

GREEN LIVING

SPRING 2013

YOUR GUIDE TO EVERYTHING GREEN IN HAMPTON ROADS

GOOD to KNOW



we mean business
ABOUT RECYCLING!



Home Sweet Fragile Home



meet the **GARDEN GURU**



follow the **WaterTrail**



kissing my garbage
disposal good-bye

askHRgreen.org

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GRILL YOUR TURF PRO

Is your lawn care company doing things the right way? If yes, your lawn is in good hands and your money is well spent. If no, your lawn suffers – and so do our waterways.

Good to Know

Excess lawn fertilizer ends up in our local waterways where it causes harm by speeding up the growth of algae blooms. These blooms cause our waterways to become discolored, smelly and undesirable for swimming and boating. Excess fertilizing also wastes your money!

Good to Do

Ask your lawn care provider these five questions from our friends at the Elizabeth River Project to ensure your yard isn't harming local waterways.

1 What kind of fertilizer do you apply?

What proportion of this contains slow-release nitrogen?

Ideally, at least 50% should be a slow-release type fertilizer. Organic fertilizers like compost and kelp are preferred. Fast-release fertilizers promote growth of grass blades at the expense of root development, which weakens your lawn. Plus, the nutrients leach away before they can be used, then wash into our waterways where they contribute to harmful algae blooms.

2 How do you control your rate of fertilizer application?

Your lawn care provider should use a formula to calculate the amount needed based on your yard's acreage and fertilizer application rates. If they don't, they may be over-fertilizing – which wastes money and harms our waterways.

3 How do your recommendations reflect the specific conditions of my lawn?

To avoid over-fertilizing and over-watering, your lawn care company should first conduct a soil test and diagnose the specific needs of your lawn before developing a plan.

4 Do I have warm or cool season grass? What are the differences in terms of water and fertilizer needs?

If your company can't tell you, they're probably not adjusting their fertilizing and watering plan to meet the specific needs of your yard.

5 What "green" practices do you follow when mowing?

They should leave grass clippings on the lawn to compost as natural fertilizer – and they get extra points if they use an electric mower. Gas mowers are a surprisingly large source of air and water pollution. It's also important to keep mower blades sharp.



This project received funding from the Environmental Protection Agency's Chesapeake Bay Program through the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), via grant number BAY-2012-06-PT.

askHRgreen.org
for more questions to ask your lawn care company
– and lots of other great information

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is there any other WaytoLive?

Welcome to the second annual edition of **Green Living**, your guide to everything green in Hampton Roads, brought to you by **askHRgreen.org**! Encouraging people to find their "inner green" is the premise behind **askHRgreen.org**, a region-wide public awareness campaign powered by the 16 cities and counties of Hampton Roads and administered through the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission. Since launching this initiative in 2011, we've been hard at work reaching out to Southeastern Virginia residents with simple steps they can take to make our region more sustainable. In this special section, we're digging deeper into green issues that impact the region. Explore our watershed and see why the time to improve our region's water quality is at hand; go beyond the big blue bin and examine the business of recycling; learn tips for keeping a "green" yard from a true garden guru; follow the path of water through our vast (and often forgotten) infrastructure; and learn why it's time to "break up" with a common household appliance. We hope you enjoy *Green Living*, learn something new and share it with friends.

All the Best—

Julia B. Hillegass

askHRgreen.org Team Leader

Public Information and Community Affairs Administrator,

Hampton Roads Planning District Commission

jhillegass@hrpdca.gov



GOODtoKNOW

Keep Hampton Roads Beautiful This Spring

Lend a hand in keeping our communities beautiful by volunteering for a Great American Cleanup™ project this spring. From school yard beautification to litter pickups and recycling events, there will be something for everyone. Visit **askHRgreen.org** to find a volunteer project in your community.

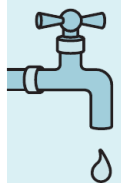


Dig in with Green Learning

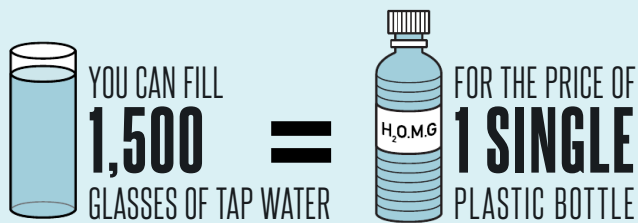
Do you know where the water goes when it rains in Hampton Roads? Or the name of the watershed in which you reside? *Green Learning* is a free educational guide designed to teach the region's sixth grade students these important concepts and about how their actions affect the environment in positive and negative ways. Download this fun guide at **www.askHRgreen.org/green-learning**.

Put the Lid on Messy Sewer Backups

You can help keep your home's pipes free and clear of blockages if you simply "Can the Grease." Pour used cooking grease into an empty, heat-safe container, such as a soup can, and store it in the freezer. Once solidified, toss the can into the garbage. Email us at **HRgreen@hrpdca.gov** to request a FREE grease can lid to prevent spills.



CHOOSE TAP over bottled water



Fill 'er up! Grab a reusable bottle (or two) and take your tap to go! You'll be doing both the environment and your wallet some good!

Free water bottle refills on the go.

TapIt™ gives you free access to clean water on the go through a network of participating café and restaurant owners around Hampton Roads. Simply take your reusable bottle into any TapIt partner café and fill it up with clean, safe tap water for free! For partner locations visit **tapitwater.com/hrva**.

