

The Water Quality of the Baltimore Harbor is known to be poor. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation has recently reported that 41% of the Chesapeake Bay represents dead zones where the oxygen content is near zero and thus not able to sustain healthy marine life. Around the Bay, this is mainly due to pollution (defined as an increase in nitrogen and phosphorus) secondary to agricultural run off into streams and rivers of the Bay.

However, the Baltimore Harbor is somewhat different in that it represents the Patapsco Basin where in most cases it does not have an escape runoff. It is also the drainage area for 27 stormwater outlets from sewer drains throughout Baltimore City and surrounding Counties. This results in an enormous amount of trash entering the Inner Harbor that seldom leaves unless picked up by the trash scooper boats.

With trash comes contamination and infection! In addition to Styrofoam cups, UTZ potato chip bags, plastic water bottles etc, there are condoms, animal waste, syringes, needles etc. that make for unhealthy water. The fish and marine life that comes into contact such an environment has to be adversely effected. Unfortunately, like the "canary in the mines", we do not know unless we see dead fish or sick fish with skin lesions, tumors etc. The slime on the fish many times is infected and a source for contact infection. Fish Handling without hand washing can infect "caught fish" both for the fishermen as well as restaurants that purchase them.

Sickness in humans is rarely reported and in most cases goes unrecognized. The public health aspect of this potential source of infection needs to be recognized.

To our advantage is the nearby presence of The Johns Hopkin's School of Public Health. It is hoped that BHWA can combine with their efforts and give Baltimore a Harbor that one day will be fishable without infection and swimable as well.

In the meantime, we have a long way to go and the first step in that direction is the new trash interceptor recently installed at Harris Creek in Canton. If successful, funding will be sought for the other 26 outlets to complete the cleanup of trash in the Inner Harbor.

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