



IMMIGRATION, POPULATION GROWTH AND  
*the Chesapeake Bay*

  
FAIR

FEDERATION FOR AMERICAN IMMIGRATION REFORM

*a report by Eric A. Ruark, Director of Research*

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## Executive Summary

Immigration is driving U.S. population growth and putting a severe strain on the nation's ecosystems. Politicians have refused to acknowledge this reality, and many leading environmental groups dismiss the issue by claiming it is a "global" problem. While the world's skyrocketing population is truly a global problem, the effects of overpopulation manifest themselves in localized ways. The growing population of the United States has its most immediate and deleterious impact on the U.S. environment. The solution is the implementation of a population policy that lowers immigration and restores it to a moderate level.

One of the most endangered areas in the United States is the Chesapeake Bay and its surrounding environs. The Chesapeake Bay is one of the world's great natural resources. It is the largest estuary in the United States and home to 3,600 different plant and animal species. The Bay's watershed spans 64,000 square miles and includes parts of six states and all of the District of Columbia. There are 17 million people currently living in the watershed and that population is continuing to grow at a rapid rate. This growing population is putting a severe strain on the Bay, threatening the survival of aquatic life and increasing the risks to human health.

Overpopulation in the Chesapeake Bay watershed is symptomatic of the impact that immigration-driven population growth is having across the United States. The difference is that the population in the Bay's watershed has already grown beyond the carrying capacity of that ecosystem. The question is not whether the Bay is going to suffer the consequences of excessive growth; the question is whether the Bay can recover from the immense damage already inflicted upon it. Immediate and decisive action must be taken, with the federal government leading the way by reducing immigration levels in order to achieve U.S. population stability.

Among the findings of this report:

- Between 2000 and 2009, immigration directly accounted for 40 percent of the population growth in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Taking into account the children born in the U.S. to immigrants, **immigration is responsible for 66 percent of total population growth in the Chesapeake watershed from 2000 to 2009.**
- Population in the Chesapeake Bay watershed is growing by 150,000 people every year. The watershed population is on pace to exceed 23 million residents by 2050.
- Maryland experienced the most immigration-related population growth. Immigration accounted for 98 percent of that state's population growth between 2000 and 2009.

- In the District of Columbia, immigration accounted for 61 percent of population growth between 2000 and 2009; in Virginia 58 percent; in Pennsylvania 48 percent; in Delaware 18 percent; and in West Virginia 10 percent. New York experienced an overall decrease in its Chesapeake watershed population. However, the immigrant population in New York's watershed area continued to increase.
- The leading environmental groups dedicated cleaning up the Bay recognize the harmful effects of population growth on the Bay but do not acknowledge that immigration is driving population growth in the watershed.
- Developers and politicians have touted the idea that population growth is both necessary and desirable while doing very little to alleviate the damage done to the Bay by excessive development. This represents an outmoded and unsustainable economic model for the 21st century. Smarter and more efficient, not ever bigger, will determine long-term economic success.
- Any short term economic benefits of continued growth are limited and will be far outweighed by the long term costs. Overpopulation in the watershed threatens the lucrative Chesapeake seafood industry and will lead to the loss of revenue from the recreational and tourism industries. The cost to clean up the Bay was estimated by the EPA in 2007 at \$28 billion.

## Introduction

The massive BP oil leak in the Gulf of Mexico that began in April 2010 deservedly received a great deal of public attention. The devastation that threatened the waters, beaches, and wetlands along the Gulf Coast was of great concern to millions of Americans, and the long-term consequences of the 4.9 billion gallons of oil that leaked into the Gulf will not be known for many years to come.

A catastrophe of similar scale is threatening the health of the Chesapeake Bay. It has been in the making over the course of many decades, and those who are responsible for safeguarding the Bay have done very little to prevent this disaster. Right now, the Chesapeake Bay is at a tipping point. Its condition has deteriorated to the extent that the Bay may never recover from the damage already inflicted upon it by overpopulation and overdevelopment on its coastal areas and vital tributaries. Even worse, there appears to be no serious effort to end future growth in the watershed.

The Chesapeake Bay's watershed is over 64,000 square miles and spans an area that covers parts of six states.<sup>1</sup> It receives 80 percent of its fresh water supply from just three sources; the Susquehanna, Potomac, and James Rivers.<sup>2</sup> These three rivers flow through densely populated regions picking up millions of tons of pollutants on their way to the Bay. The population of the Chesapeake Bay watershed has increased by 4.7 million residents since 1990 and is now over 17 million.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the watershed, this rising population is straining the Bay's ability to sustain life.

More people means more cars, more construction, more fertilizers, pesticides, detergents, and industrial and household waste that end up in the Bay. Development is claiming what unspoiled land is still left — about 100 acres of forestland are lost to development **per day** and over 120,000 acres of undeveloped land are lost to sprawl each year.<sup>4</sup> Out-of-control growth is causing great harm to the Bay. Pollution deteriorates water quality, imperils the once-lucrative seafood industry, and curtails recreational enjoyment of the Bay and its tributaries. The Bay itself is increasingly becoming a giant “dead zone.”

Environmental groups recognize the threats to the Bay, and state and federal governments are beginning to acknowledge that there is an urgent need to address the problem. There is common agreement that overdevelopment and a lack of environmentally sound practices have caused great damage to the Bay. A popular response has been to advocate “Smart Growth” initiatives, which is a way for developers and their political allies to disguise the same old practices under a new “green” appellation. What developers, politicians, and even environmental groups often



“The primary question [is] whether growing population, unchecked resource consumption, and a casual disregard for the natural environment will overwhelm our attempts to restore the Bay.”<sup>5</sup>

—Chesapeake Bay Program

choose to ignore is that population growth is the biggest threat to the health of the Chesapeake Bay, for to acknowledge this would beg the question of what is driving population growth. The answer to that question is immigration, but unfortunately profit motive and overriding ideologies prevent any real reform effort on that front.

## It's a Global Problem

Ask a representative from most major environmental organizations about immigration and U.S. population growth and you are likely to hear the refrain, "it's a global problem." This is an attempt to detour around the complex and difficult subject of immigration policy. It also reflects a failure to take responsibility for curbing population growth through clear and direct action. U.S. immigration policy cannot alleviate global population growth, but having a rational immigration policy can save the United States from the ravages of overpopulation, and it can set the correct example for developing countries around the world. Instead of pretending that perpetual growth leads to perpetual prosperity, we can make the decision to conserve the American ecology for future generations.

### *Crowding Ourselves Out*

World population will hit seven billion by 2011 and is expected to reach 10.5 billion by 2050.<sup>6</sup> While this truly is a global problem, the global aspects of population growth cannot be used as an excuse to ignore the importance of adopting a population policy for the United States. If we continue our present rate of immigration we will reach a population of more than 450 million residents in the United States by mid-century.<sup>7</sup> If we include immigrants who came to the United States since 1970, immigration by 2050 will have raised our population by 130 million.<sup>8</sup> The Pew Hispanic Center has projected a population in 2050 of 438 million, and estimated that 82 percent of that increase will be due to immigrants who came to the United States just since 2005, adding approximately 117 million more persons to the U.S. population.<sup>9</sup>

Our environmental awareness is higher now than ever before, yet our population continues to grow at a rapid rate. These two trends are incompatible. In the past ten years alone, we have added over 28 million people — an increase of more than 10 percent.<sup>10</sup> Immigration is driving U.S. population growth, with the foreign-born population growing more than four times the rate of the native-born.<sup>11</sup> Over the past decade, an average of over 1.1 million immigrants have been admitted annually, in addition to the hundreds of thousands of illegal aliens who entered the country each year. Adding to this growth are the children born in the United States to immigrants. These three trends — all spokes on the same wheel — are spurring U.S. population growth.

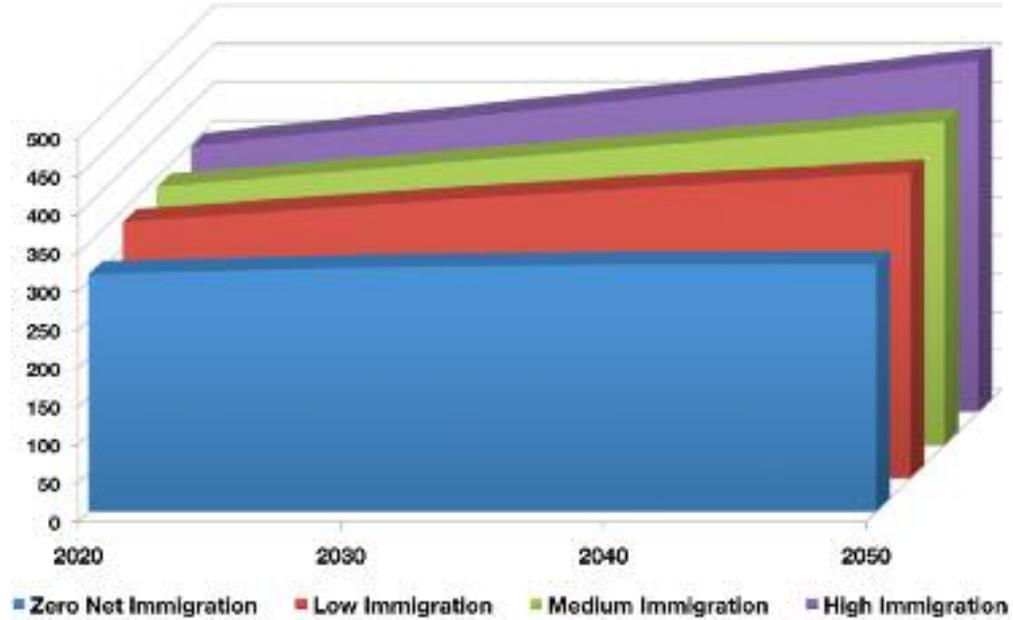


### **Global Population Growth Is No Excuse for Unsustainable Levels of Immigration to the United States**

Rapid population growth in other countries is not an excuse to ignore unsustainable population growth in the United States, or to support policies that will exacerbate this problem. The U.S. population is growing by one percent a year, one of the highest rates in the developed world. Congress must adopt a rational immigration policy that is in line with the national interest instead of continuing the disastrous policies of the last thirty years.

A growing population creates a need for increased food production, for scarce water resources, expanded urban areas, more construction, more roads and infrastructure, and generates more waste. All of this leads to increased runoff of increasingly contaminated water into our already fragile waterways. There has been incalculable environmental damage done as housing subdivisions and strip malls continue to spread out across the landscape, even as Americans choose to "go green."

## U.S. Census Bureau Population Projections, in millions<sup>12</sup>



Immigration Level	2020	2030	2040	2050
Zero Net	309.3	318.3	322.4	322.9
Low (995,000/constant)	334.1	358.4	379.6	398.5
Medium (1.2 to 2.8 million)	336.8	365.7	393.9	422.6
High (1.6 to 2.4 million)	346.7	382.6	419.4	458.2

The federal government has paid no attention to the environmental consequences of our immigration system. Many political leaders have decided that exponential population growth is in their best interest because it is in the interest of their political benefactors. If we include those who would become permanent residents through an amnesty program, such as ones currently introduced into Congress, and those who would come in as long-term guest workers, we could add another 40 million to our population projections. If those powerful special interest groups that push for even higher levels of immigration, in league with many of the largest “environmental” organizations, get their way, the United States could easily surpass half a billion people by 2050.<sup>13</sup>

## Case Study: The Chesapeake Bay

In 1900, there were five million people living in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. A century later that number had tripled to 15 million.<sup>14</sup> From 1980 to 2000, population growth in the Chesapeake Bay watershed was greater than in any other U.S. watershed area.<sup>15</sup> Over 17 million peo-