GOODtoKNOW



BE WATER-WISE AT HOME AND IN YOUR YARD

MAKE A PLAN

Group plants with similar watering needs together. Excess irrigation wastes valuable water and promotes disease and weed infestation.

PLANT MORE PLANTS

Choose plants native to our area. They require less water and fertilizer and have fewer pest problems than exotic or non-native plants.

MULCH, MULCH & MULCH

Reduce areas of thirsty turf grass by adding more mulched beds. Mulch not only helps plants retain moisture, but helps minimize weeds and keeps plants cool!

WATER WISELY

Water at the right time of day. Watering when the sun is low, winds are calm and temperatures are cooler minimizes evaporation by as much as 30 percent.

To learn more about tap water & wise water use, just **askHRgreen.org**



We Mean Business about Recycling!

You know recycling is good for the environment; it reduces energy consumption, decreases pollution and saves natural resources. But did you know recycling also is good for our economy? The recycling industry creates local jobs, saves localities money through reduced disposal fees, produces economic development opportunities and generates tax revenue.

When you recycle, you're supporting regional manufacturers that depend on recycled plastic, glass, metal and paper to make new consumer goods such as outdoor decking, park benches, glass containers and paper. The Southeast Recycling Development Council (SERDC) is a non-profit

organization represented by 11 southern states, including Virginia. In a 2010 study, the group determined that Virginia is home to more than 15 manufacturers that rely on the materials you put into the recycling bins. These companies generate more than \$3.6 billion in yearly sales and employ more than 3,700 Virginians directly in the manufacture of recycled content products.

And that's just a sliver of the state's whole recycling pie. The more cans, paper, plastics and glass that are put in the recycling bin instead of the trash, the more the region's economy will benefit.

"If Virginia recycled just 10 percent more materials each year, the potential economic impact would equate to 1,600 new jobs, an additional \$75 million in annual personal income and \$3 million in annual state tax revenue," said SERDC Executive Director Will Sagar.

Future growth in the recycling industry depends on supply assurance, and we all play a critical role. Remember, it's not just about putting things in the recycling bin; it's about putting the proper materials in the bin. Support our local economy by recycling smart!

TO RECYCLE, OR NOT TO RECYCLE?



Recycling plays an important role in responsible resource management. Pitch in to make a difference by always recycling the following items:

FOR THE RECYCLING BIN

- Aluminum, steel and tin cans
- Clean plastic bottles and jugs with neck or pour spouts
- Glass bottles and jars
- Mixed paper (office paper, paper bags, magazines, newspaper and inserts, telephone books, junk mail)
- Empty food boxes and cardboard



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We use water every day without ever thinking twice about it, but for some people in our community, losing water service is a harsh reality. The Help to Others (H2O) Program provides a one-time helping hand to those in need. Please help keep the water flowing by donating to H2O. 100% of your tax-deductible contribution helps a local family in crisis.

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what to do with your old electronics



Proper electronics recycling is paramount. Electronics contain hazardous waste such as lead, mercury and cadmium. These can be released into the air, soil and water and cause health and environmental risks.

- 1 Don't throw them in the trash!
- 2 Donate working electronics.
- 3 Take broken electronics to your locality's program or electronic store with an e-cycle program.

what to do with your used PLASTIC BAGS

GOOD to KNOW

When plastic bags and film are recycled, the plastic is melted and then reshaped for a number of different reuses including lumber or little pellets which are then used for other plastic products.



- 1 Don't throw them in the trash!
- 2 Reuse them.
- 3 Recycle them (at most grocery stores).

Don't forget you can recycle plastic shopping bags, dry cleaning bags, newspaper bags, plastic wrap from toilet paper and paper towels, plastic bags from your vegetables and more!

what to do with your HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE

Household hazardous waste (HHW), such as paint, chemicals, CFL lightbulbs, pesticides, etc., cannot be poured down the drain, on the ground, into a storm drain or put out with the trash. Dispose of these according to their type.

- 1 Don't throw them in the trash!
- 2 Share or donate leftovers.
- 3 Bring unused HHW materials to a collection site or event.



To learn more about how, what and where to recycle, just **askHRgreen.org**  /askHRgreen  /HRgreen

transform your yard into an EcoAvenger!

Longer days and warmer temps mean more time in the garden. At last! Before digging in to the same-old/same-old lawn and garden routines, askHRgreen.org challenges you to transform your landscape into an eco-avenger by putting every flower, tree, shrub and blade of grass to work. After all, your yard is not only an expression of you and your family, it's also one of the greatest ways to protect the health of our environment by filtering out stormwater pollution before it enters our local waterways. Come on, show off your "green thumb" this spring by implementing a few (or all!) of the tips below. For more info, visit askHRgreen.org/your-yard.

1 Put your soil to the test.

Before making any lawn care decisions, test your soil to see what nutrients, if any, your lawn and garden are lacking. The results will include a nitrogen recommendation, which is typically higher

than most Hampton Roads lawns need. Gardeners here can often use much less nitrogen to get successful results. If you are mulching your grass clippings back onto your lawn, you shouldn't need to add nitrogen at all.

2 Know your grass.

Warm season grass (preferred for Hampton Roads), such as zoysia, St. Augustine, centipede or Bermuda, should be seeded and fertilized (if needed) in early spring. Cool season grass (not preferred for Hampton Roads), such as fescue, bluegrass or rye, should be seeded in the late summer and fertilized (if needed) in the fall.

