

Waterkeepers: Both urban and agricultural pollution are a problem

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Bill Satterfield, in his June 11 letter to the editor ("Urban waste, not chicken manure, is the bay's biggest threat") was right when he said "everyone has a role in protecting the Chesapeake Bay." What he forgot is that "everyone" includes both the agricultural and urban sectors.

Instead of shifting blame from one polluter to the next, we should focus on addressing all the major contributors of pollution. Instead of focusing on which kid on the block is polluting more, we should focus on the glaring similarity between agricultural and urban sources: both contribute dangerous levels of nutrient, bacterial, and toxic pollution into our local waterways and the bay.

Another similarity between animal waste and human waste is that the public is outraged about both entering our waterways. Mr. Satterfield must have missed the coverage of this topic by The Sun. If he had, he would know that the [Baltimore Harbor](#) waterkeeper spoke out about the recent sewage spill and fish kills in the harbor and invested her time and resources in sampling and advocating for more aggressive action by state and local government, and in responding to a diverse set of citizen complaints on this issue. He obviously missed Baltimore Harbor waterkeeper's own letter to the editor, published only days before his, entitled "Harbor fish kills, odor not the norm" and one submitted by enraged Baltimore resident Gary Moyer entitled "Something stinks in cover-up of Inner Harbor odor."

Waterkeepers are not a single, top-down organization housed in New York, as erroneously portrayed by Mr. Satterfield. Rather, we are local, grassroots non-profit programs and organizations with nearly 200 individual advocates housed in watersheds throughout the United States and world. Those located in urban watersheds have consistently advocated against sewage and other urban waste. Those located in more agricultural watersheds consistently advocate for reduction of agricultural pollution.

Lastly, in his rush to point out the "stark contrast" between urban sewage pollution and agricultural waste, he forgot to mention the most obvious of contrasts: that the most recent [EPA](#) stats peg agricultural waste in Maryland with 41 percent of phosphorus pollution to the bay, compared to 26 percent from urban wastewater; and ag is responsible for 36 percent of nitrogen pollution, compared to 29 percent from urban wastewater. Both are huge problems, but if we're going to point out differences, we should at least get them right.

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