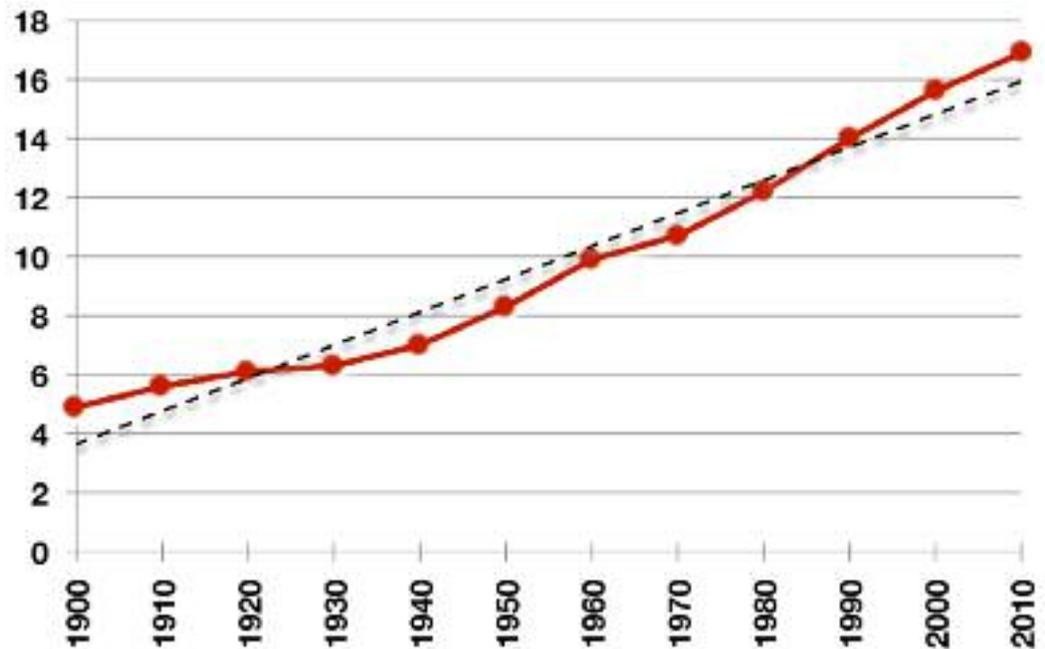


“The decline of the Chesapeake Bay is directly linked to the rise in population in the watershed.”<sup>16</sup>

—Chesapeake Bay Program

ple now inhabit the Chesapeake Bay watershed and that number is projected to reach 20 million by 2030.<sup>17</sup> Simply put, that is too many people. The Bay has been in a perilous state of health for many years as the population along its coasts and waterways has grown exponentially. If progress is to be made in protecting the Bay as a future resource, population growth must be addressed and immediate steps taken to curtail it.

### Population Growth in the Chesapeake Watershed, 1900–2010

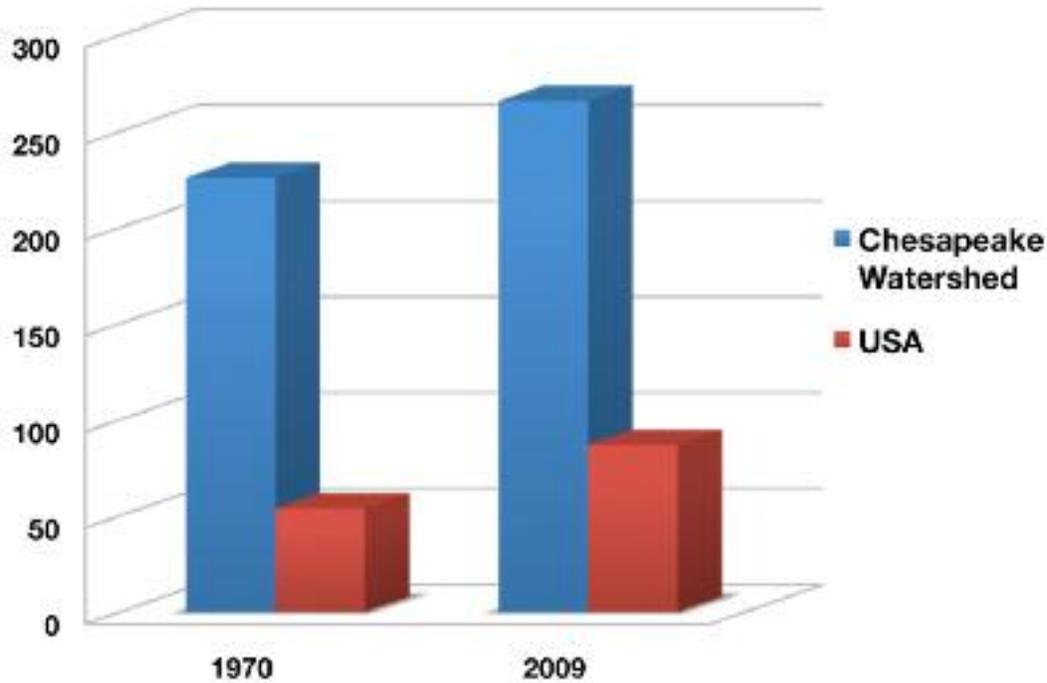


### *Packing Them In*

The northeastern U.S. is already the most densely populated region of the country and it should be no surprise that there is a severe strain on the environment in this population corridor. Much of the sprawl plaguing the Chesapeake Bay region has been due to the expansion of metropolitan areas surrounding Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia, Richmond, and Hampton Roads. Residents have been attracted by job opportunities and developers have taken advantage of the undeveloped surrounding rural areas to build ever outwards. The result may have been relatively inexpensive homes built on large lots, but the impact on the Chesapeake Bay has been devastating.

Vacationers and retirees to the Bay have helped spur intensive development of coastal areas. Their demand for new roads, fast-food franchises, chain “superstores,” and golf courses have been met by developers anxious to build and politicians dedicated to “job creation” and “smart

### Population per Square Mile



growth.” Undeveloped coastal areas, particularly the expanse of wetlands that are vital to preventing pollutants from reaching the Bay, are rapidly disappearing.

