



## Chesapeake Bay Timeline

This timeline reflects some of the important events that have shaped the Chesapeake Bay watershed region throughout its history. Some of the events have specific years attributed to them. But many of them are placed within a general time period, since it's hard to know exactly when certain practices or phenomena occurred. The events that took place within a general time period are given first, and those for which specific years are given come after.

All events are categorized and coded with icons as follows:



Natural Events



People and Government



Technology, Economy and Industry



Environmental changes

### Before the Present Era (BP)

#### 500 million BP



One huge "super" continent forms. It's called Pangea, and it includes all of Earth's seven continents in one.

#### 200 million BP



Pangea splits up. What we know of as North America breaks off as part of another huge continent, called Laurasia.

#### 50 million BP



North America begins to split off from Laurasia.

#### 2 million BP



A major "ice age" begins. Much of the world is covered in ice.

#### 18,000 BP



A lot of the huge ice sheets from the ice age begin to melt.

#### 11,500 BP



The first humans begin arriving to the Chesapeake Bay area.

#### 9,900 BP



Ice sheets keep melting into water. All of that water makes the sea level around the world get higher. The outline of the Chesapeake Bay forms.


#### 6,000-3,000 BP




As more ice melts, the world's oceans get bigger and bigger. Water floods the land. It makes the rivers wider. Where the rivers meet the ocean, estuaries form. The Chesapeake Bay as we know it is created.




## 5,000 BP

 The people who live in the area know that there are plants that they like eating and using. They start helping these good plants to grow. This is the beginning of agriculture in the Chesapeake Bay area.

## 2500 BP


 The Algonkian and Susquehannock Indians harvest oysters and other seafood from the Chesapeake Bay. They call the Bay "Chesepiook", which means "great shellfish bay".

## 1,500-1,000 BP

 Early inhabitants begin burning forest land to clear it for planting crops. They plant corn, squash, beans, and tobacco. They fish using spears, traps, and hooks and lines.


## Early AD

### 1300s AD


 The native people begin building towns in and around the Chesapeake Bay watershed.


### 1400s AD


1492

 Europeans land in the area, for the first time.

### 1500s AD

 Almost 95% of the Chesapeake Bay region is covered in "old growth" forests. This means that there are lots of mature trees in the forests.


 The native Indian population in the area is estimated to be 24,000.

 Spanish and French explorers reach the Bay. They begin trading furs with the Native Indians.


## 1600s AD

### 1600-1650

1600 AD

 The Powhatan chiefdom develops along the James River Coastal Plain. This is a powerful organization of Powhatan Indians.

1607 AD

 The Jamestown colony is formed in Virginia. This is made up of Europeans who arrived from England. It's the first colony of English people that actually succeeds. Many of the earlier immigrants died of disease and hunger.



1609



Tangier and Smith Islands in Maryland are settled by Europeans.

1612 AD



In Europe, people begin developing a craze for tobacco from Virginia. In Virginia, farmers try to meet the demand, by growing more tobacco to sell in Europe. The fur trade is still another source of income for settlers.

1619 AD



The first enslaved Africans are brought to the region in order to work in the tobacco fields. Since there's such a high demand for tobacco, many people are needed to help grow it.



Tobacco requires a lot of nutrients from the soil. The soil gets worn out quickly, and it can't be used again. There's lots of land available. So planters just abandon the old worn-out fields, then move to a new site. They keep moving as the soil gets tired. This leaves a lot of the land looking broken down.

1634



St. Mary's City is founded. It's the first official city in the new colony called Maryland.



Laws are written to protect waterfowl and water birds, like the Great Blue Heron. The birds are being hunted for their feathers, amongst other things.



Virginia makes laws to stop over-fishing and to stop people from building dams that block fish migrations.

**1650-1699 AD**

**General events in this period:**



Many of the animals used in the fur trade are being over-hunted.



