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BALTIMORE CITY HAS A PROBLEM: POLLUTED RUNOFF FOULS THE INNER HARBOR

The restoration of Baltimore's Inner Harbor has spurred downtown economic development, enhanced the city's sense of place, and garnered national recognition as a show piece of urban revitalization. Yet even with all this, an essential element of the harbor sits in stark contrast to the glitzy hotels and office buildings – the water itself. Baltimore's harbor is one of the most polluted waterways in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and idles on the Environmental Protection Agency's impaired waters list.

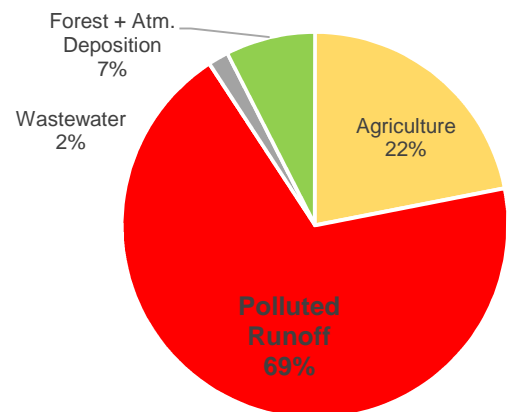
Trash, debris and the smell of sewage plague the waterfront. At times, the Jones Fall turns milky blue-green from unidentified pollutants. Floating fish are a common sight. This not only impacts the living resources in the harbor but also the businesses and quality of life around the harbor.

This pollution comes primarily from the rain that washes tons of sediment, many pounds of animal waste, thousands of cubic feet of trash, and hundreds of gallons of sewage leakage into stormwater drains and pipes that empty into the harbor and the Chesapeake Bay.

Baltimore's other waterways, the Jones Falls, Gwynns Falls, and, to a lesser extent, Patapsco River suffer the same indignity and feed the Harbor with polluted runoff.

Today, polluted runoff is the only major source of water pollution still on the rise. Using established load estimates, urban runoff contributed approximately 51% of the total phosphorus in the Baltimore watershed and approximately 65% of the total sediment.¹ In the Patapsco, polluted runoff is responsible for nearly a quarter of the excess nitrogen and almost a third of the excess phosphorus in the river.²

Fortunately there is some funding to help reduce some of the pollution. Baltimore has instituted the Stormwater Remediation Fee to help it comply with federal clean water regulations and better manage its polluted runoff. Additionally, the Bay Restoration Fee is paying for an upgrade to the Patapsco Wastewater Treatment plant that will greatly reduce nitrogen to the river and the Harbor.



Patapsco River Bay Segment
Suspended Sediment (pounds)

Chesapeake Bay Watershed Model 5.3

¹ Chesapeake Bay Land Cover Change Model 2010 Version 2; MDE Accounting for Stormwater Wasteload Allocations and Impervious Acres Treated – Guidance for NDPES Stormwater Permits June 2011.

² Chesapeake Bay Watershed Model 5.3.

THE CITY NEEDS RELIABLE FUNDING TO MEET PERMIT OBLIGATIONS



Source: Baltimore City 2012 NPDES Annual Report, Table F3.1

By its own admission, the city isn't meeting the requirements of its federal permit to discharge polluted runoff. In the five-year permit period ending in 2010, the city was required to reduce polluted runoff from 20 percent, or the equivalent of 4,675 acres, of city streets, parking lots and other impervious surfaces. Although the permit was extended, Baltimore has reduced polluted runoff of only about 10.6 percent of its total hard surfaces. The city historically has relied on street sweeping and storm drain cleaning to manage polluted runoff, and to meet the requirements of its federal National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit (NPDES). The chart above shows the diminishing results from those programs. *Source: Baltimore City 2012 NPDES Annual Report, Table F3.1.* And the city just got a new permit that is TWICE as demanding.

The federal mandates coupled with other efforts to restore the Inner Harbor to a fishable and swimmable waterbody by 2020 demonstrate why the Stormwater Remediation Fee is so critical.

A great city needs a great water system. The pieces of the puzzle are now in place. The efforts and determination the city's leaders will ultimately determine Baltimore's greatness.

Stay strong on stormwater fees.



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION
Saving a National Treasure

Founded in 1967, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) conservation organization dedicated to saving a national treasure—the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers and streams. Its motto, Save the Bay, defines the organization's mission and commitment. With headquarters in Annapolis, MD, offices in Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia, and 17 field centers, CBF works throughout the Chesapeake Bay's 64,000-square-mile watershed to build an informed citizenry, advocate pollution-reduction strategy, and enforce the law. CBF is supported by more than 200,000 active members and has a staff of 170 full-time employees. Approximately 80 percent of CBF's \$23.6 million annual budget is privately raised.

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