5

COMMUNITY CHOICES

How you get involved in your community and local decision making can help preserve and protect Virginia's natural resources.

You don't have to be a scientist to make a difference in protecting Virginia's natural resources. Virginia has 42,769 square miles of land and, while the government monitors an extensive range of this area, total coverage is virtually impossible. Your help is invaluable. Our citizens' efforts help fill in data gaps, provide educational opportunities for their communities and protect valuable natural resources.





- Become a Volunteer Citizen Water Monitor. Collect water samples from your local stream or river that the Department of Environmental Quality can use to determine the health of Virginia waterways. Visit www.deq.virginia.gov to sign up.
- Become a Virginia WildlifeMapper. Collect wildlife-related information in your community to help the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to monitor wildlife habitat in the Commonwealth. Find out more at www.dgif.virginia.gov.
- Get involved in your local government's comprehensive planning to incorporate environmental protection. Visit the Virginia Municipal League (www.vml.org) or Virginia Association of Counties (www.vaco.org) for information on your county.
- Stay informed on decisions in state government through the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall at www.townhall.virginia.gov.

How big is your footprint?

It depends on the shoe you wear.

Footprint calculators that have become popular. They generate a number based upon personal lifestyle choices, though these numbers represent very different things.

- Your *Carbon Footprint* measures the amount of carbon emissions your lifestyle generates.
- Your *Ecological Footprint* measures the amount of nature (acres) needed to support your lifestyle.

Both of these numbers are influenced by a number of variables including: your diet, the place you live, the materials you use, and the way you travel.

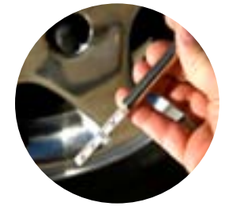
Visit www.VaNaturally.com to access calculators and other resources that evaluate how your lifestyle can impact the environment.

DEQ
Virginia Department of Environmental Quality

5 Ways to Help Virginia's Environment











Virginia Department of Environmental Quality

Food, Home, Transportation, Purchasing, and Community Choices

5 WAYS TO HELP VIRGINIA'S ENVIRONMENT

Your daily living choices directly affect the air you breathe, the water you drink and the natural areas you love in Virginia. Every choice matters — from simply what to eat for breakfast to more difficult ones like what you drive and where you live. Are you willing to make choices that will improve Virginia's environment and economy? It's easy. Choose five actions from the suggestions below and commit to start doing them today!

1 FOOD CHOICES

What you eat and where it comes from has a significant impact on natural resources and Virginia's economy.

The shortest distance between a farm and your dinner table means fewer transportation emissions that pollute the air we breathe.



- Buy local fruits, vegetables and other products.
- Buy Virginia grown food. These labels can help you find local products.
- Choose grass-fed meat which creates more open space and reduces potential run-off from feed-lots.
- Choose food that's fresh which uses less packaging and needs less storage. Less packaging means we can keep more items out of our landfills.

More information on filling your belly from farm to fork while conserving natural resources and improving Virginia's economy can be found through the Virginia Grown and Virginia's Finest programs at www.vdacs.virginia.gov/vagrown/index.shtml and www.shopvafinest.com.

2 HOME CHOICES

Where you live and what type of home you live in can have far reaching impacts on your lifestyle and Virginia's environment.





- If you're relocating, find a home close to the stores and services you visit often so your travel time is less. Visit www.walkscore.com to find out how walkable your neighborhood is.
- Restore and maintain a historic home to reduce urban sprawl, make use of existing built environments and preserve part of Virginia's history. Learn more about maintaining historic properties at the Department of Historic Resources website www.dhr.virginia.gov.
- Add insulation and install faucet aerators to make your home more energy and water efficient. Find out more in the Virginia Energy Savers Handbook at www.dmme.virginia.gov.
- Minimize or eliminate the use of chemicals in landscaping. Chemicals such as fertilizer used in inappropriate amounts, or out of season, may end up in local streams and rivers that we use for recreation and drinking water.
- Select native Virginia plants suited for your area in place of lawns. They require less water and chemicals. Read more at A Virginian's Year-Round Guide to Yard Care: Tips and Techniques for Healthy Lawns and Gardens at the Department of Conservation and Recreation website at www.dcr.virginia.gov.
- Follow tips from the Department of Forestry to plant or maintain trees to provide shade in the summer and light in the winter to help reduce your cooling and heating bills. More information on tree stewardship can be found at www.dof.virginia.gov.

5 WAYS TO HELP VIRGINIA'S ENVIRONMENT

3 TRANSPORTATION CHOICES

What you drive and how far you commute affects the air you breathe.

Gasoline powered vehicles produce carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogren dioxide, particulate matter and carbon dioxide.



- Carpool. Even once-a-week carpooling can cut vehicle emissions by half a ton per year. Visit www.erideshare.com to find carpooling information available for your area.
- Ride your bike, walk or take some form of mass transit to work or school. Participate in Bike to Work Day www.virginiadot.org.
- Impress your boss with your eco-consciousness and ask if there are any days you can work from home to reduce vehicle emissions and increase productivity.
- Combine errands and plan an efficient route to save you time, fuel, and reduce emissions.
- Keep your vehicle tuned up for the best fuel efficiency. Proper tire pressure, changing the air filter regularly, unloading the junk in your trunk and eliminating rooftop storage all increase fuel efficiency. Find out more about fuel efficiency at www.fueleconomy.gov.

4 PURCHASING CHOICES

What you purchase and how long you use it directly impacts Virginia's landfills and space needed for waste.

In 2008, Virginians disposed of 9.9 million tons of solid waste – that's equivalent to the weight of over 46,000 diesel train engines.





- Buy only items that you need. Before purchasing an item ask yourself, "Why do I want this? How often will I use it? Can I get along without it?" Buying what you don't need means those items may end up in our landfills.
- Acquire secondhand or remanufactured items instead of new items to reduce the energy and emissions associated with production of new goods. Remanufactured goods use 85% less energy to produce. Find out more at www.freecycle.org.
- Buy goods and food with little or no packaging when possible. Packaging ends up as trash in our landfills.
- Use reusable shopping bags for all your purchases (not just food) to reduce the amount of paper and plastic bags.
- Avoid buying water and other beverages in plastic bottles. Plastic bottles end up in Virginia's waterways and are carried to the Chesapeake Bay and then the ocean. Volunteers collected 180,000 plastic beverage containers in the Potomac River watershed during the 2009 cleanup!
- Go to www.deq.virginia.gov for more information on recycling in Virginia.