The fur trade collapses. Warfare between Indians and Europeans also makes it difficult to trade. As a result, planting becomes the main source of income for the colonists.



The Indian population is now less than 2,400. Many of the Indians are dead from disease and war. A lot of the remaining Indians are forced off of their land, sometimes having to settle on small plots of land that the Europeans designate for them.



The colonists start chopping wood from the forests to make boats that can sail around the Bay and its rivers. They need to be able to get around to all the new settlements that are being created.

**Other important events in this period:**

1677 AD



Settlers begin to build dams in fast-flowing streams. These dams help them use the energy of the water to run their mills.



Mills are used to grind grain, saw wood, and crush iron and other ores that are taken from nearby quarries and mines.

1680



Virginia lawmakers make a law that prevents settlers from catching too many fish in the Rappahanock River. They are worried that some settlers are being wasteful.



The English settlers begin using hand tongs to harvest, or gather oysters. These tongs are like big scissors with rakes at the ends of them.




There is an abundant supply of fish and wildlife in the area—reptiles, amphibians, birds, and fish of all kinds.

1681 AD




The colony of Pennsylvania is established.

1695 AD

 The city of Annapolis, Maryland is established.






1699 AD

 The city of Williamsburg, Virginia is established.

## 1700s AD




### 1700-1730

#### General events in this time period:

-  The English colonists become the most dominant, or powerful, group in the area. More and more new immigrants keep arriving from England.
-  African-Americans make up almost forty percent of the population, and half of the region's workforce. Many of them are enslaved, though. They don't have any political power.
-  German and Irish immigrants began arriving and begin moving into unsettled areas of the Piedmont.
-  In order to build their log cabins, frame houses, and barns, the new immigrants have to chop down a lot of dense woodland. They clear some of the richest forests. They also use stone cut from quarries, rocks taken from rivers, and bricks made from fired clay that comes from the riverbanks.
-  A network of clumps of small towns grows. They change the natural landscape. Roads are leveled and packed hard with dirt, so horses and people can travel easily.







### 1730-1750

#### General events in this time period:

-  Deposits of iron are found in bogs in the area. Iron furnaces and mills are built along the coasts to smelt iron ore into various tools and wares.
-  In order to fuel these iron furnaces, lots of trees are cleared. This tree clearing causes a huge increase in the amount of soil and dirt that gets into the Bay's waters. Some colonists notice that the water is getting murkier.
-  Some towns, like Bladensburg, Maryland and Joppatown, Maryland are experiencing trouble. They are port towns, located right on the water. But sediment is filling the waters, because land upstream is eroding. All of that extra sediment is building up, making it harder for boats to get through.











### 1750-1799

#### General events in this time period:

-  Almost the entire Chesapeake Bay region has become settled with farms, towns, roads, and small industries.
-  The bobcats, cougars, and wolves that live in the area are being hunted extensively. These animals prey on the settlers' sheep, cattle, and pigs, and the settlers don't like that. By 1750, wildcats are virtually extinct in the Chesapeake Bay region.
-  Wild game is becoming scarce. The birds' habitat is shrinking.
-  Lawmakers declare hunting seasons to help regulate the population of wild game.
-  The population of the area is estimated at 380,000. African-Americans make up almost a third of this population.
-  The Chesapeake Bay area experiences the "Little Ice Age". Temperatures in the region cool down during this brief period.





### Other important events in this period:

- 1775
-  Colonial population in the area has reached 700,000.
  -  Almost 30% of all the coastal forest land has been cut down or burned by the colonists.
  -  The populations of some native species of animals and plants begin to decline, due to the destruction of their habitats.
  -  Non-native plants are introduced into the area. Some are plants that the colonists want. They use them for medicine and for cooking. Other plants are accidentally brought and spread as weeds.
  -  Non-native animals also appear on the scene. These include Norway rats and domestic cats.
- 1776
-  The United States declares Independence from England.
  -  Many farmers begin using plows in their fields. This makes it hard for trees and plants to grow back once the farmers have finished with the fields. A period of massive soil erosion begins, because isn't enough vegetation to hold the soil in place.
- 1789
-  The U.S. Constitution is ratified.
- 1790
-  The seven-mile James River Canal, the area's first artificial waterway, is built. It helps people pass the rapids of the river near Richmond.
- 1791
-  Washington, D.C. is established as the capital of the new country. It is built where the Potomac splits off to form the Anacostia River. It is created by land given by Maryland and Virginia.