3 Aerate your lawn.

Are you aware of the life that lives beneath your lawn? Aerating increases water and oxygen movement, improves rooting, enhances infiltration, increases the activity of soil microorganisms that decompose thatch and helps prevent fertilizer and pesticide run-off. Warm season grass should be aerated in June or July, and cool season grasses should be aerated in August or September.

4 Mow right.

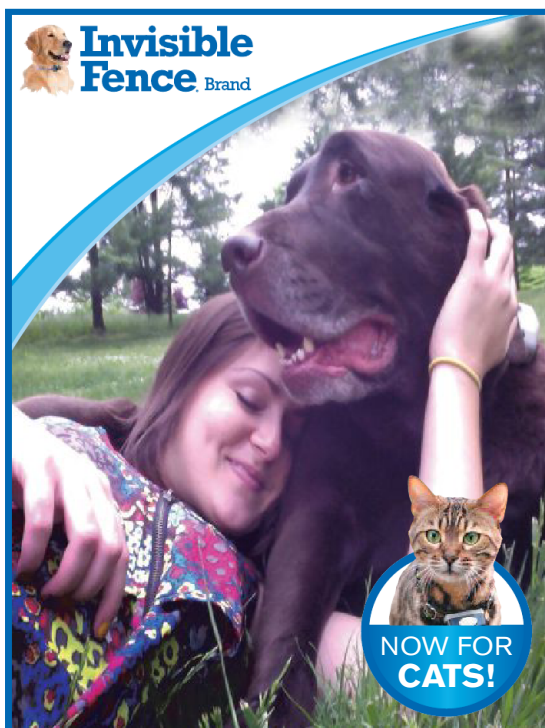
Only one-third of the height of your grass should be removed with each mowing, and always mow with a sharp blade. Leave grass clippings on the lawn to return nitrogen to the soil, naturally.

5 Use natural weed and pest management techniques.

Pull weeds by hand or spray with a vinegar and water solution. Choose repellent plants such as marigolds, which will ward off squash bug, thrips, tomato hornworm and whitefly.

6 Use compost.

Whether you produce your own or purchase compost, adding it to your soil will improve both soil structure and health. That's because compost contains humus, an organic material which assists the soil in holding nutrients, reduces the need for chemical fertilizers, helps prevent nitrogen from leaching into the groundwater and keeps soil erosion at bay.



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Why shouldn't I pour
KITCHEN GREASE
down the sink?

WHAT DO I
RECYCLE?

How much money
can I save by
DRINKING TAP WATER?

How can a
SOIL TEST
save me money?

What's better for
FOOD SCRAPS:
the garbage disposal
or the trash?

Where does **STORMWATER**
run off to, anyway?

to get answers to these important questions, AND MORE, just

askHRgreen.org

SpringCleaning

in the Kitchen

Families and friends love to gather in the kitchen. That's where we create delicious meals, chat about the day's events, grab a snack and tidy up before we call it a night. It's also one place where small changes can have a big impact on the environment and your wallet. This year, try incorporating some of these spring greening tips into your spring cleaning routine.



When cleaning up after a meal, remember to keep the fats, oils and grease out of the drain to avoid clogs that could result in a costly visit from the plumber.

- Locate an empty, heat-safe container, like a soup can. When the cooking oils have cooled, scrape these into your container, cover it securely, freeze it and throw the hardened oils away with the trash.
- Skip the garbage disposal and use a sink strainer to catch food scraps. Scrape your leftover food scraps into the trash or compost bin and wipe plates and cookware with an absorbent napkin or paper towel before washing by hand or loading into the dishwasher.
- Oil-based foods that should never go down the drain include lards/shortening, butter/margarine, dairy products, batter, icing, salad dressings and sauces.

Keeping the kitchen clean is a constant battle. Arm yourself with the tools needed to get the job done without paying a fortune for harsh chemicals.

- Baking soda and water will do the trick when it comes to cleaning your kitchen tile or countertops. Need a tougher abrasive? Sprinkle on kosher salt and scrub with a wet cloth or sponge.
- For stains, mildew or grease streaks, simply spray with lemon juice or vinegar, let it sit for a few minutes, then scrub with a brush.
- Save water and energy by only doing full loads in the dishwasher and washing machine. If you're in the market for new appliances, always look for the Energy Star and WaterSense labels.

Cleaning out the pantry can be a daunting task; once you've cleaned it out, remember these tips when it's time to fill'er up:

Can the Grease

1 Pour used cooking grease into an empty, heat-safe container, such as a soup can, and 2 store it in the freezer. Once solidified, 3 toss the can into the garbage.



Scrape the Plate

Wipe all pots, pans, dishes and cooking utensils with a paper towel prior to washing to absorb the grease.



Catch the Scraps

Eliminate using the garbage disposal. Catch food scraps in your sink with a basket or strainer and toss them into the trash.



- Buying in bulk minimizes excess packaging and it's cost-effective too. Whenever possible, try to find items packaged in recycled/recyclable containers.
- You can help support our community by buying fresh from local farmers right here in Hampton Roads whenever possible.
- Quit the bottled water habit. In addition to reducing your carbon footprint, replacing expensive bottled water with clean, safe, tap water is good for your wallet, too!

For more information on ways to keep your kitchen and the rest of your home clean and green, visit askHRgreen.org.

