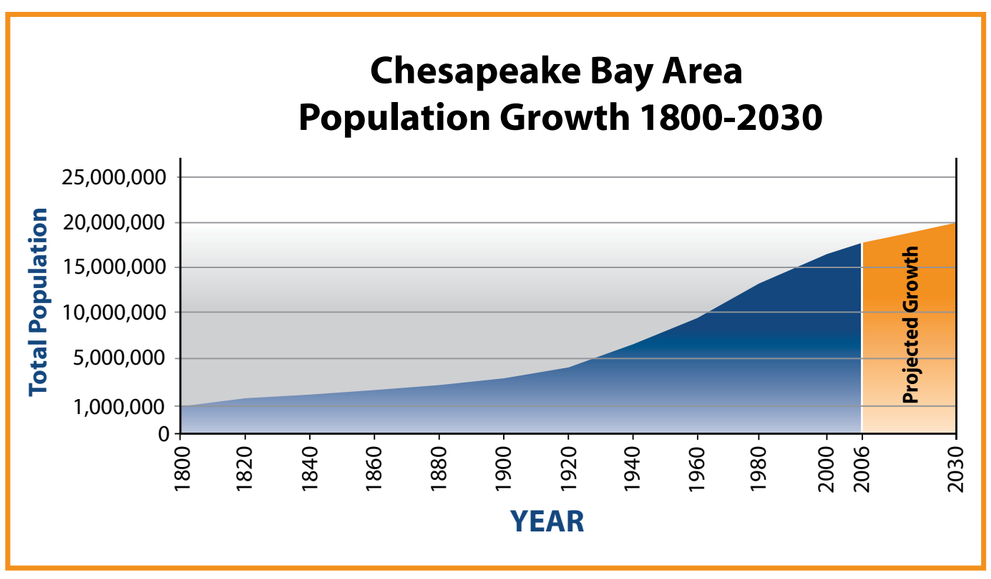
The Chesapeake Bay is fed by 48 major rivers, 100 small rivers and tens of thousands of small streams and creeks. Because of this far-reaching network of feeders, a toxic chemical spill from almost 200 miles away can have an impact on its water. The constant flow of water into the Bay combined with the movement of the tides serve to continually "flush" the Bay's water and make it livable for myriad species, many of which are too small to see with the naked eye. At the same time, however, the constant currents also serve to bring problems of one area to another. Halting population growth and protecting the quality of the Bay's waters will ensure future harvests of rockfish, clams and oysters, as well as enable the Bay to be used for human recreation activities for decades to come.

SPEAK UP! TAKE ACTION.

Solving the Chesapeake Bay's problems will not happen overnight but we need to act quickly especially since population growth and development are only feeding its decline. With the Bay's health declining at an alarming rate, there is an ongoing need to constantly broaden the debate about its future and make difficult choices. While federal, state, county and city leaders are working in concert to tackle the Bay's myriad crises, each person living in the Bay area also has a responsibility to help protect it so it will remain a clean, vibrant estuary. Students who live in the Chesapeake Bay's environs have a special incentive to save the Bay as it will surely play an important role in their lives if they remain in the area to live, work and raise a family. You can help shape the Bay's future by interacting with elected leaders or by joining a local volunteer group that works to reverse the declining habitat of the Chesapeake. Spreading the word that we must halt and eventually reverse population growth (in the Bay area as well as the entire U.S.) is the single greatest step you can take toward protecting the Chesapeake Bay!

FACTS

- About 2,700 different plants and animals live in the Chesapeake Bay area.
- Geese wintering in the Chesapeake Bay breed in northern Quebec, Canada, while others are resident to the area. Canada geese leave the Bay in the early spring and return in the early autumn.
- Population-driven development leads to more paved, non-porous surfaces, such as roads and parking lots, which keep water from soaking into the soil. As this water runs into streams that eventually feed into the Bay, it picks up harmful pollutants which greatly contribute to the decline of water quality.
- "Dead zones" where too little oxygen exists to support a healthy ecosystem are becoming more prevalent in the Bay each summer. They are fed by nitrogen, pollution from farmland and urban runoff, airborne pollutants from more vehicles and power plants, and sewage treatment plants. Increased population will only feed this problem.
- Federal, state, and local governments have invested hundreds of millions of dollars to help restore the Chesapeake Bay and renew its ability to cleanse itself by protecting its natural defense systems such as forests, wetlands, oysters and underwater grasses. Billions more will be invested in future years but may well be wasted if population is allowed to continue to expand in the area.
- Between 1945 and 2007, the average harvest of Chesapeake Bay crabs stands at 73 million pounds. During six of the past eight years, there have been extremely low harvests of under 50 million pounds.
- Air pollution that impacts the Bay by overloading its nutrient levels is not limited only to emission from the growing number of autos and industries in the immediate area. Air currents and other weather patterns carry pollution to the Bay from twelve states and even Canada.



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For more information, go to
www.npg.org

This educational poster has been provided by the tens of thousands of Negative Population Growth (NPG) members who are working together to stabilize America's population at a sustainable level, far smaller than today's, so that we will leave a prosperous and livable nation to future generations. Negative Population Growth is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

YOU HAVE A VITAL STAKE IN THE CHESAPEAKE BAY'S FUTURE. MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY!