



You Can Make a Difference in the Health of Casco Bay

A Bay Paper from Friends of Casco Bay



Friends of Casco Bay
Casco BAYKEEPER

Confronting the consequences of climate change and the changing chemistry of our oceans—specifically, the carbon dioxide that threatens our coastal waters—may seem daunting, but Maine has many advantages to help it meet the challenge. Mainers are known to be resolute, resourceful, and committed to community. Our residents value the environment, understanding that our future prosperity is dependent on maintaining the state’s beauty and natural resources. If any place can identify and implement solutions, it is Maine.

Even if you adopt only one or two of the suggestions below, you will be helping to improve the health of Casco Bay. Acting locally, ultimately, can have a global impact.

Think about Casco Bay as You Care for Your Lawn

Why? Nitrogen is public enemy #1. Nitrogen-laden fertilizers intended for lawns and fields can end up feeding phytoplankton instead. In addition to killing bugs, pesticides kill sea life.

- Do not use fertilizers and pesticides, which our testing has demonstrated can end up in the ocean.
- Adjust your lawn mower to its highest setting, preferably 3½-4 inches. This promotes vigorous root growth and healthier grass. Healthy grass needs less fertilizing.
- Leave grass clippings as you mow. (That’s right—no raking!) These natural fertilizers return about 50% of the nitrogen back to the soil, where it belongs!
- Do a soil test to determine what, if any, amendments are needed.
- Find out more at cascobay.org/bayscaping.



BayScaping promotes green yards that keep Casco Bay blue.

Responsible Boaters Are Important Stewards of the Bay

Why? Because boaters are on the water, in the water, or next to the water working on their boats, they are the first line of defense in protecting Casco Bay. Those who enjoy the Bay have a special responsibility to keep pollutants out of the water, including sewage, urine, fuel, oily bilge water, cleaning supplies, paint, and varnish.

- Use a pumpout facility for your marine toilet. And don’t pee over the side! Find a list of pumpout stations in Casco Bay at cascobay.org/boat-pumpout-program.
- When refilling your tank, avoid spilling fuel and don’t overfill.
- If you do spill fuel, don’t squirt dishwashing liquid on it; sop it up with the fuel spill pads at the fuel dock.

Green up Your Ride

Why? Cars and trucks are huge sources of nitrogen pollution (nitrous oxides), carbon dioxide, and other greenhouse gases.

- Bike, walk, use public transportation, or carpool.
- Maintain your car so oil, antifreeze, and other toxic substances don’t leak. By keeping your car tuned up, it will run cleaner, burn less fuel, and get better gas mileage.
- When you do drive, combine trips, reducing the distance you travel. For example, do errands on the way home from work.



Be kind to cyclists. They are keeping nitrogen pollution and carbon dioxide out of the Bay.

Reduce the Energy You Use in Your Home

Why? Burning less oil, wood, and coal to heat your home reduces the release of nitrogen, as well as your fuel bill. By conserving energy, you will lower both your carbon and nitrogen footprints.

- Get an energy audit.
- Lower your thermostat by 2 degrees in winter.
- Replace incandescent light bulbs with LEDs.
- Make it a habit to turn off lights when you leave a room.
- Unplug “vampire” electronics and appliances when not in use, such as cell phone chargers and cable or satellite TV boxes.

Calculate Your Impact

Personal actions each of us take can ensure that the next generation inherits a cleaner and healthier Casco Bay. Calculate your **nitrogen footprint** at either of these sites: <http://www.cbf.org/news-media/multimedia/nitrogen-calculator> http://n-print.org/sites/n-print.org/files/footprint_java/index.html#/home
Find **carbon footprint** calculators online.

Use Less Water

Why? Up to a third of our electricity is used to move, clean, and dispose of water and wastewater. Every drop saved also saves electricity, reduces power plant emissions, and lowers demand on sewage treatment capacity.

- Turn off the water while shaving, doing dishes, and brushing your teeth.
- Install water-saving faucets, toilets, and showerheads.
- Fix your toilet if it tends to run after flushing—and fix that dripping faucet!
- Only run your dishwasher and washing machine when they are full.

Manage Your Waste

Why? We're talking about sewage here. Even treated sewage, including urine, is loaded with nitrogen. Discharges into coastal waters can cause algae blooms and ocean acidification.

- Pick up pet poop.
- Have your septic system inspected yearly and pumped every 2-3 years to remove sludge.
- Don't dump anything down a storm drain because it may end up in Casco Bay.

Keep Water from Running off Your Property

Why? Prevent pollutants, such as nitrogen fertilizers and other chemicals, from being washed into the Bay. Plantings act as sponges, giving rainwater time to soak into the ground.

- Redirect your downspouts from hard surfaces to your lawn or garden.
- Position rain barrels to catch water that runs off roof and sheds.
- Cover bare soil with grass seed and compost to keep it from washing away—and to keep down weeds.
- Plant a buffer strip of bushes and trees between lawn and water's edge.



Water your garden with the rainwater your rain barrel collects.

Buy and Eat Local

Why? An average plate of food travels over 1,300 miles. Frozen and processed foods, especially, require a lot of energy to produce and transport.

- Grow your own vegetables and buy fresh food from local farmers.
- Opt for meatless Mondays—or more. Eating meat generates 2½ times more greenhouse gases than eating vegan, but any reduction lowers greenhouse emissions.
- Compost food wastes.
- Bring reusable shopping bags. US consumers use 100 billion plastic bags per year.



Get Involved—What You Can Get Others to Do

Why? Volunteers and voters are vital in catalyzing changes in communities, businesses, and governments. Friends of Casco Bay, and other nonprofits, could not accomplish our work without the help of citizen scientists and community activists.

- Limits on nitrogen discharges are needed. In 2007, Friends of Casco Bay helped persuade the Maine Legislature to pass a law requiring the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to establish a limit on how much nitrogen sewage treatment plants and other facilities may discharge into coastal waters. The DEP has yet to fulfill that directive. Tell your state legislator to make the DEP take action.
- Encourage your community to adopt ordinances to ban pesticides. Children and pets can come in direct contact with toxic chemicals in parks, school yards, and playing fields.
- If legislation is introduced to limit the application of pesticides and fertilizers on a state level, please support it.
- Support municipal actions and fees to reduce sewage and stormwater pollution.

Help Us Help the Bay!

Why? Friends of Casco Bay started as a grassroots community organization 25 years ago. Our success today continues because of the commitment of our volunteers and members!

Find out more at cascobay.org.

- Become a supporter of Friends of Casco Bay. Go to donate.cascobay.org.
- Learn about issues that pose a threat to the Bay and use our Bay Papers to educate friends and family.
- Invite a dynamic speaker to talk about issues impacting Casco Bay.
- Volunteer with us to pick up trash from beaches and marshes, test water quality, stencil storm drains, and lobby your public officials.



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Friends of Casco Bay's mission is to improve and protect the environmental health of Casco Bay.