

Chesapeake Bay Resource Protection Areas

Waterways enhance our quality of life by giving us a visual and recreational treasure. These waters also support a wide variety of plants, animals and aquatic life.

What are Resource Protection Areas (RPAs)?

RPAs are the corridors of environmentally sensitive land that lie alongside or near the shorelines of streams, rivers and other waterways. In their natural condition, RPAs protect water quality. RPAs filter pollutants out of storm water runoff, reduce the volume of storm water runoff, prevent erosion and perform other important biological and ecological functions.

RPAs include:

- Tidal Wetlands
- Tidal Shorelines
- Nontidal wetlands next to tributary streams
- 100-foot buffer along all waterways

All waters in Prince William County eventually flow to the Chesapeake Bay. In 1988, Virginia enacted the Chesapeake Bay

Preservation Act. The Act requires local governments to include water quality measures in their zoning and subdivision ordinances and in their comprehensive plans. In 1990, Prince William County embraced this act and enacted stringent local requirements to protect the RPAs as a means to safeguard the Bay.

Prince William County features over 1200 miles of streams and rivers. Our important rivers include the Occoquan River, which serves as a major source of drinking water to Northern Virginia and the Potomac River, a legendary river that flows directly to the Bay.



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Please remember

- All Waterways in Prince William County eventually flow into the Chesapeake Bay
- Leading concerns for our local waters are materials dumped into storm drains, animal wastes, excess fertilizers from lawns and excess pesticides.
- Citizens can help by picking up litter, helping with stream cleanups and be mindful of your waste disposal, use of fertilizers and pesticides

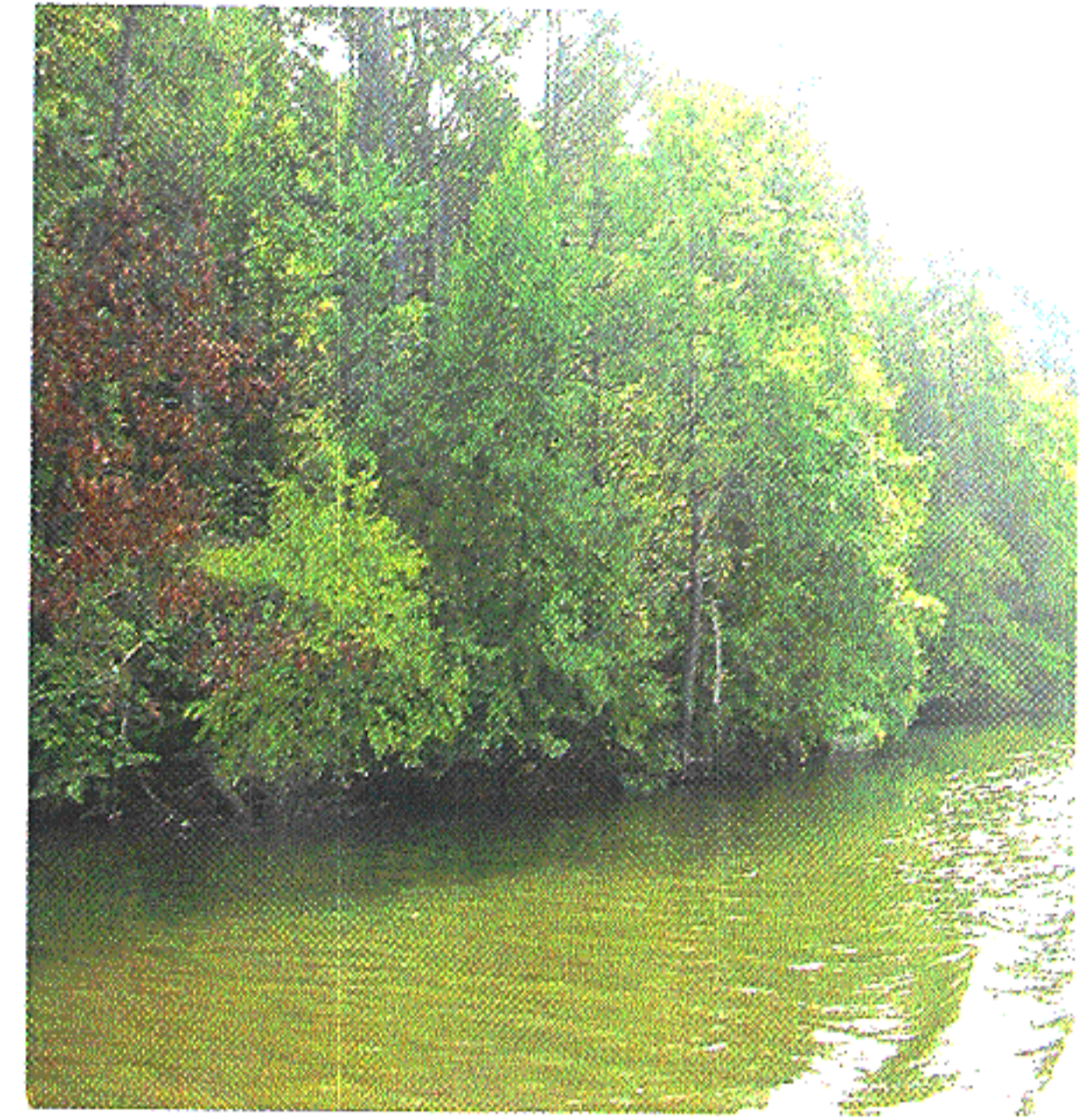
Is there a RPA on your property?

