SALT WATCH®
IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA

Keep It Fresh: The Salt Watch Community Science Initiative

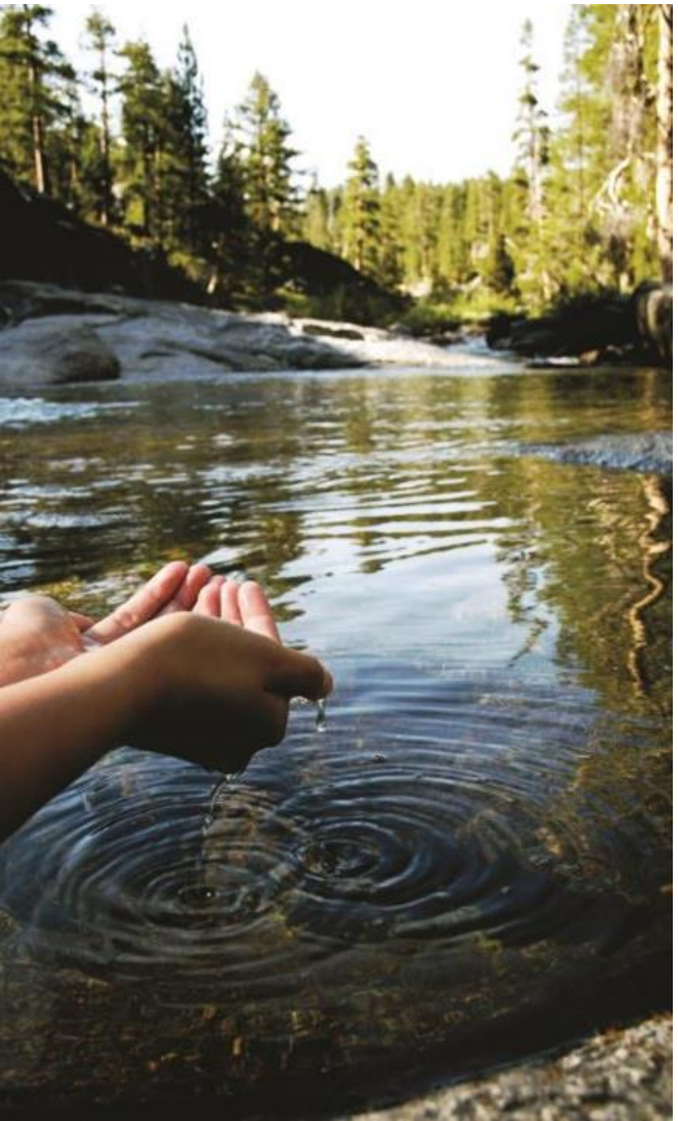
May 27, 2026

Abby Hileman

Salt Watch Coordinator

ahileman@iwla.org

Izaak Walton League of America



To conserve, restore, and promote the sustainable use and enjoyment of our natural resources, including ***soil, air, woods, waters, and wildlife.***

SALT WATCH®
IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA

Salt Watch

SaltWatch.org

- Launched 2018
- Mobilizing community scientists to monitor chloride levels in streams
- Goals:
  - **Raise awareness** about the connection between salt and stream health
  - Identify chloride **hot spots** in freshwater
  - Advocate for **smarter application** of road salt

Salt Watch Kit

Includes:

- 4 Hach 30-600ppm chloride test strips
- Sample testing instructions
- Conversion chart
- Data uploading instructions

Salt Watch QAPP

New as of 2026, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) via partnership with the Chesapeake Monitoring Cooperative.

Hach Chloride Quantab® Test Strips (strips used in Salt Watch kits) have +/-10% accuracy.

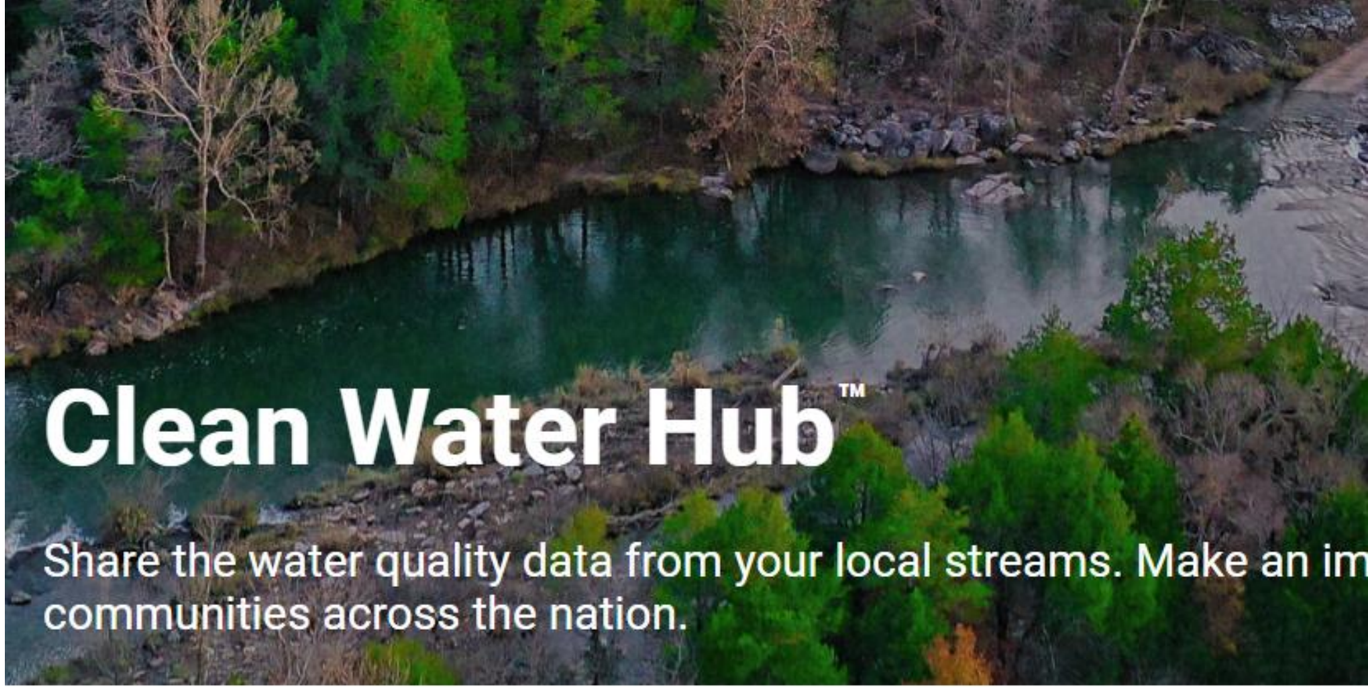
THE IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA

