

Why are wetlands valuable?

Tidal wetlands have environmental and economic value:

- Tidal wetlands absorb wave energy, protecting your shoreline from erosion.
- Tidal wetlands filter sediment, nutrients and pollutants found in yard runoff, improving river water quality.
- Tidal wetlands provide a nursery for a variety of fish and crabs that are important to Virginia's economy.
- Tidal wetlands provide a home and food for wildlife, including herons, egrets and migratory birds.

What does one look like?

Areas with grasses or mudflats regularly covered by the tides are tidal wetlands. This could include part of your backyard. If you're not sure, go to wetlandswatch.org for more specific descriptions for the Tidewater region.

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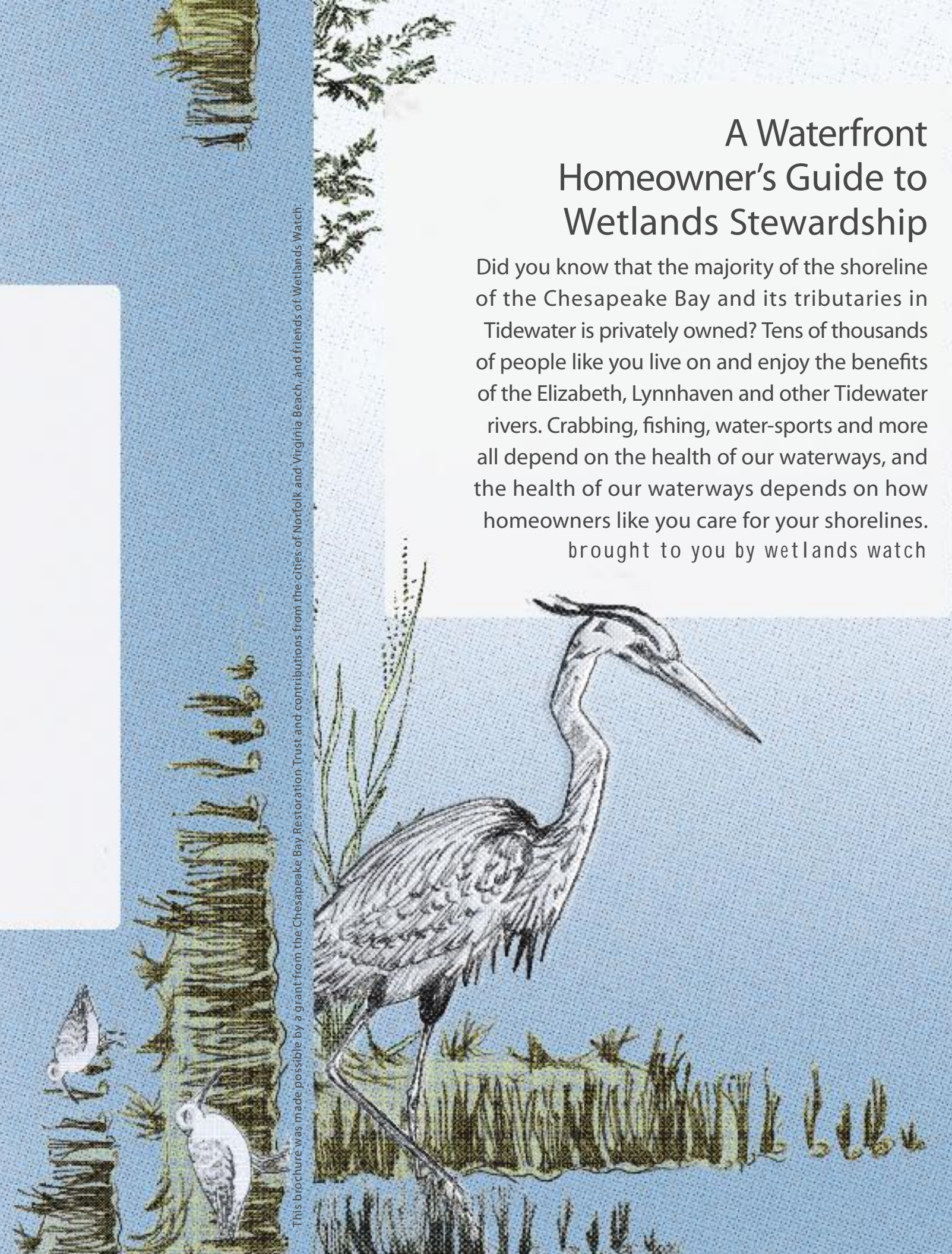
Wetlands Watch
P.O. Box 9335
Norfolk, Virginia 23505



This brochure was made possible by a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Trust and contributions from the cities of Norfolk and Virginia Beach, and friends of Wetlands Watch.

A Waterfront Homeowner's Guide to Wetlands Stewardship

Did you know that the majority of the shoreline of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries in Tidewater is privately owned? Tens of thousands of people like you live on and enjoy the benefits of the Elizabeth, Lynnhaven and other Tidewater rivers. Crabbing, fishing, water-sports and more all depend on the health of our waterways, and the health of our waterways depends on how homeowners like you care for your shorelines. brought to you by wetlands watch



Over the last decade, Virginia has lost an average of twelve acres of tidal wetlands per year from legally permitted activities. In addition, more than 200 miles of tidal shoreline has been hardened by construction of bulkheads and rock rip rap. These activities are often detrimental to the health of tidal wetlands, your river and the Bay—and in many cases there are alternatives.

How to protect your wetland

- Create a border of native plants at the water's edge or leave a 20' band of un-mowed grass to slow down the flow of water from your yard.
- Trim trees near the water's edge that are shading out marsh grass. The thicker growth will provide better erosion control.
- Learn about shoreline erosion protection alternatives from wetlands specialists listed at wetlandswatch.org.
- Support Wetlands Watch. Go to our website to make a commitment and receive a coupon for a 10% discount on native plants from several local nurseries.

Go to wetlandswatch.org

Visit our website for comprehensive information on ways to make your shoreline more river-friendly. Find out about:

- Activities that require permits and how to navigate the permitting process.
- Native plants that create good buffers and where to buy them.
- Different methods for protecting your shoreline from erosion.
- Local, state and federal agency offices that can provide assistance.

Do you need a permit?

Most projects that alter the shoreline require permits. Commonly, homeowners will unknowingly commit wetland violations by cutting or removing wetland plants, placing yard-waste, rock or soil on the shoreline or constructing erosion control structures. Fines can amount to many thousands of dollars. Be safe. Find out whom to call for permits at wetlandswatch.org or by calling Wetlands Watch at (757) 456-1394.

natural shorelines (our tidal wetlands) are essential for healthy, diverse and abundant wildlife. This includes the fish and crabs that support Virginia's commercial and recreational fisheries and the economy.

hardened shorelines (rip rap, bulkheads) hurt wildlife and water quality. Recent studies show reduced numbers of juvenile fish, crabs and other marine life along these shorelines. One way to reduce negative effects is to plant a buffer at the water's edge. For a complete list of options and resources to make your shoreline more natural, visit wetlandswatch.org.