

Letter from the Editor --An end to the bay blame game

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Hollywood, MD - On Saturday, Aug. 20 Maryland Governor Larry Hogan addressed the Maryland Association of Counties and made an announcement that brought much joy to rural representatives. Hogan announced a revision to a requirement that builders of structures located outside the Critical Area serviced by septic systems must install a new system manufactured with the best available technology. Now only buildings within the Critical Area will need to install septic systems with the much costlier components.

Some view this action as proof that the "War on Rural Maryland,"—at least from the governor's perspective—is over and was just another failed policy of the previous administration.

What remains, however, is the challenge of restoring the Chesapeake Bay to its once-pristine state. This was a time when fresh seafood sustained Maryland and fed the world.

Certainly, too much focus and blame is put on the rural areas regarding the polluting of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. And septic systems get a bad rap even though wastewater treatment plants have the potential to spew much heftier amounts of waste into the water.

A few weeks ago, it was literally a collective effort by some careless—or clueless—residents living in the more urbanized areas of Howard and Anne Arundel counties that prompted a huge spill in the upper Patuxent. An accumulation of discarded kitchen grease clogged a sewer pipe and the end result was approximately 2 million gallons of waste in the river. To date, the lower Patuxent has apparently not been tainted. Still, it's clear the effort to stop water pollution and preserve the Chesapeake Bay needs statewide participation. Just because you can't see the river or the bay from your house doesn't mean your actions—pouring grease down the sink, allowing spent motor oil to wash down a gutter or over-fertilizing your lawn—won't impact it.

The waterways are crucial to Maryland's quality of life. Every Marylander needs to participate in the stewardship. No one community should be burdened with the entire task. There are organizations, such as your local cooperative extension service, that can enlighten residents to some of the basics. Everyone should evaluate the bay-friendliness of their own home and business. Bringing back the bay would truly boost Maryland's economy in a most-sustainable way.

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