To learn about all things **GOOD&YOU** just askHRgreen.org or askHRgreen or HRgreen



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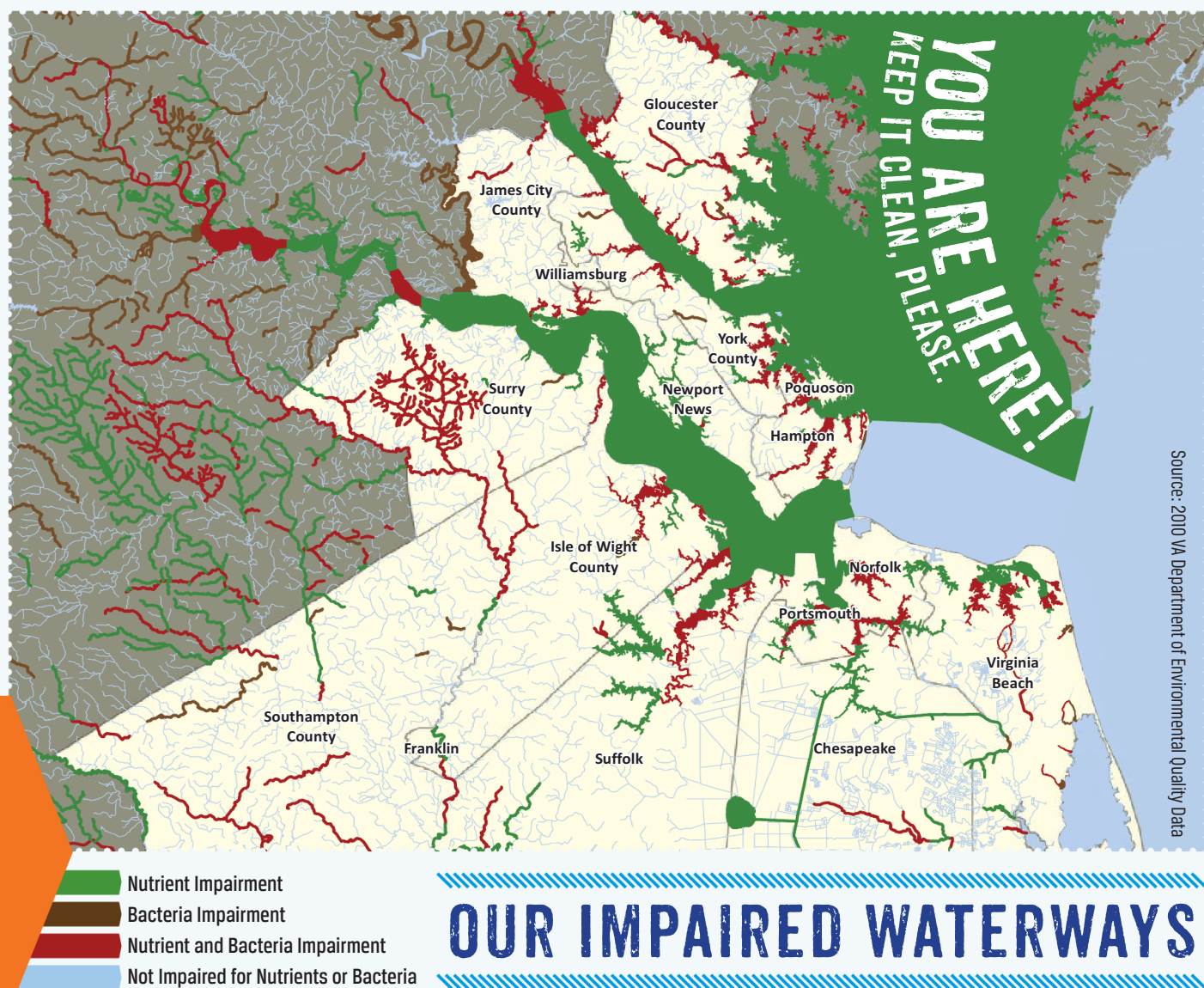
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from treatment and discharge



AIR POLLUTION

from power plants and vehicle exhaust



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from roadways, development, residential/
commercial lawn fertilizers



SEPTIC SYSTEMS

resulting from backups and failures

BACTERIA



SEWAGE DISCHARGE FROM BOATERS



PET & WILDLIFE WASTE



SEPTIC SYSTEMS



SANITARY SEWER OVERFLOWS

Hampton Roads is a region defined by water, from the creeks and tributaries that flow into the Chesapeake Bay, to the recreational and culinary options these watery trails provide. We're known for our beautiful beaches, on-water fun and fresh-caught seafood. But did you know that many of our region's waterways have swimming and shellfish harvesting restrictions because they contain unhealthy levels of bacteria? Or that these waterways, including the Chesapeake Bay, have insufficient levels of dissolved oxygen which cause harm to our aquatic life?

The situation is serious and the time to act is now. Localities are working hard to improve water quality by upgrading wastewater and stormwater infrastructure and installing natural systems to slow the flow of rainwater and filter out pollutants. HRSD (Hampton Roads Sanitation District) is doing its part by upgrading wastewater treatment plants to reduce the amount of nutrients in their discharges to our local waterways. **Are we residents, though, doing enough to protect our unique and vulnerable landscape?**

EVERY ACTION WE TAKE HAS AN IMPACT
ON OUR HOME SWEET HOME

GOOD to DO

STORMWATER POLLUTION

AS RAIN FALLS FROM THE SKY, IT COLLECTS...

AIR POLLUTION

from power plants and vehicle exhaust

GUTTER RUNOFF

picks up leaves, sediment left behind in gutters

LAWN RUNOFF

picks up soil, pet waste, fertilizer, trash

DRIVEWAY RUNOFF

picks up oil, gasoline, sediment, trash

ROAD RUNOFF

picks up oil, gasoline, sediment, trash, tar

STORM DRAIN

All water goes to a storm drain which leads to...

