

## How is China like...



## ...the Coast of Maine?



“Gross!” was the overwhelming response to photographs of people struggling to remove waist-deep mats of green algae choking the coastal waters around Qingdao, China, the site of the Olympic sailing competition. Nearly 20,000 people and an armada of small boats were mobilized to clean up an algal bloom that covered more than 5,000 square miles of the Yellow Sea.

China’s plague of green algae is on a larger scale than what we see spreading across coves and mudflats along the coast of Maine as summer progresses. These bright green shag carpets have similar sources: rainwater carrying nitrogen-rich fertilizers and sewage wastewater into coastal waters. According to news reports from China, “Many coastal Chinese cities dump untreated sewage into the sea, and rivers and tributaries emptying into coastal waters are often contaminated with high levels of nitrates from agricultural and industrial runoff. These nitrates contribute to the red tides of algae that often bloom along sections of China’s coastline.” That’s right; nitrogen contributes to both **green** algae and **red** tides.

This past year, Friends of Casco Bay helped to get a state law passed to establish nitrogen limits for Casco Bay waters. Through this law and our BayScaping initiative, we are working with the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, sewage treatment operators, and homeowners to address nitrogen overload in Maine’s coastal waters. China’s embarrassment is an international incident for them and a lesson for us on how nitrogen pollution could change our Bay forever!

*China Photo: Victor Kovalenko, courtesy of YachtPals.com*

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