



CHEASPEAKE BAY RESOURCE PROTECTION AREA

What is the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act?

In 1988, the Virginia General Assembly enacted the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act. The act requires local governments to include water quality protection measures in their zoning, subdivision ordinances and in their comprehensive plans. In November 1990, Isle of Wight County adopted the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance to protect environmentally sensitive lands known as Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas (CBPA). The most sensitive of these are called Resource Protection Areas (RPA).

What are Resource Protection Areas?

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

- Tidal wetlands
- Tidal shores
- Non-tidal wetlands connected by surface flow & contiguous to tidal wetlands or water bodies with perennial flow; including streams, rivers, lakes & ponds;
- A 100-foot buffer landward of the above features

What happens if Resource Protection Areas are not properly managed?

Because RPAs are so close to water bodies, disturbing them allows more pollutants to enter our waters and, eventually, the Chesapeake Bay. Storm-water runoff picks up and carries oil from roads, soil from construction sites, fertilizers and pesticides from farms and lawns, harmful bacteria from pet and farm animal wastes, and trash. In many areas, storm water is one of the leading causes of surface-water pollution. Poorly managed RPAs, or the lack of protected stream corridors, may result in other impacts, such as stream

bank and channel erosion, habitat destruction and a reduction in the stream’s biodiversity.

How do I know if my property is within the RPA?

Please contact Isle of Department of Community Development Planning and Zoning at 757-357-9114 to determine if your property potentially contains RPA.

It is important to note that before any land disturbance can occur on a property the RPA must be definitively located by a licensed surveyor or professional engineer.

Under the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance, activities and uses that are permitted and not permitted in the RPA include:

Permitted*

- Water-dependent facilities, such as docks, piers & public beaches
- Water wells, boardwalks, trails, pathways & public utility structures
- Selectively removing trees, for reasonable sight lines & vistas or pedestrian walkways (created using natural materials)
- Removing dead or dying vegetation

Not Permitted

- New development
- Additions to existing structures
- Parking lots
- Secondary structures, such as sheds & gazebos
- Clear-cutting trees
- Filling and grading activities
- Establishing lawns

*ALL PERMITTED ACTIVITIES REQUIRE COUNTY APPROVAL BEFORE COMMENCING

Isle of Wight County Department of Planning and Zoning is here to help you sort out issues related to RPAs with responsible research and expert insight. Get in touch together we’ll figure out the best way to serve land and home. And always:

Before you act, contact!