RIVER, LAKE OR OCEAN

By the time the rain makes it to the ocean, it has picked up pollutants from hundreds of sources.

GETTING OUR LOCAL WATERWAYS BACK ON TRACK

MANY HAMPTON ROADS WATERWAYS CONTAIN TOO MUCH SEDIMENT, NITROGEN, PHOSPHOROUS AND BACTERIA.

To combat this, the state has assigned **Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL)** to many of our waterways. A TMDL identifies how much pollutant a body of water can receive while still meeting water quality standards. You may have heard it called a "pollution diet."

In order to meet the TMDLs, state agencies are working with farmers and wastewater facilities to implement projects that reduce nutrient pollution; localities are undertaking capital improvement projects; and nonprofit river groups are working with private property owners to implement natural methods to manage rainfall.

Most of our waterways are part of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Therefore, our impaired waterways also are contributing to the poor health of the Chesapeake Bay, which has also been assigned a TMDL that every state within the watershed is working to achieve.

YOU'RE CLOSER THAN YOU THINK!

5 MIN WALK

10 MIN WALK

15 MIN WALK

20 MIN WALK



Even though you may not be able to see the Chesapeake Bay from your back yard, you're closer than you think! No matter where you live in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, it would take about 15 minutes to walk to a stream, river or body of water that flows into the Chesapeake Bay.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO CLEAN UP OUR WATERWAYS?

WE'RE GLAD YOU ASKED!



SCOOP, BAG, AND TRASH DOG WASTE



SEED BARE SPOTS IN THE YARD



PUT CIGARETTE BUTTS IN THE TRASH



DON'T FEED THE WILDLIFE



TEST SOIL BEFORE FERTILIZING



PLANT MORE NATIVE PLANTS



KEEP GRASS AND YARD WASTE OUT OF THE STREET

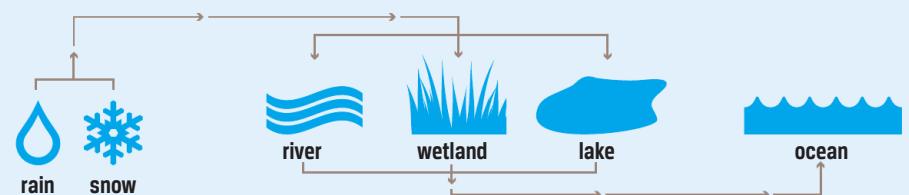


DON'T TREAT THE TOILET LIKE A WASTE BASKET



CAN COOKING GREASE, SCRAPE LEFTOVER FOOD INTO THE TRASH AND CATCH FOOD SCRAPS IN THE SINK

WHAT IS A WATERSHED?



When it rains or when snow melts, the precipitation flows across the ground's surface and begins to make its way to a nearby tributary, wetland, river or lake, and then on to a larger body of water, such as a bay or ocean. The land that the water flows across on this journey and the waterways that receive it are called a watershed.



theGardenGuru

Jim Orband, a retired Virginia Cooperative Extension Horticulturist, has earned numerous awards for community education, including the prestigious Virginia Tech Alumni Award for Extension Excellence. He was kind enough to come in from the garden when askHRgreen.org caught up with him this month.

With spring lawn care, where should I start?

First, assess your landscape and develop a plan to take care of specific situations that need help. For example, you might look at an area where the soil is bare. Something must be wrong, and it is preventing the establishment of a turf. So make a plan that might include: soil testing, soil amendments and studying different ground covers to stabilize the soil.

How do I know if I need to fertilize?

You'll know by testing your soil. Soil test kits can be obtained from your local Cooperative Extension Office. Complete the required information, collect the

soil sample as instructed, and mail with a check to the address on the box. Results provide recommendations for soil amendments to help you make the right decisions for your lawn.

Do you have any tips for selecting and arranging plants?

Begin by studying the area that you intend to plant. Observe the amount of sun the area receives at different times of day and whether the sun is filtered by trees or buildings. Monitor the area for wind conditions. Then observe if the soil drains well or if water pools and the area is soggy. These factors will help you select the right plants. There will be pretty

flowering plants at garden centers that will catch your eye. Stay the course and select plants that will adapt to the conditions you identified.

Are there any natural pest control techniques I can use?

One method is proper pruning because it allows light penetration and increases the air movement in the plant, making it difficult for insects and diseases to live. Another is to use predatory insects. Lady beetles, or lady bugs, eat aphids, scale insects, thrips, mealybugs and mites—pests all gardeners despise. When it's time to control an insect, identify it, then try to find an alternate control rather than a pesticide.

Why are soil splash marks on the outside of my house and garage?

These marks result from rain hitting a hard surface and causing the loose particles (sand, organic matter, etc) to bounce up and land on the building. This usually occurs in



Jim Orband

Retired Virginia
Cooperative
Extension
Horticulturist

places where the soil is bare. Using a ground cover will reduce this occurrence. Mulch is a short-lived solution and will become part of the problem in the future. Another option is to use large-sized stones or river rock in the drip area. The idea is to reduce the loose soil surfaces close to your home's exterior.

For more lawn and garden advice, visit www.askHRgreen.org/your-yard

GOODtoKNOW

EVERY ACTION WE TAKE HAS AN IMPACT ON OUR HOME SWEET FRAGILE HOME



To learn more about our impact on local waterways, just **askHRgreen.org**

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Dear Garbage Disposal,

I thought we had something special. I thought we met each other's needs. I cooked for you; you cleaned for me. I peeled potatoes; you ate the peelings. We shared every meal.