### 1800s AD

#### 1800s

##### General events in this decade:

-  The population in the area reaches 1 million.
-  The people in the area begin using dredges to harvest oysters. Dredges completely rip up oyster beds.



##### Other important events:

- 1800
-  The first turnpike in the area is completed. It links Lancaster, Pennsylvania with Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Lots more all-weather turnpikes begin to be built after this.
- 1804
-  Work begins on the Chesapeake Delaware Canal.
- 1810
-  The first iron-chain suspension bridge is completed across the Potomac River near Georgetown. This makes it possible for towns to expand. It also makes trade and commerce easier.







## 1810s

### General events in this decade:











-  The economy shifts from tobacco production to livestock, wheat, and corn production.
-  Automated machines gain popularity. The high pressure steam engine is invented. This paves the way for the development of steam-powered trains and ships.

### Other important events:

- 1811
-  Virginia bans dredging for oysters because it is too destructive to oyster beds. Maryland continues to allow dredging.
- 1812
-  The War of 1812 begins.
- 1813
-  The first commercial steamboat on Chesapeake Bay waters begins service. Steamboats carry lots of different kinds of things to towns around the area—mail, shipments of things, and passengers.
- 1814
-  The War of 1812 ends. A lot of development begins to take place. Many towns inland do well, because of their location to timber, water, and mineral resources. On the coasts, fishing, shipbuilding, and trading ports grow.

## 1820s


### General events in this decade:

-  The regional population reaches 1.3 million.
-  The city of Baltimore has become the third largest city in the country. It is a big shipping town, delivering goods throughout the Chesapeake Bay area.
-  Large scale deforestation (cutting down trees) is occurring, especially in the lower Susquehanna Valley in Pennsylvania, and in the Maryland and Virginia piedmonts. The forests are being cleared because canals and roads are being built. The forest is also being converted to agricultural land.
-  A lot of land is being over-grazed. This is because cattle, horses, and hogs require large amounts of grass to eat.
-  Black bears and beavers are almost extinct, due to hunting. And the white-tailed deer population is much lower than it was when the colonies began.
-  States begin outlawing commercial hunting.
-  Inventors are experimenting with steam locomotives, and the railroad industry in the US begins to grow.
-  More canals are built, including the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. These canals control water flow. They allow boats to pass and carry goods. They greatly improve transportation and help in trade and commerce.
-  Coal from the upper Potomac and Susquehanna Valleys is used to operate the railroads. It also fires the furnaces that smelt iron and steel. These things are needed to build more railroad track, bridges, engines, machines, and tools.
-  Entire forests are cleared to produce charcoal. The wood from these forests is still the main source of fuel. Charcoal is made from wood. It takes 20-30 thousand acres of forest to produce enough charcoal to smelt 1,000 tons of iron.


### Other important events:

1820




 Maryland bans oyster dredges, because it begins to sense that oysters are being over-harvested.


1828

 Work begins on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, the first passenger and freight railway in the country. Railroads make it possible for new towns that aren't on the water or near major roads to develop.

## 1830s


### General events in this decade:

 Half of all the original old-growth forests have been cut and cleared to make way for fields of wheat. Wheat has become the new major cash crop. In other words, it's what people plant to make money. Tobacco and corn are still grown, but not as much as they were.


 An epidemic of cholera reaches the Bay and kills tens of thousands of people. Large-scale outbreaks of malaria and yellow fever occur. Crowded urban slums become breeding grounds for tuberculosis.

### Other important events in this decade:

1832


 A new substance, called marl, is used as fertilizer on crops. Marl is rock containing clay and calcium carbonate (also known as lime). A lot of the soil had been worn out from intense tobacco, corn, and wheat production. Marl makes the soil healthier, and as a result, the agriculture economy gets a real boost.


1834

 Oysters are being shipped in jars that are packed in ice cut from the Bay. The railroads allow the oysters to travel as far away as Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

## 1840s

1840

 There's such a high demand for oysters that watermen are forced to go out to the deeper waters in search of them. They find huge supplies in the Tangier Sound and dredge tons of oysters from there.

 Oyster canneries are built all around the Bay. Canneries are places where oysters are canned and packaged for sell. The oyster industry becomes really large, processing millions of bushels of oysters each year.



1844



The nation's first telegraph line is constructed between Baltimore and Washington, D.C.

**1850s**

**General events in this decade:**



The population in the region is almost 2 million people.



The elevator is invented. Builders can now construct buildings with multiple stories because people and goods can now travel easily from floor to floor.



Local rivers and streams are dammed in order to create reservoirs in Baltimore and Washington, D.C. Reservoirs help make sure that there is enough water for the needs of the people in the cities.



New sewers are dug under the city streets to help get waste out. The waste goes straight into the rivers that flow into the Chesapeake Bay.



Many Italians, Russians, Greeks, Ukrainians, Jews, and Scandinavians immigrate and settle in the area.



There are so many oysters being shipped around the country that the mail is being delayed. No mail can fit in the postal stagecoaches because they are so full of oysters.

**Other important events:**

**1853-1863**



The Washington Aqueduct is constructed to carry water from a dam built above the Potomac River to reservoirs in Georgetown and Washington, D.C.

**1860s**

**General events in the decade:**



New kinds of buildings are being constructed. Instead of wood, these buildings are made of steel, stone, brick, and iron.



Coal replaces charcoal and wood as the fuel of choice.

**Other important events:**

1861



The Civil War begins. Virginia is part of the Confederacy. Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Delaware are part of the Union (although they all allow slavery). Many of the major Civil War battles are fought in the Chesapeake Bay watershed area.

1862



Parts of western Virginia split off to form the state of West Virginia. West Virginia enters the Civil War as part of the Union.

1865




The Civil War ends. A lot of the region has been burned and destroyed. Soldiers attacked farms, roads, railroads, bridges, and many other things during the course of the war.





A new canning process is invented that makes it possible to store food for up to six months without it going bad. Now fresh seafood can be canned and shipped all over the country. The seafood industry in the Chesapeake Bay area picks up.






1866  
 More and more people from the former Confederate states start moving to Washington, D.C. and Baltimore. They are looking for work because many of the former Confederate states are having bad economic problems.


1868  
 Maryland creates the Oyster Navy. This navy patrols the Bay waters for oyster dredgers who are violating dredging laws. The Oyster Navy helps bring an end to the "Oyster Wars". Oysters have become such a big money-maker that people are actually fighting over them.


 Watermen in the area begin using crab scrapes to catch crabs. Crab scrapes are like oyster dredges. They pick up soft-shelled crabs from underwater grasses.

### 1870s

#### General events in the decade:


 Refrigeration devices for railroad trains are invented. This makes it possible to ship oysters and crabs further across the country. The demand for Chesapeake seafood increases. This puts a strain on the supply of the creatures in the Bay.


 Railroads also make it possible to ship fresh produce. This gives rise to the creation of large fruit orchards and tobacco farms in Pennsylvania.


 Fish-hatcheries are opened to spawn and grow fish that are being threatened. All of the dams that are being built and all of the commercial fishing that is happening are making the numbers of fish decline.


### 1880s

#### General events in the decade:


 Skipjacks are invented. These are swift wooden boats that are made specifically to be able to navigate the shallow waters of the Chesapeake.


