

For many of us, each New Year begins with the best intentions; we resolve to get fit, plan for retirement and get organized. It seems that the ball has barely dropped when our routines take over and our self-improvement plans are postponed another year.

This year we can each commit to a simple resolution with benefits that reach far beyond our waistlines, our wallets or the hall closet. By resolving to be a better companion to our natural world and making small changes in our daily lives, we can improve our quality of life, our State and our planet.

We are blessed to live in a State with great estuaries and rivers, incomparable seafood, exceptional working landscapes and scenic open spaces. With this privilege, comes the responsibility to safeguard these treasures for future generations. From planting a vegetable garden or using public transportation when available, to conserving water and improving energy efficiency in our homes, we can all find ways to do our part for the earth. Every minor adjustment we make in our daily lives can net big results for our natural world, not to mention save money through our efforts.

If you are unsure where to begin, start at home and think small. When it comes to living more sustainably, use less and recycle

more. Use less water, energy, fertilizer and products that contain chemicals. Recycle your trash, your stormwater, and your holiday trees and wrappings.

If you are ready for a larger commitment, consider planting a rain garden, native plants and new trees. Trade traditional light bulbs for compact fluorescents. Increase your home's insulation and replace outdated windows and block drafts. Invest in ENERGY STAR-rated appliances, fixtures and water heaters. Explore renewable energy incentive programs and consider new energy sources.

Reach out to your community and connect with others who are ready to live greener. Encourage your local school to become a Maryland Green School. Form a partnership to increase natural play spaces or clean up a local waterway. Organize a community garden. Volunteer to monitor stream health, teach environmental education, or assist at a State Park.

Visit green.maryland.gov and learn how Maryland's Genuine Progress Indicator is allowing us to measure our sustainable prosperity. Become a Smart, Green & Growing Partner, or a member of the Maryland Green Registry. Track Maryland's Bay restoration and land conservation efforts.

If you are already making smart decisions for our earth, increase your impact by 10-fold or 100-fold by sharing your philosophy and your knowledge.

Encourage friends, family and colleagues to follow your lead, and help them find the resources they need to embrace a more sustainable lifestyle. Mentor the children in your life and help them connect with nature. They are the stewards of tomorrow and will be left to live with what we leave behind – for better or worse.

In Maryland, we share the belief that every person can make a difference and all of us must try.

We encourage you to visit green.maryland.gov and learn more about what you can do to nurture the resources that are currently on loan to us from our children. Let's begin 2012 with a renewed passion for our natural



John Cornell

Governor Martin O'Malley and Secretary John Griffin

world and an unflinching desire to live a sustainable life, surrounded by the beauty that is Maryland.

Martin O'Malley
Governor

John R. Griffin
Secretary