In 2009, there were 266 people per square mile within the Chesapeake Bay watershed, far above the national average of 87.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, urban sprawl is eating up more land than ever instead of enlarging a few densely populated cities. The entire Chesapeake Bay watershed is being packed full of people. Due to sprawl, the Chesapeake Bay watershed area loses an average of 100 acres of forested land to development every day.<sup>19</sup> It is estimated that the amount of developed land will increase by more than 60 percent by 2030 and the watershed will lose over two million additional acres of forest and farmland.<sup>20</sup>

As the population grows and sprawl swallows up the landscape, more green space is paved over for roads, sidewalks, and parking lots. These impervious surfaces are especially harmful for the Bay because they impede the soil’s ability to absorb water and filter pollutants.<sup>21</sup> More vehicles spending more time on the road consume more oil and spew more emissions into the atmosphere. This leads to toxic runoff from thousands of miles of roads and the release of tons of additional carbon dioxide into the air.

## Immigration and the Chesapeake Bay in the Twenty-First Century

The Chesapeake Bay region was sparsely populated at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Starting in the 1950s, the population began to rapidly increase. The opening of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge in 1952 contributed to increased settlement along the Eastern Shore of the Bay in Maryland and Delaware. Just between 1970 and 1990, the watershed population increased by over 35 percent.<sup>22</sup> The population of the watershed today is growing by 400 persons a day, approximately 150,000 new residents every year, which amounts to 3 million more people added to the population every two decades.<sup>23</sup>

Much of the population growth in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Chesapeake Bay watershed was due to internal migration, i.e. native-born residents moving into the area from other parts of the United States. After 1970, immigration began to account for more and more of the proportion of new residents in the region. Today, the major cause of population increase in the Chesapeake Bay watershed is immigration. A look at population figures since 2000 reveals that almost 40 percent of population growth in the watershed comes directly from immigration. The impact is much more pronounced when the children of immigrants are taken into account.

Foreign-born women have a much higher fertility rate than their native-born counterparts. Taking into account children born to immigrant women, **immigration has resulted in 66 percent of the overall population growth in the Chesapeake Bay watershed since 2000.**

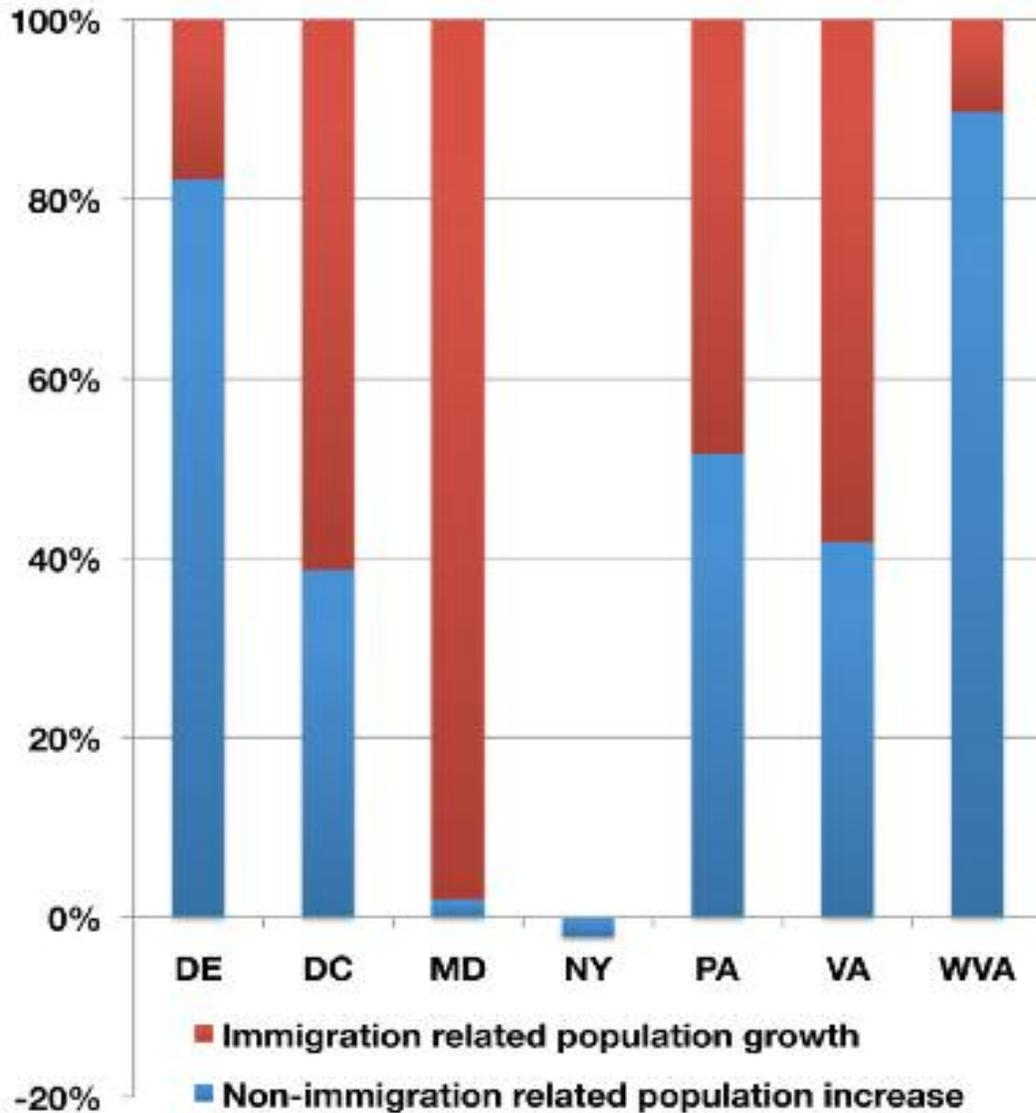
### Comparative Fertility Rates of Women in the U.S.

