

## Critical Area

The Critical Area Act was passed in 1984 in an effort to protect Maryland's most important natural resource, the Chesapeake Bay. The Bay watershed covers 64,000 square miles, where 15 million people and 2,700 species of plants and animals live and interact.

By law, the Critical Area is defined as all land within 1,000 feet of the Mean High Water Line of tidal waters or the landward edge of tidal wetlands and all waters of and lands under the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Any land-disturbing activities within the Critical Area must be carried out following specific provisions that can be found in the State-adopted Critical Area Criteria and local Critical Area Programs.

**Before conducting any land-disturbing activities, be sure to contact the Cecil County Department of Public Works regarding grading permits and Cecil County Planning and Zoning concerning Critical Area questions.** Critical Area violations include activities such as clearing trees, removing vegetation, and increasing impervious surfaces. These activities are violations if conducted without proper permits, variances, or management plans.



Riparian Forest Buffer within the Critical Area  
along the North East River

## From My Backyard to Our Bay

**110-foot Buffer:** The Cecil County Critical Area Law requires a 110-foot Buffer along the shoreline used as a transition between upland and aquatic habitats.

### Typical Critical Area Violations:

- Clearing trees and/or vegetation in the Buffer
- Construction of accessory structures (shed, pool, etc.) in the Buffer
- Disturbance of the Buffer, including; grading, stockpiling of construction materials, or dumping

### Other Violations:

- Clearing or cutting trees anywhere within the Critical Area without a permit
- Building or grading without a building or grading permit

The above listed activities may not be a violation if the property owner has proper approval from the local planning and zoning office and a building and/or grading permit is displayed on the property. If you feel that the work being carried out is not in accordance with the permit, call the office that issued the permit.

## Where To Get Help for Critical Area information

- Cecil County Planning and Zoning **410-996-5220**
- Cecil County Department of Public Works **410-996-5267**
- Maryland Critical Area Commission; <http://dnr.maryland.gov/criticalarea/Pages/default.aspx> **(410)-260-3478**
- Maryland Department of the Environment Tidal and Non-tidal Wetlands Division Call; **410-537-3837** or **410-537-3768** for violations including filling of tidal or non-tidal wetlands without a permit, pier construction without a permit, construction of structures on piers, and clearing and/or burning marsh vegetation
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resources Police Call **410-260-8880** for violations including exceeding the posted speed limits on waterways and abandoned boats
- Cecil County Zoning Ordinance  
<http://www.ccgov.org/home/showdocument?id=1172>
- Cecil County Government Geographic Information Systems (GIS)  
<http://cecilmaps.ccgov.org/>