

Living Shorelines

IS "ARMORING" YOUR SHORELINE ALONG TIDAL CREEKS REALLY NECESSARY?

Many waterfront property owners who live on protected creeks and rivers see their neighbors' wooden bulkheads and rock walls and think that they are the only solution to erosion concerns. However, where there is low-to-moderate wave energy and minimal erosion, it is usually not necessary to install these hard structures. Not only are they more costly, but they can destroy shallow water habitats when wave energy is reflected back.



CCRM/Virginia Institute of Marine Science

A contrast in shorelines: The living shoreline on the left provides many water quality and wildlife benefits while blending in with the natural environment. The shoreline on the right is completely covered in stone and has no vegetation behind it to prevent erosion.

THE "IDEAL" LIVING SHORELINE

The "ideal" living shoreline in many tidal areas in the Bay watershed contains a succession of natural filters that normally would be found in undisturbed ecosystems. These filters include:

- riparian buffers above the tide line, made up of native trees and shrubs, including a mix of shrubs at high tide elevation;
- tidal wetlands, including grasses, rushes, and sedges at mid-tide elevation, and marsh grasses and common threesquare at low tide;
- oysters and an oyster reef—where appropriate; and
- underwater grasses in shallow water.

SELECTING NATIVE PLANTS

Native trees, shrubs, and grasses have expansive roots that hold soil in place and slow erosion from water and overland runoff. They add critical wildlife habitat and diversity, as well as beauty and value, to your property. Plant selection will depend on your site conditions.