All	2.1
Native-Born	2.0
Foreign-Born	2.7
White	2.0
Black	2.2
Asian	2.1
Hispanic	2.6
Foreign-Born Hispanic	3.1

Source: Pew Hispanic Center<sup>24</sup>

In Maryland, where almost the entire state lies within the Chesapeake Bay watershed, 98 percent of the population growth in the watershed between 2000 and 2009 was a result of immigration. In Virginia, the state with the largest population residing in the watershed, immigration accounted for 58 percent of new residents. Immigration accounted for nearly half of the population growth in the crucial Susquehanna River Basin in Pennsylvania. In New York, the overall population in its watershed area has decreased while the foreign-born population continued to rise over the previous decade.

**Population Growth in the Watershed by State:  
Immigration as a Proportion of Population Growth**



Immigration has radically transformed one of America’s most vital ecosystems. While it is not the single cause of development and sprawl, the rapid rise of the foreign-born population is driving both these trends. Immigrants have historically settled into existing “gateway cities” while the native-born population expanded into suburban areas in search of more room — a phenomenon known as “secondary migration.”

While secondary migration is still occurring, the settlement pattern of immigrants has changed drastically in recent years. Now, 40 percent of immigrants move directly to the suburbs.<sup>25</sup> Not only has the foreign-born population contributed to the rise in the population of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, but immigration to other parts of the United States has spurred secondary mi-

“[I]f the current economy and population never grew again, those of us already here are already overwhelming the bay.”<sup>26</sup>

—Columnist Tom Horton, *The Maryland Gazette*



gration there, as well.<sup>27</sup> When one area becomes too crowded, people seek to move to less developed areas, and the Chesapeake Bay watershed has been opened up to intense development to meet the needs of the region's burgeoning population.

## How the Bay Suffers

### *A Complex System*

The result of overpopulation is not just crowded roads and a loss of scenery. The Chesapeake Bay is part of a vast, complex system that is home to over 3,600 different species.<sup>28</sup> It is also home to 17 million people who are rapidly transforming the Bay into an inhospitable habitat for animal and plant life. The runoff from farms, mines, construction sites, industrial and business complexes, and landscaping contains high levels of metal and chemical contaminants. The burning of fossil fuels, mining operations, and industrial processes also releases airborne pollutants that eventually end up in the Bay.<sup>29</sup>

Open-pit mining and large-scale construction exposes trace metals in the underlying rock resulting in acid-drainage. The destruction of protective forests and grasslands along the shoreline has caused excessive erosion.<sup>30</sup> As development continues, more and more absorptive surface area is paved over and rendered impervious. Without this filtering system, more storm water flows straight into the groundwater and into the Bay. Already facing depleted oxygen levels, low pH levels, turbidity that prevents sunlight from penetrating the water, as well as the loss of grasses that serve as a vital sanctuary for breeding and hatching, the odds against life being sustained in the Bay are far from favorable.

Pollution of the watershed also poses serious health risks to humans. Runoff from high concentrations of animal waste from confined feedlots, the over-application of manure on agricultural land, and the failure of sewage disposal systems causes high levels of pathogens in the water. Some of the most common pathogens in the Chesapeake Bay are very dangerous and transmittable by consuming only a tiny amount of water. *Vibrio cholerae*, the pathogen that causes cholera; giardiasis, more commonly known as "beaver fever;" and cryptosporidium, tiny parasites that cause stomach discomfort, diarrhea, and dehydration, are found in the Bay at unhealthy levels with alarming frequency.<sup>31</sup>

### *Measuring the Damage*

The University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES) publishes an annual report card measuring various characteristics of the Bay and its tributaries. Overall, the Bay received a grade of "C" in 2009, which appears to be grade inflation, as that rating is based on a

It is difficult to estimate the true number of people infected by all pathogens in the Bay. Many people ignore these signs of infection, assuming incorrectly that they simply have the flu. Often these parasites do leave the body on their own, but occasionally these infections can lead to severe complications, such as skin or blood infections, intestinal illnesses, and liver disease.

*See: Bad Water 2009: The Impact on Human Health in the Chesapeake Bay Region, Chesapeake Bay Foundation*



score of 46 percent out of 100.<sup>32</sup> The Chesapeake Bay Program's Bay Barometer, a measure of the overall condition of the Bay, put the health of the Bay at 38 percent in March 2009 and found that the "Chesapeake Bay ecosystem remains severely degraded."<sup>33</sup>

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) also publishes an annual assessment of the Bay. The CBF gave the Bay an overall score of 28 out of 100 in 2008, which is slightly better than the low of 23 in 1983 but far short of healthy.<sup>34</sup> Anything less than 40 indicates severe ecosystem degradation and a threat to human health. The Bay has not scored higher than 40 since the 1950s, and current progress is less than encouraging.

## An Uncertain Future

The only thing standing between the celebrated rockfish and extinction is a severe catch limit, in place since the 1980s. The softshell clam and oyster industries are on the brink of collapse. The annual oyster harvest of today only totals approximately one percent of the number harvested annually in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>35</sup> The harvest of softshell clams over the past several years has been officially recorded as zero, and seasonal mortality rates of up to 80 percent have been reported for razor clams.<sup>36</sup> Aside from being a staple of local cuisine, oysters and clams are vital for filtering the Bay's water. Their dwindling numbers make cleaning up the Bay that much more difficult.<sup>37</sup>

The legendary Chesapeake blue crab has seen a resurgence in the past few years, but it is still only 40 percent of its population in 1970.<sup>38</sup> The ubiquitous symbol of the region and its most valuable fishery is struggling to survive. Bay area restaurants and stores have in fact started to purchase a majority of their blue crabs from Texas, Florida, Mexico, and even Indonesia, a situation which just twenty years ago would have been considered unthinkable but is becoming increasingly commonplace as the industry goes to ruin.<sup>39</sup> Between 1998 and 2006, the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences estimated that jobs related to crabbing in Maryland and Virginia fell by 40 percent leading to a loss of \$640 million in revenue.<sup>40</sup>

This degradation of resources has a discernible impact on the quality of life for those who live around the Bay, especially for those who have made their living for centuries harvesting the bounty of the Chesapeake waterways. A distinct culture that spans back to the mid-1600s has virtually disappeared as rural areas have been subsumed into the unending, anonymous exurbia. Developers rarely ask the people who live in these rural areas what they think of growth.

