

CONSIDER THE ELEMENTS



Lately, “sustainability” has become quite a buzz word. It is hard to pick up a newspaper or listen to the news without hearing someone somewhere talking about “sustainable this or sustainable that.” Interestingly, research has shown that many people are not sure exactly what sustainability means. A recent survey by the Hartman Group shows that just over half of those interviewed had any familiarity with “sustainability”, and even those that had heard the term could not define it appropriately.

At its core, the definition of sustainability as it pertains to the natural world is pretty simple.

Sustainability is meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Those of us who are fortunate enough to call Maryland our home have more opportunities than ever to make the changes in our own lives that will help create a healthier, more sustainable state, nation and planet.

Under the leadership of Governor Martin O’Malley, we recently launched the Marylanders Plant Trees Initiative with the goal of planting 50,000 trees by 2010 and planting 1 million new trees across Maryland by 2011. Planting a tree is an easy way for each of us to get personally involved in creating a more sustainable future.

Even though you and I may not get to enjoy the shade of the trees we plant today, they will be there for our children and grandchildren in the years to come. In fact, Nelson Henderson’s well-known quote, “The true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit,” is a true message of sustainability.

Another way that homeowners can lessen their impact on the Chesapeake Bay is to improve the way we treat waste from our homes – for free! Since 2004, all Marylanders have contributed to the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund, which provides funding to upgrade wastewater treatment plants and to plant cover crops.

Homeowners with septic systems can now receive free upgrades that will help keep harmful pollutants out of our waterways. Through this program, administered by the Maryland Department of the Environment, 100 percent of costs for equipment, installation, and five years of maintenance are paid for through the Fund.

This program is another example of meeting the needs of the present while protecting our natural resources for those generations to come.

A big part of understanding the natural legacy we will leave to future generations is to stay informed. I encourage you to visit the State’s new Smart, Green & Growing website often, and to sign up for the BayStat monthly newsletter. These two tools will inform you about state programs available to you, inspire you to get involved in citizen stewardship activities, and allow you to track the progress we are making at the State level.

Now, more than ever it is imperative that each one of us stay engaged in and informed about what is happening in our state. Working together we can improve the health of the Chesapeake Bay today and learn how to live in a sustainable way that leaves a legacy for those that are counting on us to protect the natural world they will inherit.



John Griffin

John R. Griffin
John R. Griffin
Secretary