Now, I can barely look at you. Those food scraps? They weren't disappearing; they're still here! And now I'm left with pipes full of memories of you, shreds from every breakfast, lunch and dinner. There they linger—built up from our years together, lining my pipe walls just waiting to block the flow of wastewater and backup into my sink.

We're through. No more leftovers for you! Not one green bean or black-eyed pea, not one chunk of a chicken tender or spoonful of saffron rice will ever cross your path again. Not on my watch. From now on, food scraps go where they belong—in the trash or compost bin. And meal prep and cleanup consists of washing only soap suds, not potato spuds, down the drain. I'm wiping the slate clean, and I'm wiping my dishes and scraping them into the trash before washing. And those stuck-on food scraps? I'd catch them with a sink strainer any day of the week before I'd ever let you claim another victim in your sticky web of ground-up grit and grime.

In the words of Taylor Swift, "We are never even getting back together."

Your Ex,
Katie



find your InnerGreen



1. Choose tap, not bottled water. Good for the landfill. Good for your wallet.
2. BYOB when you shop. That's bag, by the way.
3. Recycle, recycle, recycle.
4. Buy fresh, local produce. Local farmers will thank you.
5. Get involved. Join a community clean-up.
6. Cut the fat. Dispose of cooking fats, oils and grease in the trash.
7. Go native in your landscape. Native plants and trees, that is.
8. Reduce paper. Communicate electronically.
9. Speaking of electronics, please recycle them.
10. For your next party, get out the good dishes and cloth napkins, instead of paper. (Are we invited?)

I wonder if she remembered to call **SMI** to get the A/C system checked.



Will your system handle the dog days ahead?



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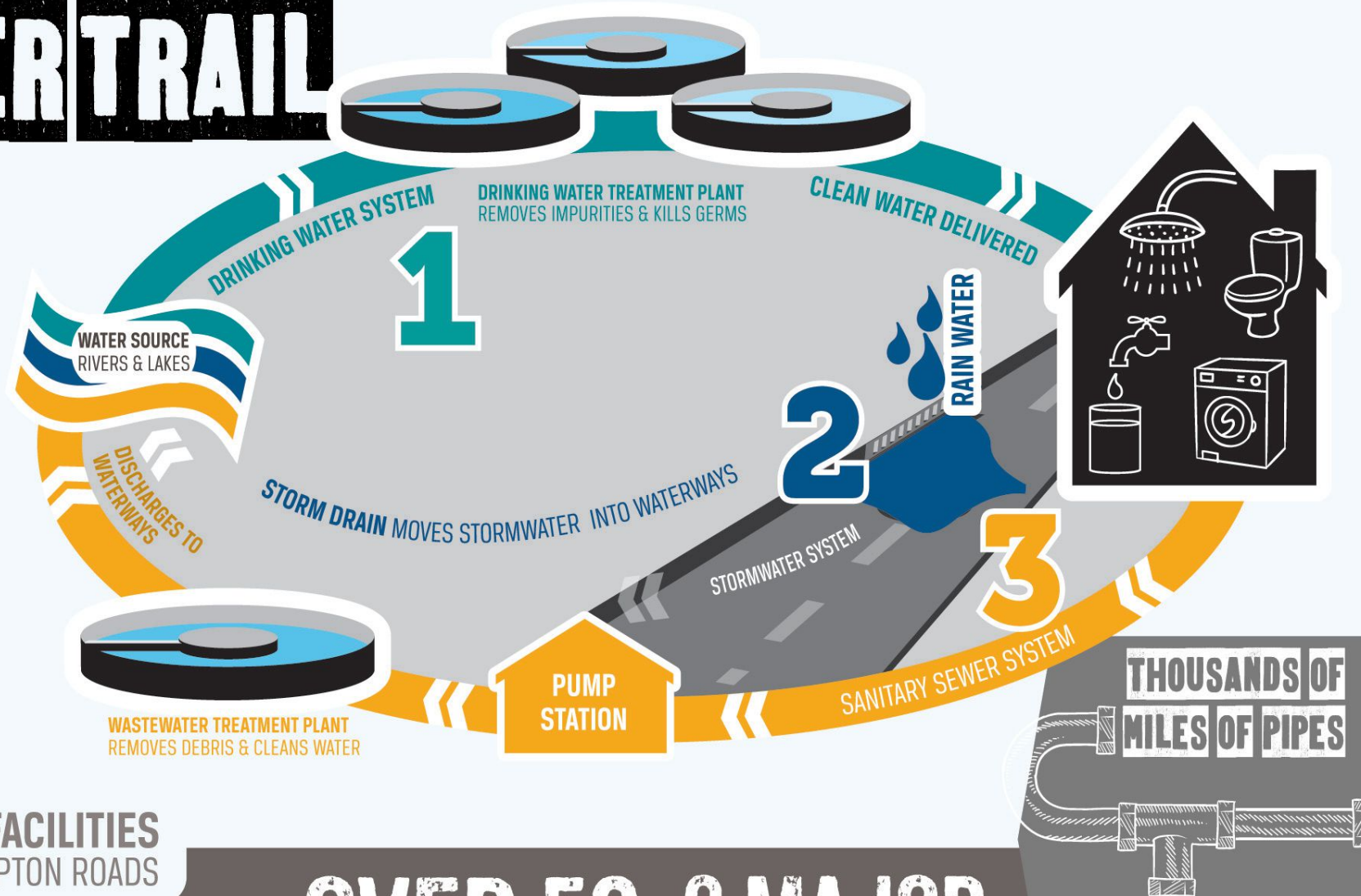
FOLLOW THE WATER TRAIL

Over 1.5 million people in Hampton Roads are served by public water systems. Daily water use in our region is approximately 135 million gallons per day (MGD).