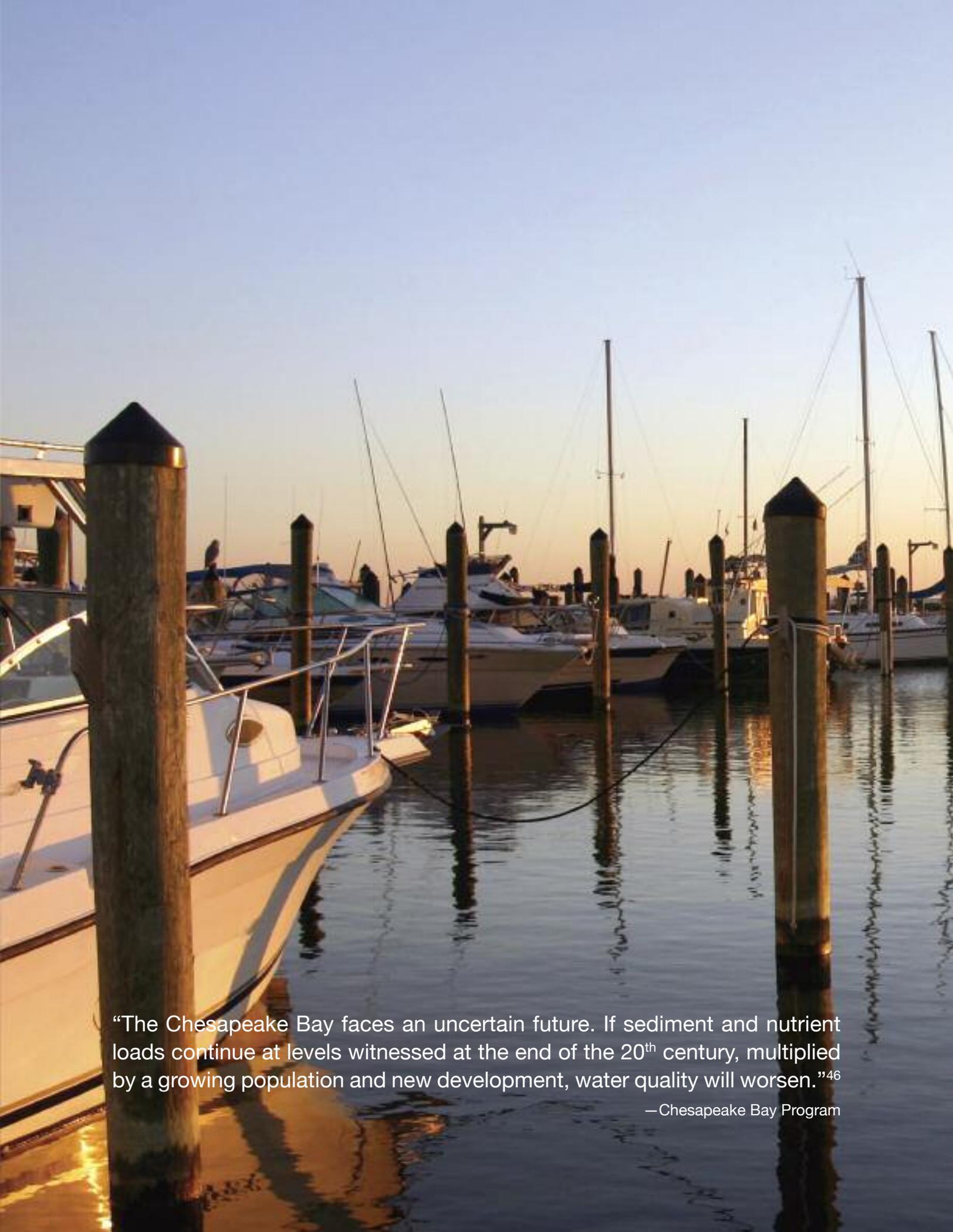
One must also consider the impact that the depleted fisheries of the Chesapeake Bay will have on the larger ecosystem. Not only is the effect on the Eastern seaboard of such a loss impossible

## WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WATER

Overloads of nitrogen and phosphorus have led to the depletion of the oxygen level in the water, known as **hypoxia**, making it very difficult for aerobic organisms to survive.<sup>41</sup> Before the 1980s, the occurrence of hypoxia in the Bay was rare. Today, a zone 90 to 125 miles long and six miles wide at its peak is devoid of aquatic life. Smaller hypoxic hot-spots dot the bay, as well, so that over 15 percent of the total volume of water in the Chesapeake is effectively dead.<sup>42</sup> Some reports estimate that as much as 40 percent of the Bay is afflicted.<sup>43</sup>

**Mercury** has accumulated in fish and shellfish in concentrations that can make them hazardous for human consumption. Similarly, the leaching of oils, sealants, asphalt, and rubber into the water has caused unprecedented levels of PAHs (**poly-aromatic hydrocarbons**), carcinogenic chemical compounds which the EPA has designated as priority pollutants. These compounds have been linked to massive fish kills and are also known to cause malignant cancerous tumors in humans. Consumption advisories are frequently issued warning about eating seafood caught in the Bay and surrounding waters.<sup>44</sup>

**Endocrine disruptors**, common mutagenic chemicals, can also be found in high concentrations in the water of the Chesapeake Bay. Deriving primarily from people's use of pharmaceuticals, these drugs then make their way to the Bay through sewage leaks and industrial discharge. Once there, these compounds cause problems with the nervous and reproductive systems of the Bay's denizens. In recent years, reports have surfaced of growing numbers of male fish that are growing eggs inside their testes, among other unnatural phenomena.<sup>45</sup>



“The Chesapeake Bay faces an uncertain future. If sediment and nutrient loads continue at levels witnessed at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, multiplied by a growing population and new development, water quality will worsen.”<sup>46</sup>

—Chesapeake Bay Program

to predict, a growing dependence on the importation of seafood from other areas will impact those fisheries and ecosystems. In this respect, population growth in the Bay's watershed does have a deleterious impact on the global environment.

