

# Group seeks volunteers to monitor acidification of St. George estuary

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Scientists report a trend in the Gulf of Maine and elsewhere around the world toward lower pH values, i.e. increasing acidity.

Offshore the culprit appears to be climate change as the oceans absorb more and more carbon dioxide which forms carbonic acid in seawater, according to a news release from the Georges River Tidewater Association. Inshore this trend can be accelerated by nutrient loading from shoreline runoff. There is evidence that even a slight increase in acidification disrupts recruitment and growth of shellfish such as clams, oysters, and mussels. The oceans may be acidifying faster today than they did in the last 300 million years, according to scientists publishing a paper this week in the journal *Science*.

"The ocean acidification we're seeing today is unprecedented," said Candace Major, program officer in the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Division of Ocean Sciences, "even when viewed through the lens of the past 300 million years, a result of the very fast rates at which we're changing the chemistry of the atmosphere and oceans."

No one really knows what is happening in Maine's small estuaries. GRTA has been developing a monitoring program with assistance from Friends of Casco Bay, the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment, and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. GRTA is investing in sampling equipment, but needs citizen volunteers to launch the program this spring. To learn how to participate, come to a meeting Saturday, March 10 at 9 a.m. at Watts Hall, 174 Main St., Thomaston -- starting with refreshments at 8:30 a.m., followed by a presentation by Dr. Curtis Bohlen, Director, Casco Bay Estuary Partnership on The Vital Role for Citizen Scientists in Protecting Our Waters, and an introduction to water monitoring methods and equipment.

For more information: Sherry Frazer, phone 354-0709, email [gsfrazer@myfairpoint.net](mailto:gsfrazer@myfairpoint.net).