

Resource Protection Areas in James City County

James City County has an extensive amount of water and wetland resources; environmental features that play a vital role in James City County's effort to Protect the Chesapeake Bay. These features, as well as a 100-foot buffer area adjacent to and extending landward from them, are protected by the County's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance.

The goal of the Ordinance, which was adopted in August 1990 and revised in January 2004, is to "assist in protection of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries from non-point source pollution from land uses or appurtenances within the Chesapeake Bay drainage area." In other words, the goal is to protect water quality from degradation that results from the use or development of land. The Ordinance has several performance standards or tools to protect the waters and aquatic life.



One of the tools used is the provision of a 100-foot wide buffer adjacent to and landward from Resource Protection Areas (RPA). RPAs are comprised of lands that have an intrinsic water quality value or are sensitive to impacts which may degrade the quality of state waters. Examples of RPAs are tidal shores, tidal wetlands, perennial streams, and nontidal wetlands adjacent to these features.

Based on the Ordinance definition, James City County has designated certain areas as RPAs.

If you have RPAs on your property, it is important for you to know that these protected areas are to remain in their undisturbed natural state. Any removal of vegetation or land disturbance is prohibited without approval of the County. The Ordinance does allow modifications to the buffer's vegetation through coordination with the County. Unfortunately, there have been several instances in the County where vegetation has been removed without this coordination. These cases have been pursued by the County as violations and the resolution of these violations has involved replanting of vegetation and civil penalties.

So please, before removing any vegetation from the RPA or to determine if you have an RPA on your property, contact the James City County Engineering and Resource Protection Division at (757) 253-6670.



***Help us protect the Bay by
preserving these important
and sensitive buffer systems.***

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*We work in partnership with
all citizens to achieve
a quality community.*



Protecting our Future