

**Statement to the Public**  
**Your Action Is Key to Reduce Bacteria in the River**  
**(Regardless of Sewage Spills)**  
The Elizabeth River Project 12/26/11

Elizabeth River Project's River Star Homes program asks residents to commit to seven practices they can follow at home that help reduce pollution in the Elizabeth River. After two recent HRSD sewage spills, we received questions from citizens as to whether their actions still make a difference in reducing harmful bacteria in the river.

**To our River Star Homes: Your actions do count - a lot. Here's why.**

**1) Scoop the dog poop - reduce this chronic source of as much as 7 million pounds of poop a year in the Elizabeth River.** A 60 lb. dog produces about a quarter pound of poop a day. As many as 16,500 dogs live in the Lafayette sub-watershed of the Elizabeth River alone (census data for households, times the average number of dogs per American household from a survey by American Pet Products Manufacturers Association.) That's more than 4,100 pounds of poop a day, or almost 1.5 million lbs a year just for the Lafayette - and easily more than 7 million pounds for the entire Elizabeth River watershed (drainage area when it rains!)... That's unless you pick up the poop and dispose of it in the trash. HRSD spills only occur when something malfunctions. Pollution from the dogs' poop is continual, unless you pick up after them. And while the HRSD spill volumes were high, they were mostly water (highly diluted sewage), compared to pounds of dog poop on your lawn. The August 30, 2011, spill of 448,000 gallons added an estimated total of only 1000 pounds of solids (0.0022lb/gal) to the river.

**2) Keep grease out of your kitchen sink - it's the most common cause of sewer overflows.** Around Hampton Roads, small sewer overflows at the manhole level occur with frequency. The sewage then can wash into the river when it rains. Household grease building up in the pipes is the cause of the majority of sewer blockages in Hampton Roads, says the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission. That's why we ask River Star Homes to pour your bacon fat and other grease in a container, let it harden, and throw it in the trash. You really are making a difference with a key cause of sewage in the river.

**3) One problem HRSD can't address without your help is leaky, aging clay sewer pipes on private property.** HRSD plans to begin free inspections – and potentially free fixes – of this problem in the near future for River Star Homes who sign up for this service.

The Technical Committee of Elizabeth River Project's Board met with HRSD's director Ted Henifin on Oct. 21, 2011 to discuss the recent spills. We are continuing a collaborative dialogue with HRSD to explore the full impacts of the spills and any additional proactive measures that could be taken in the future. Meanwhile, we continue to recognize HRSD as one of the Elizabeth River Project's leading partners in the restoration of the Elizabeth River. HRSD's inception in 1940 may have been the most significant turning point in the improvement of the river, eliminating raw sewage in the Elizabeth and surrounding waterways. Currently HRSD is undertaking \$1.2 billion in massive upgrades to improve its 500 miles of now aging sewer infrastructure. We have recognized HRSD for numerous voluntary pollution prevention initiatives as a "Model Level River Star" industrial facility. HRSD is a major investor and partner in the River Star Homes initiative and Lafayette River restoration plan.