In 1990, Prince William County adopted the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act into its local ordinance. RPAs were designated on all properties, both new and existing, along all waterways in the County.

Owners are responsible for determining if an RPA exists on their property, whether the owner just purchased it or has owned it for years. Please know that if you apply for permits to undertake a project

that will disturb land or add a structure to your land, the RPA will appear on our maps. RPAs may exist even if they are not shown on your plat. You will still be required to comply with the RPA requirements.

Please call Public Works at (703) 792-7070 if you would like to learn if RPAs exist on your property. We can provide tips to help maintain it so you can do your part to protect our waters.



Why is it so important to protect RPAs?

Trees and other plants help stabilize stream banks, limit erosion and reduce the volume of storm water runoff rushing into the waterways. Trees also provide shade to help maintain water temperatures which helps support aquatic life. The trees also provide habitat for wildlife.

Vegetation in the RPA also reduces the amount of sediment and nutrients that are carried by stormwater runoff. This runoff is slowed by the vegetation on the

ground and can be used by the plants as food.

Trees and plants can also change the structure of pollutants to make them useful substances for the environment. Soil can help change nitrogen into a useful protein for plants and bacteria. Toxic chemicals can be broken down into non-toxic forms.

Vegetation can store nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus in plant tissue. This keeps it from entering

A naturally vegetated RPA or buffer serves a critical function by removing pollutants from storm water runoff. It acts as a protector, filter and a system to change pollutants into useful substances.

streams where it can make algae grow too fast, choke fish and block sunlight.

Why we need RPAs

When RPAs are disturbed, more pollutants are able to enter our waters and eventually the Bay. Water runoff from storms carries oil from the roads, soil from construction sites, fertilizers and pesticides from lawns and farms, harmful bacteria from animal waste

and trash. In fact, runoff is one of the leading causes of surface water pollution.

If RPAs are not preserved or the stream corridor is not protected, then other impacts can occur including stream bank erosion,

habitat destruction and a reduction in the stream's biodiversity.

We ask for your help in our efforts by learning more about RPAs and protecting these important areas on your property.



What activities in the RPA require County approval

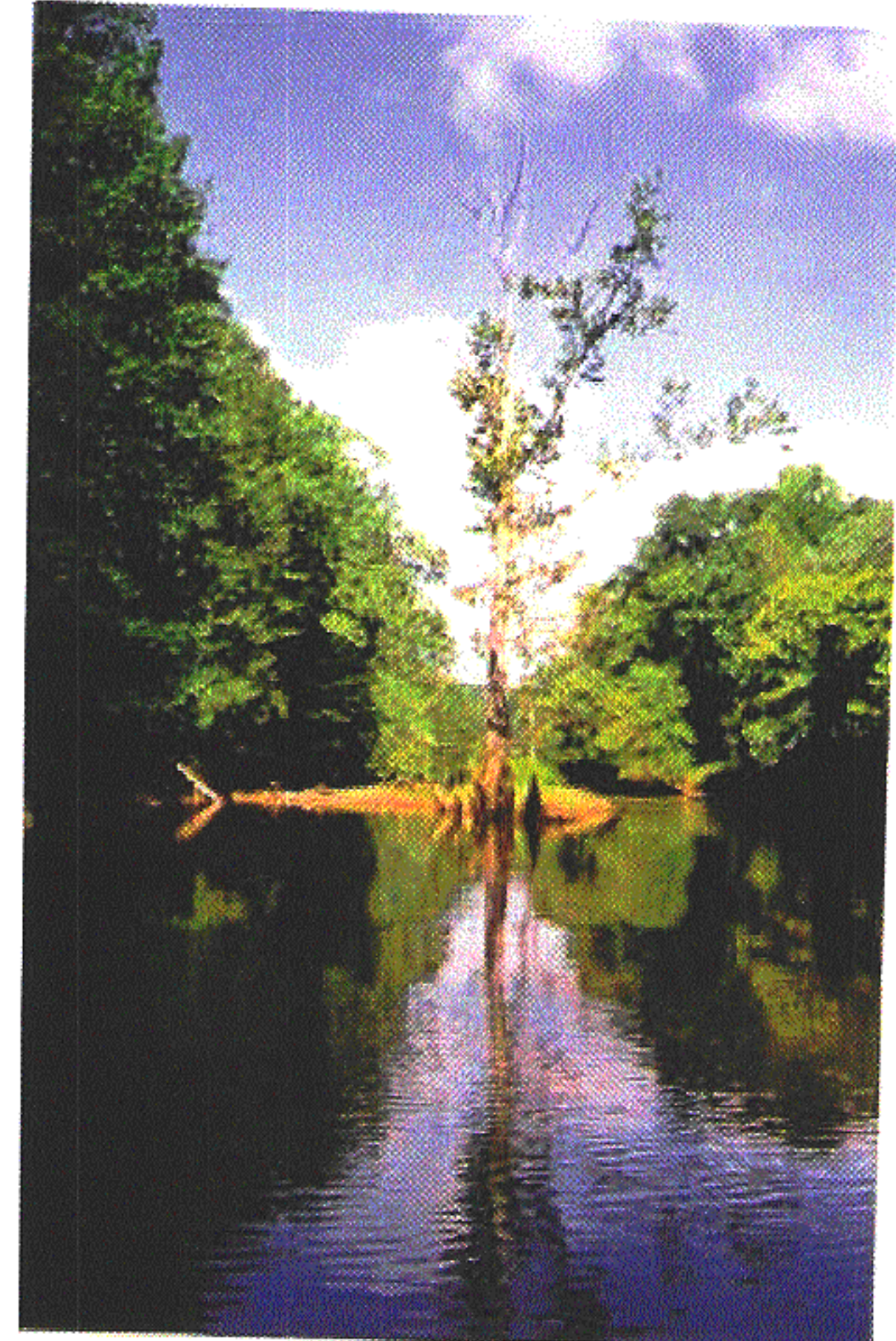
You will need to discuss and apply for permits with the County before undertaking any activity within the RPA. A 100-foot buffer is required as part of the RPA to help prevent runoff and erosion, as well as filter non-point source pollution. The following activities and uses are permitted in the RPA with County approval, as long as water quality is maintained

