

Seeing Green?

Help stop nitrogen pollution in Maine's coastal waters

Nitrogen is necessary

As every gardener knows, nitrogen is essential for the growth of living things. In the ocean, nitrogen triggers the growth of algae, including seaweeds and phytoplankton which form the base of the ocean food chain.

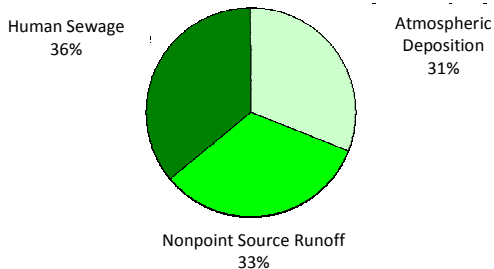
...But *too much* nitrogen is bad

An overdose of nitrogen in coastal waters can prompt harmful algae blooms that degrade coastal water quality. Nitrogen pollution has wreaked havoc in other parts of the world, causing fish kills, outbreaks of shellfish poisoning, marine mammal deaths, and dead zones in the Chesapeake Bay and the Gulf of Mexico.

Parts of Casco Bay are now showing signs of this problem - green algae smothering mud flats, prolonged red tides, and murky waters choking out eelgrass beds. Deteriorating coastal water quality threatens our marine resources, our quality of life, and our economy.

Where does it come from?

Excess nitrogen comes from sewage treatment plants and septic systems, stormwater runoff carrying fertilizers from lawns, and air deposition dropping particles from car exhaust and smoke-stack emissions.



Sources of Nitrogen Pollution in Casco Bay

Source: Castro, M. S., Driscoll, C. T., Jordan, T. E., Reay, W. G., and Boynton, W. R., 2003, Sources of Nitrogen to Estuaries in the United States. Estuaries 26, No. 3: 803-814.

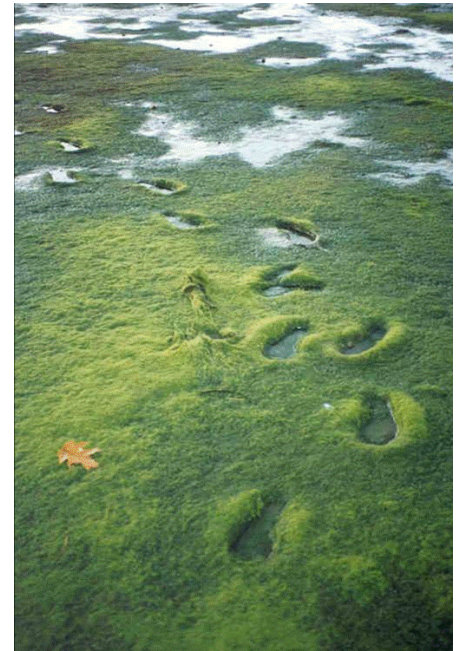
Stopping nitrogen pollution

To combat the "rise of slime" in Maine's coastal waters, Friends of Casco Bay has launched a Nitrogen Pollution Initiative. Our goals are to:

- ↪ educate the community about the spread of nitrogen pollution and what all of us can do to slow it down
- ↪ engage wastewater treatment operators, scientists, conservationists, and policy makers in a dialogue to work toward a solution
- ↪ convince the State of Maine to adopt nitrogen standards to protect Maine's coastal waters

How you can help

- ↪ Drive less
- ↪ Avoid using lawn fertilizers (find Bay-friendly landscaping techniques at www.cascobay.org/bayscaping)
- ↪ Boaters, pump out your holding tank (www.cascobay.org/pumpout)
- ↪ Help us assess the problem - become a Slime Watcher!



This cove in Falmouth is being smothered by a mat of green algae, which is an indication of nitrogen pollution.

Help stop nitrogen pollution — Become a Slime Watcher!

Friends of Casco Bay is documenting the extent of nitrogen pollution around the Bay and along the coast. This helps us target our efforts to stem pollution and strengthens our advocacy work.

When you're on the Bay, keep an eye out for coves and mudflats covered in green slime. If you spot some green algae, let us know at slimewatchers@cascobay.org (tell us the location, with coordinates & landmarks, and take a photo if you can!)

Friends of Casco Bay / Casco BAYKEEPER®

Improving and protecting the environmental health of Casco Bay

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