You've flushed a toilet, let the faucet flow and watched water rush down the street during a rainstorm. But do you really understand where our water comes from—and where it goes?

In Hampton Roads, three very important water systems make up our regional infrastructure.

Each system has a separate and specific purpose from the others.



OF FACILITIES IN HAMPTON ROADS

MORE THAN 1,400
SANITARY SEWER PUMPING STATIONS

OVER 50 WATER PUMPING STATIONS
9 MAJOR WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANTS
249 MILLION GALLONS PER DAY (MGD)

Hampton Roads has more than **6,500 miles** of water distribution pipeline and over **5,800 miles** of sanitary sewer lines.

OVERSEEING PROJECTS AND KEEPING IT CLEAN

Over the last decade, Hampton Roads communities constructed over 1,100 stormwater management projects.

These projects involve retrofitting areas, installing stormwater best management practices (for example: retention ponds) or restoration activities. This represents an investment of nearly \$200 million.

Projects of this scale and magnitude continue today.

On average, local governments clean more than 55,000 catch basins, service more than 700 miles of drainage facilities each year and sweep nearly 90,000 miles of streets. These activities prevent an estimated 40,000 tons of material from polluting the region's waterways annually.

COMPARATIVELY, WATER AND SEWER SERVICE IS A BARGAIN IN HAMPTON ROADS

5,000 GALLONS = \$75 PER MONTH | \$900 PER YEAR

2 SMARTPHONES WITH DATA PLANS = \$140 PER MONTH | \$1,680 PER YEAR

1 DRINKING WATER SYSTEM

BRINGS SAFE, CLEAN WATER TO OUR HOMES



HOW IT WORKS

Hampton Roads' raw water sources include aquifers, reservoirs, lakes and rivers. Most of our drinking water comes from surface water which is pumped to water treatment plants. During the treatment process, the water passes through screens, then chemicals are added to remove impurities. Next, the clarified water is disinfected to kill bacteria, viruses and other microorganisms, then filtered to remove any remaining particles. Finally, a secondary disinfectant is added to maintain disinfection throughout the pipe system. Once the water is cleaned and safe to drink, it is pumped through a network of pipes and storage facilities to homes and businesses.

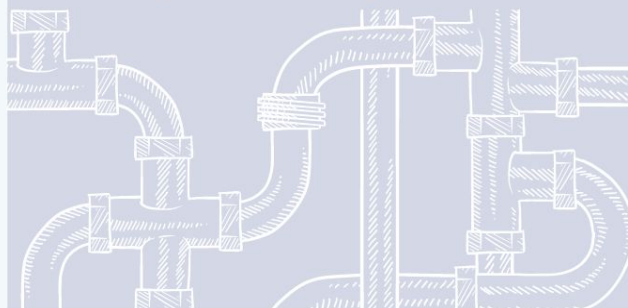
2 STORMWATER SYSTEM

TAKES RAIN WATER AWAY FROM HOMES AND STREETS THROUGH THE STORMWATER OPENINGS YOU SEE ON YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD CURB OR THE GRATES ON PUBLIC STREETS



HOW IT WORKS

Rainwater runoff from rooftops, gutters and lawns is directed into the stormwater system. The drain usually looks like a small opening in the curb or a grate in the pavement. Unlike the sanitary sewer system, stormwater is never treated and flows directly to our local waterways.



3 SANITARY SEWER SYSTEM

TAKES WATER AWAY FROM OUR HOMES WHEN WE FLUSH THE COMMODE, TAKE A SHOWER OR OTHERWISE RUN WATER DOWN OUR DRAINS. THIS WATER IS KNOWN AS WASTEWATER



HOW IT WORKS

Wastewater leaving our homes travels through miles and miles of pipes to nine treatment plants across the region. Because of the flat landscape, sewer pumping stations are used to push the wastewater to the treatment plants. At the treatment facility, debris is screened and settled out of the wastewater. Bacteria and other small organisms then consume the waste and help clean the water. Finally, it is disinfected before being released back into local waterways. Some treatment plants add an extra step to remove nutrients to help protect local waterways.



OUR AGING INFRASTRUCTURE

Driving along the region's roadways, it is easy to see the wear and tear that time and the elements place on our highway infrastructure. But underneath those same roads lie thousands of miles of pipeline that make up our drinking water, sanitary sewer and stormwater systems. Our community is literally built on top of this vast infrastructure. These systems, and the people who maintain them, work silently and reliably

to keep the water flowing. In fact, the systems work so well, we often take them for granted. Because this infrastructure is out of sight, we are less likely to appreciate the need for maintenance. But just like our road systems, their proper functioning is essential to ensuring a high quality of life here in Hampton Roads.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office has noted that water and wastewater utilities do not generate enough revenue from user rates to cover their full service cost. The result of this shortfall

is postponed maintenance and delayed replacement of our infrastructure. This is a reality in Hampton Roads and without action now, we risk increased service disruptions, water main breaks and sanitary sewer overflows. Beyond these inconveniences, deteriorating infrastructure poses a threat to the environment, our local economy and public health.

