

WHEN WILL BALTIMORE CITY'S WATER WHEEL BE SHUT DOWN?



Baltimore City's newest Water Wheel has received a lot of positive attention in recent months, but it is just one solution to the Inner Harbor's serious trash problem. A two-minute video from Healthy Harbors shows hundreds, if not thousands, of bottles, cans, cigarettes, Styrofoam and plastic bags floating from Jones Falls and into the Inner Harbor. In a video on NBC, Adam Linguist of the Healthy Harbor Initiative stated that "our goal is to actually put the water wheel out of business ... it's great because it's immediate, it's innovative, but the real solution is that people need to change their behavior."

This sentiment has been expressed since at least 2008 when Baltimore's harbor was the second waterway in Maryland to be officially designated as "impaired by trash, debris, and floatables." This designation means Baltimore needs a pollution diet, more formally known as a TMDL (total maximum daily load), and more sustainable and green solutions to water pollution. Until shutting down in 2008, Baltimore's former water wheel collected 30,000 pounds of trash per day, but the daily volume of trash flowing into the Inner Harbor outgrew the old wheel's capacity.

Creators Dan Chase and John Kellett collaborated with government, NGOs, and architects, to build the new wheel which collects 50,000 pounds of trash per day. Despite the years gone by, new and creative ways to tackle upstream pollution have yet to be realized. The most tangible methods continue to be the water wheel, trash skimmers, and other trash trapping methods, as currently employed in the Inner Harbor. Baltimore City bears the burden of the heavy trash load even though the trash flows from the Gwynns and Jones Falls watersheds all the way to the northwestern corner of Baltimore County.



Trash is not the only problem for the Inner Harbor. The University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science published a scorecard which grades based on scores of zero (very poor) to 100 (very good) for the health of the Inner Harbor and the two watersheds.

- The Inner Harbor's ecological health indicators ranged from poor to very poor.
- The Inner Harbor's human health indicators, including trash, are all graded as poor.
- The watersheds' ecological health indicators ranged from moderately good to poor.
- The watersheds' human health indicators, including bacteria and trash, are graded as poor.

With no finalized plan for a pollution diet and recent changes in political standing after Maryland elections, it is hard to say if the Baltimore region will see any improvement of its ecological and human health grades. In addition to making a dent in trash collection, the water wheel has brought national attention to the city.

Source: <http://www.globalsiteplans.com/environmental-design/when-will-baltimore-citys-water-wheel-be-shut-down/>