## “We Can't Afford *Not* to Grow”

Laws limiting development in the watershed have been passed, with Maryland having one of the most stringent protections in place since 1984 preserving buffer zones along coastlines. These laws have been ineffective because developers and land owners have been granted endless waivers and exemptions, and many violations have simply been ignored.<sup>47</sup> State and local governments have passed tough regulations, touted their commitment to protecting the Bay, and then turned a blind eye to flouting of environmental ordinances. Legislators have protected the interests of wealthy developers who put short-term profit above environmental sustainability.

There are those who do benefit from sprawl. For them, the more growth the better, and they spend a great deal of money to protect their economic position by influencing policy makers.<sup>48</sup> In 2008, the new home construction and real estate industries accounted for 28 percent of Maryland's Gross State Product (GSP).<sup>49</sup> It is no wonder that in 2010 the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) urged the Environmental Protection Agency to delay the implementation of standards limiting the amount of nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment that Bay states are allowed to discharge into the watershed.<sup>50</sup> Reducing pollution is cost-prohibitive, says the NAHB. But is this true?

The developers' argument has been that the cost of stopping growth and cleaning up the Bay is too steep a price to pay. They rationalize that ending growth means a loss of jobs, revenues, and a decrease in the standard of living. If viewed outside the conventional — and totally erroneous — assumption that endless population growth not only can be sustained but is essential for economic viability and not incompatible with environmental sustainability, it becomes clear that the costs associated with sprawl threaten the future of the Chesapeake watershed.<sup>51</sup>

The greatest fallacy in the pro-growth argument is the way in which it measures “prosperity.” The GSP, the state equivalent of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP), only measures total spending. Any amount of spending contributes to the GSP, whether it's the money being spent to develop the watershed or the money that is being spent to clean up the damage due to overdevelopment in the watershed.<sup>51</sup> It includes the profits that go into the pockets of builders and the tax money being spent to pay the costs of sprawl.

Virginia has failed to address the issue of unsustainable growth. Instead, it promotes the state's willingness to allow sprawl in crucial watershed areas. Virginia advertises the state as "open for business" and welcoming of intense development.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, the state is losing almost 24,000 acres of farmland to development each year.<sup>53</sup>

At the same time, the state is spending more than \$400 million annually in an attempt to clean up the Bay.<sup>54</sup> The Virginia government doesn't advertise that fact. Maybe the state could save money by not allowing land developers to poison the Chesapeake Bay.



## *The True Cost of Sprawl*

The Chesapeake Bay seafood industry has been conservatively valued at \$1.2 billion annually.<sup>55</sup> Almost 20,000 people are directly employed by the seafood industry, not counting those who work in restaurants and related businesses.<sup>56</sup> This is dwarfed by the estimated \$30 billion that is generated by tourism each year in the watershed.<sup>57</sup> All of this is threatened by overpopulation and, despite the assurances of developers and some politicians, more growth is not the solution.

In 2006, the Conservation Fund put the ecological value of the Chesapeake watershed forests at \$24 billion.<sup>58</sup> While this, too, should be kept in mind when discussing the economic costs of development, is impossible to put a price tag on the watershed because its value is priceless. There is an immediate payoff when agricultural land is sold for development, but how can one assess the damage that results as the watershed loses its agricultural base? That some things cannot be measured in dollars and cents works to the advantage of those who wish to dismiss environmental concerns. It *is*, however, possible to see that the costs of destroying the watershed far outweigh any economic benefit.

The standard pro-growth argument is that growth means economic expansion and greater tax revenues, but offsetting this are the fiscal costs that taxpayers have to absorb. A growing population creates a need for more schools, roads and transportation systems, water and sewer systems, fire and police services, libraries, parks, trash service, and social services; and many, many more costs. Anne Arundel County, Maryland found that in 2008 the impact fees paid by builders to offset the cost of municipal services provided to a new household fell far short of the mark.<sup>59</sup> The County Executive, John R. Leopold, proposed raising the building fee from \$4,094 to \$26,407, a 545 percent increase. Keep in mind that this fee hike would only cover the initial costs of municipal services provided to one new home, not the long-term costs that are incurred by “increasing the tax base.”<sup>60</sup> Leopold’s proposals were opposed by the building industry and were not adopted.<sup>61</sup>

Aside from the immediate and immense costs associated with sprawl, cleaning up the damage already done and preventing future pollution in the watershed will cost billions. The EPA estimated the cost of a Bay clean-up in 2007 at \$28 billion. That level of funding is not available and, more importantly, the will to stop growth is lacking.<sup>62</sup> This is not to say that considerable money is not being spent to delay the inevitable. Between 2007 and 2010, the Chesapeake watershed states spent a combined \$800 million on Bay cleanup and management, with the federal government spending an additional \$160 million.<sup>63</sup>

President Obama in September 2010 unveiled a plan calling for \$491 million in new funding for a Bay restoration program.<sup>64</sup> While a commitment from the federal government to a healthy

Bay is welcome, the failure of the federal government to address the reality that the population in the watershed has exceeded its carrying capacity is troubling. And the federal government cannot dodge responsibility for population policy, something local politicians often attempt to do. The federal government has the ability and the duty to adopt a policy to stabilize the U.S. population, which would ameliorate the primary threat to the health of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

### ***More Growth Is Not Smart***

In 1997, Maryland unveiled to great praise its new “Smart Growth” initiatives, which aimed to promote dense, urban settlements near public transport systems and existing infrastructure. The state claimed it would stop subsidizing sprawl and would preserve land and water resources as well as minimize traffic back-ups and improve community relations.<sup>65</sup> Things, however, have not gone according to plans. A report by the *Journal of the American Planning Association* found “there is little evidence after ten years that [smart-growth laws] have had any effect on development patterns.”<sup>66</sup> About three-quarters of the lots used for single-family homes in the past decade were former pasture and forest lands outside smart-growth areas designated by local governments, about the same number as before the law was passed.<sup>67</sup>

Delaware, New York, and Pennsylvania also have “Smart Growth” initiatives, which, by any objective measures, have fallen short of their defined goals.<sup>68</sup> Ideas like “Smart Growth” are doomed to fail from the beginning because they ignore the fundamental problem: there is no longer any smart way to grow in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. There are already too many people living in the watershed and there is no way to accommodate more without putting a greater strain on the environment. Initiatives to clean up the Bay and to prevent further loss of wetlands are laudable, but are only delaying the inevitable if the mindset of constant growth and development is not abandoned.

