

ATLANTIC COASTAL BAYS CRITICAL AREAS

In 2002 the General Assembly formally recognized the value of a precious natural resource that exists only in Worcester County, the Atlantic Coastal Bays. These water bodies had felt the effects of the significant growth along the County's shoreline over the last quarter century and were in need of protection. Comprised of five bays of varying sizes and their associated tributaries, the Coastal Bays receive drainage from approximately half of Worcester County.

The Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area is denoted as the area of land that exists within 1000 feet of the head of the tide or tidal wetlands.

The Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area is broken up into the land use designations;

- Intensely Developed Area (IDA): These areas where residential, commercial, institutional, and/or industrial uses predominate and where relatively little natural habitat occurs or remains.
- Limited Development Area (LDA): These are areas which are currently developed in low or moderate-intensity uses. They also contain areas of natural plant and animal habitats.
- Resource Conservation Area (RCA): These areas are characterized by nature dominated environments and support resource utilization activities like agriculture and forestry.

To see if a particular property is in the Critical Area, please refer to the maps (</departments/env/natural/atlmaps>).

On all waterfront properties or properties that border tidal wetlands, there is a 100 foot buffer that is measured from mean high water, the most landward extent of tidal wetlands, or the bank of tributary streams. In this area there are serious restrictions on what can legally occur relative to clearing, cutting, structures or general disturbance. In some areas however, the restrictions are reduced. These less restrictive buffer areas are known as buffer management areas. These areas are classed into a letter and number label (i.e. BMA A-15). The letter references the group and the number indicated the reduced buffer length. For information on Buffer Management Areas, please refer to the maps (</departments/env/natural/atlmaps>).



How do I know if a property is in the Critical Area?

Please refer to the Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area Maps (</departments/env/natural/atlmaps>).

What do I need to get a permit for?

The majority of development activities in the Critical Area need a permit. Please contact the Department for more information. Atlantic and Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Review Fees:

- Major Subdivision: \$200.00 base fee plus \$25.00 per lot
- Minor Subdivision: \$100.00 flat fee
- Major Site Plan: \$200.00 base fee, plus \$25.00 per acre
- Minor Site Plan: \$100.00 base fee
- Revisions:
 - <25% of the site: \$150.00 flat fee
 - >25% of the site: \$150.00 plus \$35.00 per acre
- Growth Allocation Requests: \$650.00 base fee plus \$15.00 per acre
- Building / Zoning permit review: \$50.00
- Board of Zoning Appeals Review: \$100.00

What can be done on a property in the Critical Area?

There are numerous restrictions in the Critical Area. These include limits on lot coverage, tree clearing and development activity in general. Please contact the Department for more information.

What if I want to remove a dead tree on my property in the Critical Area?

Please contact to the Department before any clearing or cutting occurs in the Critical Area.

Contact Information

Joy Birch: (410) 632-1220, ext. 1161

ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS

[Department Homepage \(/departments/env\)](/departments/env)

[BRF Septic Upgrade Program \(/departments/env/brfgrant\)](/departments/env/brfgrant)

[Bathing Beach Advisories \(/departments/environmentalservices/beaches\)](/departments/environmentalservices/beaches)