 High rise buildings begin to appear in cities. The only place where this doesn't happen is in Washington, D.C. In D.C. there is a law that says no building can be taller than the Capitol Building.


 The skies and waterways are suffering from intense pollution. Factory smoke is making the sky black. Sediment and sewage is flowing into the water. Industrial waste and human and animal waste is a huge problem.

 Hunters have reduced the duck population. Local governments are forced to make laws to limit the legal hunting catch.

#### Other important events:

1885  
 The oyster harvest in Maryland has reached an all time high of 15 million bushels per year. Oysters are called the Chesapeake's "white gold".

1886  
 Standard gauge links on railroads make it possible to link all the country's railroads.

 Twenty percent of all people who are involved in the fishing industry in the country live in the Chesapeake Bay region.





1888


 America's first electric trolley line is established in Richmond. It replaces horse-drawn street cars and carriages.

**1890s**

**General events in this decade:**


 Newport News, Virginia is chosen to be a major shipyard. Previously it had been a small town. But now its population begins to boom.


 There is a lot of coal production going on in mines in the upper Potomac and Susquehanna River basins. Waste from these coal mines flows into the streams and rivers and makes the water toxic.

 Sport fishermen and scientists begin publishing reports that talk about how the underwater grasses are being threatened by invasive species and pollution.

**Other important events:**

1890

 The Cull Law is passed. It sets a minimum size for oysters taken from the Bay. Any oysters smaller than 2.5 inches have to be returned to the water.

 Nearly sixty percent of the area's forests have been cleared by this point. The land has been cleared to build more homes and more industry.


1898


 The Spanish-American War is fought with Spain.


**1900s AD**


**1900s**


**General events in this decade:**


 The regional population reaches 3 million.

 Seventy percent of the original forestland in the area has been cleared. Less than thirty percent of it remains.

 Many of the roads in the area have to be widened and graded to make them fit for cars. City streets begin to be paved in asphalt and concrete. Before, streets were paved using shell, brick, or cobblestone.

 Automatic guns and better gunpowder make it possible for hunters to kill lots of birds. A lot of the fashionable clothes made during this time use bird feathers. So commercial hunting of birds is very popular.

 Environmental and wildlife protection organizations like Audubon are formed. They help count the numbers of birds, to see how the bird populations are doing.

 Lots of sewage and industrial waste is being dumped into the Bay. The water quality is really bad. People start noticing phytoplankton (algae) growing in the water. This causes a big problem for the underwater grasses and oysters.






**1910s**

**General events in this decade:**

 Automobiles and trucks begin to take over the roads. Turnpikes are paved.








## Other important events:


- 1910  
 The federal Public Health Service investigates pollution from the canning industry that is getting into the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay. The waste is causing problems in the fisheries.
- 1912  
 Baltimore becomes the last major city in the country to install sewer lines, but it is the first to create wastewater treatment plants. This is an effort to try to save the oysters in the surrounding waters.
- 1914-1918  
 World War I takes place. The US enters the war in 1917.
- 1918  
 The Migratory Bird Treaty Act is passed. It outlaws the killing of birds that migrate between the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Russia, and Japan. It also protects the birds' nests and eggs, establishes hunting seasons, and sets bag limits on hunting waterfowl.  
 The University of Maryland Chesapeake Biological Laboratory is founded. It conducts the first water quality survey of the Bay. The survey says that Bay is in good shape, except in heavily industrialized areas.

## 1920s


### General events in this decade:

-  The region's population exceeds 4.5 million.
-  The country's economy is doing really well, and factories are busy producing things to be sold nationally and abroad. The stock market becomes a popular thing.
-  After World War I, a huge number of people begin moving north to cities from rural areas. A large migration of African-Americans occurs. They move to DC, Baltimore, and also Richmond and Newport News. The population north of the Potomac increases dramatically.
-  The government begins setting aside wilderness lands and historical sites for animal refuges, parks, and national forests and monuments.
-  Crab pots are developed, which lure crabs into the pots and trap them. The crabs are attracted to bait put inside the pots.