## **Conclusion**

“We can’t stop growing,” claims the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.<sup>69</sup> But the reality is we must stop growing if we are going to stave off environmental devastation. Conservationists cannot ignore the problems posed by overpopulation, but they frequently dare not risk the political impropriety of discussing the issue openly. “Think globally, act locally” used to be a common phrase among environmentalists. Today, so-called environmental groups want you to think globally and ignore what is going on in your own backyard. It has become impolitic to talk honestly about immigration and its impact on the American environment.

It is the path of least resistance for local and regional environmental organizations and local and state governments to blame the federal government for our immigration system being “broken.” It is true that only Congress has the authority to set immigration levels and to institute the policies necessary to stabilize the nation’s population at a size amenable to a healthy environment. However, Congress has neglected this responsibility in large part because local governments and many organizations concerned with maintaining healthy ecosystems have failed to push for a reduction of immigration to the United States.

The demand for change must be a grassroots effort and it must concentrate on local concerns. Those who live near the Chesapeake Bay or who care about its future do not have to give up on their efforts to address the problems of global population growth, but they can have a direct and immediate say in the population policy of the United States. They can also work on the local level to support the enforcement of immigration laws.

Reducing immigration to the United States will not solve all the problems facing the Bay, but it will curtail the driving force behind population growth in the watershed. The failure to acknowledge immigration as the root cause of population growth is the failure to acknowledge reality. Any policy initiative to improve the Bay that ignores reality will have disastrous results. Any initiative to stop growth and end sprawl must begin with a policy that is geared towards U.S. population stabilization.

What those who have a concern for the environmental future of the United States must realize is that mass immigration is not an ecologically sound policy. It is part of the expansionist mindset that demands constant growth, no matter the long-term costs. With population growth a global problem, what moral authority can the United States claim on the issue of global population growth when we increase our population by three million persons a year? FAIR advocates for less consumption, more environmentally conscious policies, *and* a commitment to U.S. population stabilization. We urge the leading environmental groups in the United States to do the same.

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## What You Can Do to Protect the Chesapeake Bay

***Raise the issue for discussion at local meetings.*** Many environmentalists already believe that limiting immigration for the purpose of stabilizing the U.S. population is essential. But, because of intimidation by defenders of open borders and mass immigration, they have been reluctant to speak out. Local chapters of the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, Ducks Unlimited, and other environmental organizations are legitimate forums for raising these issues. There are also regional groups dedicated specifically to restoration of the Bay, such as the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Chesapeake Bay Program, and the Chesapeake Bay Trust. Get involved!

***Adopt local resolutions on immigration and population growth.*** If your local environmental group recognizes the impact of immigration-generated population growth on your region, go on record in support of reducing immigration. Send a resolution supporting immigration reduction as a means to population stabilization to your organization's national headquarters and press for it to be considered by all its members.

***Support environmental groups that address reducing population growth.*** Curbing population growth is a fundamentally important environmental priority facing the United States. If an environmental group is unwilling to address this issue, it isn't serious about protecting the U.S. environment and does not deserve your support.

***Explain why urban sprawl is happening.*** All across the country, environmentalists are appearing before zoning boards, city councils, county boards of supervisors, and other agencies to oppose urban sprawl. Make the connection between the pressure to expand city boundaries and immigration.

***Let your elected officials know you are concerned.*** Meet and discuss the issue of immigration and population growth with as many local, state, and federal officeholders as you can. Support those who favor responsible immigration and population policies.

***Use the media.*** Write op-eds and letters to the editor, and make calls to radio talk shows. Explain how immigration policies made in Washington are responsible for the stresses of population growth in your area.

***Become a public speaker on this issue.*** Raise the need for immigration reform before civic and religious organizations in your community.

***Form your own local group.*** If local environmental groups aren't making the connection between mass immigration and the environment, you can form an organization to do so yourself. Hundreds of citizens just like you have created such local groups. A list of local organizations working on immigration reform is on FAIR's website ([www.fairus.org](http://www.fairus.org)) in the "Take Action" section.

## Learn More About the Chesapeake Bay and its Watershed

Alice Ferguson Foundation  
[www.fergusonfoundation.org](http://www.fergusonfoundation.org)

Anacostia Watershed Society  
[www.anacostiaws.org](http://www.anacostiaws.org)

American Farmland Trust  
[www.farmland.org](http://www.farmland.org)

Chesapeake Bay Commission  
[www.chesbay.state.va.us](http://www.chesbay.state.va.us)

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[www.cbf.org](http://www.cbf.org)

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Environmental Protection Agency  
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## ABOUT FAIR

The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) is a national, nonprofit, public-interest, membership organization of concerned citizens who share a common belief that our nation's immigration policies must be reformed to serve the national interest.

FAIR seeks to improve border security, to stop illegal immigration, and to promote immigration levels consistent with the national interest — more traditional rates of about 300,000 a year.

With more than 250,000 members and supporters nationwide, FAIR is a non-partisan group whose membership runs the gamut from liberal to conservative. Our grassroots networks help concerned citizens use their voices to speak up for effective, sensible immigration policies that work for America's best interests.

FAIR's publications and research are used by academics and government officials in preparing new legislation. National and international media regularly turn to us to understand the latest immigration developments and to shed light on this complex subject. FAIR has been called to testify on immigration bills before Congress more than any organization in America.

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Your support is crucial to our ability to improve border security, stop illegal immigration, and promote immigration levels consistent with the national interest. You may join or donate online at [www.fairus.org](http://www.fairus.org), toll-free by phone at (877) 627-3247, or complete the adjacent form and mail to:

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