

**Be Careful what you "put in" the Put-In-Creek**  
**By Grace Keel**

It wasn't until I moved into a home on the Put In Creek that I learned how important our actions are to save the oysters. After seeing all of the oyster shells along the shore I was excited thinking we could harvest oysters in our own backyard. When I talked to my Grandfather about it he told me that sadly, we are not allowed to eat the shellfish from our section of the creek. Of course, I asked why and that started my journey into how to consider the oysters.

My Grandfather showed me the shellfish area condemnation notice and a map which included our house. I learned that it is important to be careful to not allow harmful chemicals, pesticides, and run off from septic systems to seep into the water, which will contaminate the habitat of the oysters. I learned that there are laws and regulations that control what you can and can't do by the water. For example, my grandfather's landscaper is not allowed to apply certain types of fertilizer and weed killer, which may seep into the water and harm the oysters.

I learned that, in addition to the chemicals themselves, such items as clippings and leaves, should also be kept out of the water. Use the bare minimum or no weed killer when working near the water. Popular products such as Round Up weed killer should never be used near water. It not only can it kill aquatic plants, it can significantly contaminate the water. In addition, any fertilizer containing phosphate used near the water may runoff and cause algae to bloom. The only problem is that now my grandfather has me helping him pull the weeds by hand. Additionally, when our exterminator sprays for insects, he must stay 5 feet away from the shoreline, so that the pesticides do not harm the oysters. Lastly, when my grandfather purchased this older home, he was required to replace and relocate the aging septic system drain field, so that the sewage would not seep into the oyster's habitat. I also saw firsthand when the drain field was replaced in our yard that obviously you should do whatever is required to keep sewage from seeping into our waterways. One thing I did not realize is that not picking up dog waste is the same as a non-functioning septic system.

It was not until I lived on the water that I became aware of how important it is for owners along the shore to do whatever is necessary to help protect the environment of the oyster population, in order for us to continue to enjoy harvesting the shellfish in our water ways. We must be sure to do everything possible to help protect our rivers and streams from contamination. I now appreciate how important it is for everyone to work together to protect our coastal environment. All I know is that next summer, when my sister and I go swimming off my grandfather's Dock, we will have done everything possible to improve the environment to not only save the oysters, but all forms of shellfish. I will definitely be sure to be careful what I put

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