GOOD to DO

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

DON'T TAKE WATER FOR GRANTED.

Water is life. The water we use now is all we'll ever have, so we must use it wisely. You can conserve in small ways that make a big difference to preserve and protect our water resources.

SUPPORT AND INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE.

It is critical that we support the investment necessary to replace our aging infrastructure. Our quality of life and health cannot be sustained without continued and improved access to clean drinking water and sanitation services.

THINK BEFORE YOU FLUSH.

It's a toilet, not a trash can! Everything you send down the drain ends up at your local wastewater treatment plant.

STAY INFORMED ABOUT WATER-RELATED ISSUES.

Learn more about what happens to the water you drink and use. Start by reading and understanding your water and wastewater bill and your locality's annual water quality report.

Happy Birthday

Nearly Two Years and Counting

askHRgreen.org!



askHRgreen.org turns two this summer—and what a couple of fun years it has been. The go-to source for all things green in Hampton Roads, askHRgreen.org began as a region-wide public awareness and education campaign. What it is becoming is a local green movement that is gaining momentum among residents from Williamsburg to Virginia Beach, and from Isle of Wight County to Poquoson. Julia B. Hillegass is delighted. On behalf of the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC), she oversees askHRgreen.org, working with municipal representatives from all 16 Hampton Roads cities and counties, as well as HRSD. askHRgreen.org was top of mind when *Green Living* caught up with Julia this month.

askHRgreen.org will soon mark its second anniversary. Why was it developed?

We developed askHRgreen.org to help Hampton Roads residents find their inner green with just the click of a mouse. For years, the HRPDC facilitated a variety

of environmental education efforts to assist localities in notifying residents and meeting regulatory requirements. Developing consistent regional messaging has always afforded localities an economy of scale that they could not otherwise achieve. It was smarter to pool resources than to have a small, scattered approach.

Couple that with various emerging issues beginning to overlap, like sanitary sewer overflows and stormwater pollution, and we knew the time was right for the development of an umbrella brand to tie all of the messages together. Then, voila! askHRgreen.org was born.

How has it evolved?

We began with offering just the green basics. What we found was that people then craved more information. Once you show someone an easy, green alternative, they get hooked and want to add something else. Now we make the connections for people, by illustrating not just what they can do, but why they should care and how their actions impact the larger environment.

What site features do you believe aide residents the most?

Well, we're true to our name—if you have a question, you can literally askHRgreen.org! Questions are filtered using information on the site. If it is a question we haven't addressed, you can send us the question through the site, and someone from our staff will find an answer. Another great feature of our site is the event listings. All of our member localities and partners can post their environmental activities so that

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residents can find the green events closest to where they work, live and play.

Does askHRgreen.org provide exposure for other like-minded green groups?

Absolutely! We welcome calendar submissions for related events, blog comments, there's a form for watershed restoration groups to send us their info to share, and we welcome your comments. A conversation about keeping the environment clean is a good one to have!

Who handles the "Let's Talk Green" blog featured on the site?

Our blog content is written by a team of local government committee members, HRPDC staff, long-time partners and occasional guest bloggers. We strive to keep the content informative, yet entertaining, and we hope to elevate the green conversation in Hampton Roads.

In addition to the blog, where else can you find askHRgreen.org?

You can like us on Facebook, follow on Twitter, tune in to YouTube and pin us on Pinterest. We're very social.

Is there information to help educators?

There is a whole section of the website devoted to the classroom. Educators can download our *Green Learning* guide (written and provided for the region's sixth-grade students), various lesson plans and even apply for mini-grants to fund innovative environmental projects for their classes or environmental clubs.

Are there site features that Hampton Roads residents would be surprised to find?

In general, we're hearing that 1) residents are impressed with the variety of information that we are able to place literally at their fingertips and

2) the fact that it is so customized for Hampton Roads. In addition to news for residents and educators, we have great material specific to greening your business.

What's on tap for askHRgreen.org in its third year?

We hope to continue this *Green Living* series and develop another *Green Learning* classroom publication. We're looking for creative ways to showcase our partners and develop more regional askHRgreen.org champions to help us spread the word. Our messaging is becoming more sophisticated in that we're helping people to make the connections between their actions, the environment and improving their lives. It's not enough to encourage action because it's the right thing to do; we need to tell a story, show people why they should care and why behavior change is important to the environment and their personal quality of life.



What is your favorite website page?

By far, my favorite page is our *Green Learning* guide. Although it is targeted to school-aged children, I think most adults will learn a thing or two as well! The photos and info-graphics tell a compelling story of how easy it is to make a positive impact on the environment. Traditional and non-traditional educators, and especially students, have given it rave reviews. It can easily be used to start a family discussion around the dinner table.

GOOD to KNOW

**DISPOSABLE
"FLUSHABLE" WIPES**



Regardless of what the packaging may say, if it's not toilet paper it belongs in the trash, not down the drain where it clogs your pipes.

WHAT NOT TO FLUSH

MEDICATIONS



Expired or unwanted medications should never be flushed or poured down the sink. Wastewater treatment plants are not designed to remove medications.

TRASH



The toilet is not a wastebasket. You'll save your pipes and lots of water by putting trash (paper towels, cotton swabs, feminine hygiene products, etc.) where it belongs.

PLEASE FLUSH RESPONSIBLY » ONLY YOUR PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

To learn more about what not to flush, or proper disposal of medications, just **askHRgreen.org** /askHRgreen /HRgreen

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