



STATE OF THE BAY:

Backyard Report Card

No matter where you live, you can brainstorm ways to save the Bay at home!

We need to understand what parts of our homes impact water quality—for better or worse. And don't worry—all our homes have an impact! Let's investigate how your home impacts your local environment and water quality in four categories: Energy, Water, Waste, and Habitat.

Step 1: Watch the Video

Watch the [Backyard Report Card video](#).

cbf.org/news-media/multimedia/video/cbf-education-videos/backyard-report-card.html

Step 2: Examine Your Household

Take a moment to brainstorm and develop a list of all the ways your household uses Energy, Water, Waste, and Habitat. For example, a household may use energy by turning on the lights or use habitat by having a garage. Draw a picture to represent your relationship with each category in the boxes below.

You can represent your household use in a variety of ways: You can draw items larger if your household uses them more, or if they are more important. You can make graphs or charts and you may find it helpful to label what you draw.

ENERGY	WATER
WASTE	HABITAT

Step 3: Explore Your Answers

Answer the questions below for each category after you have filled in the boxes for Step 2. At the end of each category, return to your drawings and add ideas for how you can improve your household's impact on water quality. Each category title links to more information that can also be found at cbf.org/issues.

ENERGY

1. How does your household get from place to place? Which methods of transport use the least energy?
2. Can you tell if any of your appliances (refrigerator, microwave, stove/oven, heater/air conditioner, computer) are Energy Star appliances? These are designed to use less energy, which is good for the environment and saves money.
3. What types of light bulbs are in and around your home? Most incandescent light bulbs have been phased out of use because they use more energy than fluorescent or LED bulbs.

Make a difference:

Add ideas to your drawing from Step One for how your household might use less energy.

WATER

1. How many gallons of water does your toilet use per flush?
2. Are there any leaky faucets in your kitchen or bathroom?
3. How many times per week is your dishwasher and/or laundry machine used? How many gallons of water does each system use? Calculate the total gallons of water used per week based on your findings.

Make a difference:

What are some ways you think your household could help conserve more water? Add those ideas to your drawing. What might persuade your household to reduce their water use, and what would you need to convince them?

WASTE

1. Where does your food waste go? Do you compost or know anyone that does?
2. Does your community have a recycling program?
3. What does your household do with clothing you've outgrown, or items you don't use any more? Would you throw it away, donate it, or give it to a friend? How can our purchasing choices impact the environment?

Make a difference:

Add ideas for how your household generates waste to your drawing from Step One. Then, add three ideas below for how your community could help your home reduce waste.

HABITAT

1. Some examples of habitats are tall grassy meadows, thick brush and brambles, dead standing trees or rotting logs on the ground, and streams with forested buffers. Can you observe any of these habitats or others from your home?
2. Open a window and listen to your surroundings for 30 seconds. How many different species of animals did you hear?
3. By counting the different types of leaves, bark, and berries, how many different types of plants can you find?

Make a difference:

Plants can help water soak into the ground, reducing polluted runoff while creating habitat for pollinators. Draw an outline of your property and mark where you might be able to put a tree or plants. Why did you choose that spot?

Step 4: Take Action!

It's important to remember that the Bay starts at home. All of the waterways in your local community eventually lead to the Chesapeake Bay. Brainstorm with someone in your household about what your community might need to be more protective of the waterways near you. Is it education, time, money, or help from local elected officials? Ask yourself: What can I do, right now, to help save the Bay?



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INVESTIGATION

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