- Water dependent facilities such as docks, piers and public beaches
- Rebuilding existing structures to original footprint
- Water wells, boardwalks, trails, pathways and public utility structures
- Selective removal of trees for reasonable sight lines, vistas or walkways (using natural materials)
- Removing dead, dying or noxious vegetation

Please note that any removal of trees must be approved by the County. Any vegetation that is removed must be replaced by another type of vegetation that offers an equal level of water quality protection, such as shrubs or ground cover that don't grow as high. We recommend selective pruning of branches at viewing level so that the tree does not have to be removed.

Some activities may or may not be permitted by the County. These projects require a longer special review process, perhaps a Public Hearing and payment of various fees. Activities that may or may not be permitted include:

- Additions to existing structures
- Secondary structures such as sheds, gazebos and pools



All Prince William rivers, streams and waters flow into the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay. Help protect our unique habitats and water wonders!

What activities are NOT permitted in the RPA

The following activities are not permitted in the RPA:

- New development
- Parking lots
- Clear-cutting trees
- Filling and grading activities
- Establishing lawns



**Prince William County
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Doing Our Part to Protect the Bay**

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In harmony with nature.

Learn more:
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The Environmental Services Division of Public Works is responsible for enhancing water quality, monitoring air quality, protecting properties and the public from flooding due to storms and preventing pollution. We share information with the community through a variety of outreach programs. Staff manages the County's water resources through protection of wetlands, control of storm water runoff, implementation of pollution prevention activities, public education, review of site development plans and inspection of developments for proper drainage and erosion control. Additionally, staff investigates and corrects vegetation ordinance violations, inspects trash violations and provides maintenance for right-of-way landscaping.

Did you know? You can help prevent runoff of oils, gas and petroleum products by maintaining your car and disposing of these products properly. Used motor oil and antifreeze are recycled at the County Landfill. Gasoline and other fluids from vehicles are accepted as part of our Household Hazardous Waste Collection. Call (703) 792-5750 for details.

What happens if you violate the RPA requirements?

If you violate RPA requirements, you will also violate county ordinances that may result in penalties. Violators will be required to restore the RPA in accordance with county guidelines. A plan must be submitted and approved by Public Works. The objective of the plan will be to restore the RPA's ability to protect the stream from runoff and erosion.

The restoration plan requires proposed plantings and a schedule for restoring the disturbed RPA. You will not be allowed to just wait for vegetation to grow back on its own, since it will take too long.

Plantings should include ground cover, shrubs, small trees and large

trees. Be sure to provide a layout to show where the plantings will go. The layout should show the type, number and size of the vegetation to be planted. It should also include information on the timing for the planting.

The County will require an escrow to be posted to cover the cost of plant material and labor for installation. This escrow will be returned once the work is completed and established.

Looking to restore a previously disturbed RPA?

Call Public Works if you would like guidance on restoring property that was disturbed by a previous owner.

We can also offer ideas on ways to enhance an existing RPA. Please call us at (703) 792-7070 for ideas on plants and proper planting techniques.