1922



-  The blue crab population is experiencing a decline. Crabbers are only landing half the amount of blue crabs as they were in previous years.

1924


-  An immigration law is passed. It greatly reduces the number of immigrants that can come to this country from Europe. It also bans any immigrants from Asia.

## 1930s


### General events in this decade:

-  Regional population reaches 5 million.
-  Gas engines and electric motors replace wind and wood power. Power lines that carry electricity become a common sight.

1929


-  The Great Depression begins. The economy is in the worst state it's ever been in. Tens of thousands of people are unemployed and face poverty. Many families and individuals are homeless.




 U.S. Routes are developed. They are the nation's first modern highway system. Most routes are 2 or 3 lanes of all-weather, concrete roadway. They cut through mountains, cross valleys, and go over waterways.


### 1930s

#### General events in this decade:


 New housing developments are built to house low and middle income families that are hit hard by the depression. Greenbelt, Maryland is a town that was created for this purpose.

 Farmers continue to relocate their crops to more productive land. The land that they were using before grows back as forest. This results in an increase in the amount of forestland.


1933

 The first multi-state conference on the Bay's health is held. The federal government (which represents all states), and representatives from Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, and Washington, D.C. are there. All these people get together because they understand that the Bay's health is getting worse. They know that, in order for the Bay to get better, it will take everyone's effort.

1938

 Aerial photographs of several Chesapeake rivers show that there are many full underwater grass beds.


1939


 World War II begins.


### 1940s


#### General events during this decade:


 The regional population is close to 5.5 million.

 Hundreds of thousands of people move to the area to work in factories that make guns and munitions for the war. More people means that more houses and buildings have to be constructed.


 Wartime research leads to advances in electronics and jets. Industries in the area start producing these things and selling them to foreign countries. Many European countries are trying to rebuild after the war, and they really want new technology.


 As the soldiers return from war, they start marrying and having children. There are lots of babies born. This is called the "Baby Boom".

 Suburban neighborhoods like Silver Spring, Bethesda, and Towson spring up in order to house all the new families.


 The car companies in Detroit, Michigan begin producing automobiles really cheaply. People begin buying and driving cars more than ever. They start driving their cars between their homes and their jobs, instead of using public transportation, such as the light rail system.

1945

 The use of chemicals to fertilize crops becomes a widespread practice. Chemicals replace manure and marl as the fertilizers of choice.

 New improvements in boats and fishing equipment make it easier for watermen to catch larger amounts of fish. This causes a decline in the population of many fish species.






1948

 Both Maryland and Virginia have now created water pollution control agencies to help monitor and reduce pollution in the Bay and its rivers.




## 1950s

### General events in this decade:



-  The regional population climbs to 7 million. The population boom puts a serious strain on the water quality.
-  Electric trolley lines are replaced by diesel, gasoline, and electric buses.
-  The trucking industry begins taking over the railroad industry. People are sending things across country by truck rather than by train.
-  More new roads are created to deal with the increasing traffic.
-  Many wetlands are drained. This increases the levels of nutrients, sediment, and toxins in the Bay. The water quality of the Bay significantly decreases.

### Other important events:


1952

-  The Chesapeake Bay Bridge is completed. It connects the western and eastern shores of Maryland.

1956


-  The Federal-Aid Highway Act is passed. Larger interstate highways with free access (no traffic lights and higher speed limits) are constructed.
-  New highways lead to the development of gas stations, motels, restaurants, and shopping centers to cater to the new traffic.

1959

-  A new oyster disease hits the Virginia portion of the Chesapeake Bay. It is called MSX, and it devastates the oyster populations there.

## 1960s


### General events this decade:

-  The first large, enclosed shopping centers are developed. They are built for the people in the suburban communities. More and more suburbs are appearing.




