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 and discharge facilities 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.

To combat this, the state has assigned Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) 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.

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 body of water. The land that the water flows across on this journey and the waterways that receive it are called a watershed. As a bay or ocean, the Chesapeake Bay watershed contains 605,000 square miles of land and water. The land that the water flows across on this journey and the waterways that receive it are called a watershed.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO CLEAN UP OUR WATERWAYS? WE’RE GLAD YOU ASKED!

Good to do:
- 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

THE TIME TO CLEAN UP OUR WATERWAYS IS NOW!
Many Hampton Roads waterways contain too much sediment, nitrogen, phosphorous and bacteria. 

STORMWATER POLLUTION
As rain falls from the sky, it collects...

AIR POLLUTION
from power plants and vehicle exhaust

GUTTER RUNOFF
picks up leaves, sediment, trash

LAWN RUNOFF
picks up oil, pet waste, fertilizer, trash

DRIVEWAY RUNOFF
picks up oil, gravel, sediment, trash

ROAD RUNOFF
picks up oil, gravel, sediment, trash, bar

STORM DRAIN
all water goes to a storm drain which leads to...

RIVER, LAKE OR OCEAN
By the time the rain reaches the ocean, it has picked up pollutants from hundreds of sources.

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