

## HOW YOU CAN HELP...

Estuaries are an important component of the complex and dynamic coastal watershed. The economy of many coastal areas relies on the natural beauty and bounty of estuaries. When those natural resources are imperiled, so are the livelihoods of the many people who live and work along the coast. As our population grows, the demands imposed on our natural resources increase. Protecting these resources for all their natural, economic, and aesthetic values becomes even more important.

People have an impact on the quality and health of our bays and estuaries. From learning more to watching what goes down storm drains, we have an opportunity to help take better care of our waterways. Examine your everyday activities and think how you can make a difference. Here are some suggestions and tips.



- ✓ **Join a local environmental group such as Coastal Bend Bays Foundation ([www.baysfoundation.org](http://www.baysfoundation.org)), Sierra Club ([www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org)), Audubon ([www.coastalbendaudubon.org](http://www.coastalbendaudubon.org)) or Surfrider Foundation ([www.surfrider.org](http://www.surfrider.org)). Attend meetings, lectures and festivals to learn more about local environmental issues.**



- ✓ **Use native plants or plants with low-maintenance needs for landscaping.**
- ✓ **Limit fertilizer use to only what's needed, as excess can cause water quality issues.**
- ✓ **Water your lawn conservatively.**
- ✓ **Plant trees and shrubs to prevent erosion and promote infiltration of water into the soil.**
- ✓ **Keep litter, pet waste, leaves and grass clippings out of street gutters and storm drains to keep them from ending up in estuaries and bays.**
- ✓ **Never put household, automotive or gardening waste into storm drains.**



✓ **Keep septic systems in good working order.**

✓ **Replace any dripping or leaking faucets or pipes and install water-saving devices in showers and toilets.**

✓ **Properly dispose of hazardous materials at approved service stations or designated landfills.**

✓ **Keep a respectful distance from birds and wildlife, especially bird rookery islands during nesting season. Use binoculars for observation. Don't allow your dog to chase birds and other wildlife.**

✓ **Practice catch and release fishing. Releasing fish helps with population recovery.**

✓ **Maintain your boat and vehicle to prevent leaks and energy inefficiencies.**

✓ **Reduce your energy consumption to keep nitrogen and toxic pollutants from entering estuaries and bays through exhaust emissions. Examples include unplugging seldom-used appliances, unplugging chargers when not charging, turn off the lights when you leave the room, use compact fluorescent bulbs, and buy energy-efficient appliances.**