## Other important events:

1965



-  There is a severe shortage of oysters. Oysters used to make up the bulk of the Chesapeake Bay seafood industry. But now they only make up 10% of it.

1966

-  The Historic Preservation Act is passed. The area is changing so rapidly. The law is made to help protect historic buildings and sites from being destroyed.


## 1970s

### General events this decade:



-  Corporations and factories begin moving to suburbs because the cities have too much traffic. Business “parks” are created in the suburbs.
-  Glass and steel-framed high rises start sprouting up in Arlington, Virginia and Columbia, Bethesda, and Silver Spring, Maryland.

## Other important events:




1970

-  Since trucks took over much of the business the trains used to get, many railroad companies turn their businesses over to the federal government. The government creates Amtrak. Most of Amtrak’s service carries passengers between major northeast cities.


1972

-  Hurricane Agnes hits the area. It washes away lots of underwater grasses and brings huge amounts of sediment and pollutants into the Bay. This only makes problems worse. The Bay is already unhealthy due to the destruction of wetlands, sedimentation, acid rain, erosion, and toxins pollution.
-  The federal government passes the Federal Clean Water Act. This law says that every state has to have the same water quality standards. It places limits on the kinds of things that can be dumped into rivers, and it requires new sewage lines and water treatment plants to be built.

1973

-  The Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel is completed. It travels underneath the Chesapeake Bay to connect the Eastern Shore and Virginia Beach.
-  The first OPEC oil embargo begins. It makes it really hard for the U.S. to get cheap foreign oil. Since many things in this country run on oil, the economy suffers.
-  The US Army Corps of Engineers completes a study that it had been doing to tell what kind of condition the Chesapeake Bay is in. Two years later, it releases another study that tells what the Bay will be like by the year 2020.


1975

-  A toxic chemical, called Kepone, is found in the James River in Virginia. This chemical seriously threatens fish, wildlife, and human health.







1979

 The second oil crisis occurs. People begin to seriously think about alternative forms of energy, like solar and nuclear power.


**1980s**


**General events in this decade:**

 Lots of laws are passed to help the Chesapeake Bay. The health of the Chesapeake Bay even becomes a major issue in the presidential campaigns.

 The Chesapeake Bay's "dead zone" is more than twice the size that it was in the 80s. A "dead zone" is an area of water in which there is almost no oxygen. Any creatures that can't swim away usually end up dying, because they can't breathe. Dead zones are caused by high levels of nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) in the water.


1983

 The Environmental Protection Agency establishes the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP). The CBP is created to combat all of the alarming problems that people are seeing in the watershed area.


 The Chesapeake Bay Agreement is signed. The agreement aims to restore and protect underwater grasses, reduce erosion and sedimentation, restore wetlands and other habitats, manage fisheries, restore wildlife stocks, and many other things. It is a very important agreement for the health of the Bay.

1985


 Maryland's oysters are devastated by the Dermo disease.


 Local governments ban phosphate detergent. Phosphorus was found to cause algae blooms.

1987

 A second Chesapeake Bay Agreement is signed. This one sets a goal of reducing nitrogen and phosphorus in the Bay by 40% by the year 2000. It also begins studying the air pollution that gets into the Bay.

1990s


 The population in the area reaches 10.5 million.

 More restoration and management acts are passed around the watershed. These acts and action plans target specific problems in local areas. They also try to get money for citizen education and stewardship programs. Some of these acts involve planting more forest buffer and restoring wetlands and aquatic reefs.


1993

 The oyster harvest in Maryland is at an all time low. Only 80,000 bushels are harvested. This is only 4% of the level it was at in 1884.

1997

 Studies show that some conditions in the Bay are improving. The number of acres of underwater grasses has increased; there is more oxygen available to fish and crabs in the early summer; and there is less nitrogen and phosphorus in the water compared with previous years.

**2000 AD**

 The population in the region reaches 12 million.