Chesapeake Monitoring Cooperative

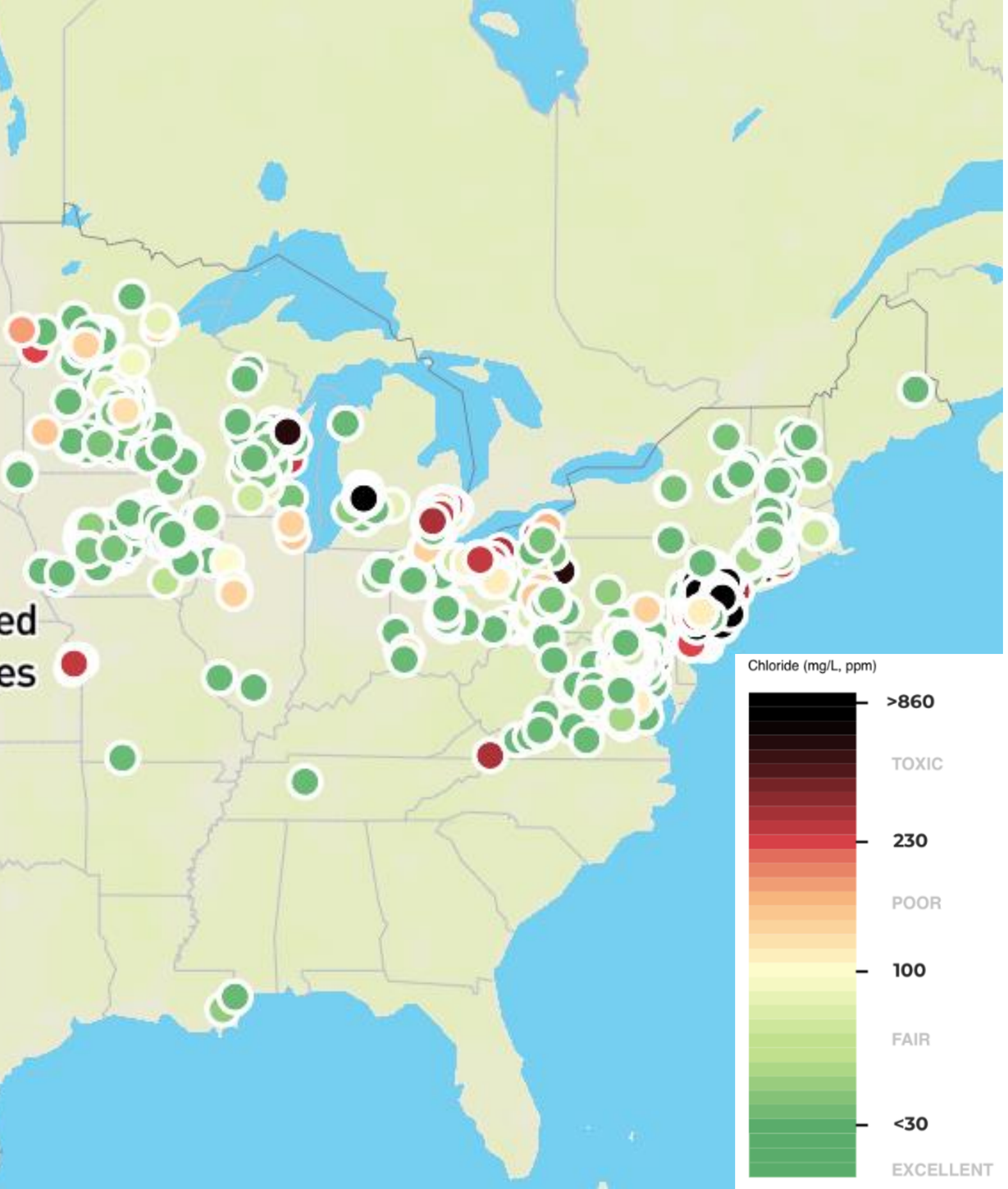
Clean Water Hub

www.CleanWaterHub.org

- National water quality database
- Publicly accessible
- Created with usability in mind
  - Data is meant to be easy to access, understand, and share
- Color-coded, interactive maps

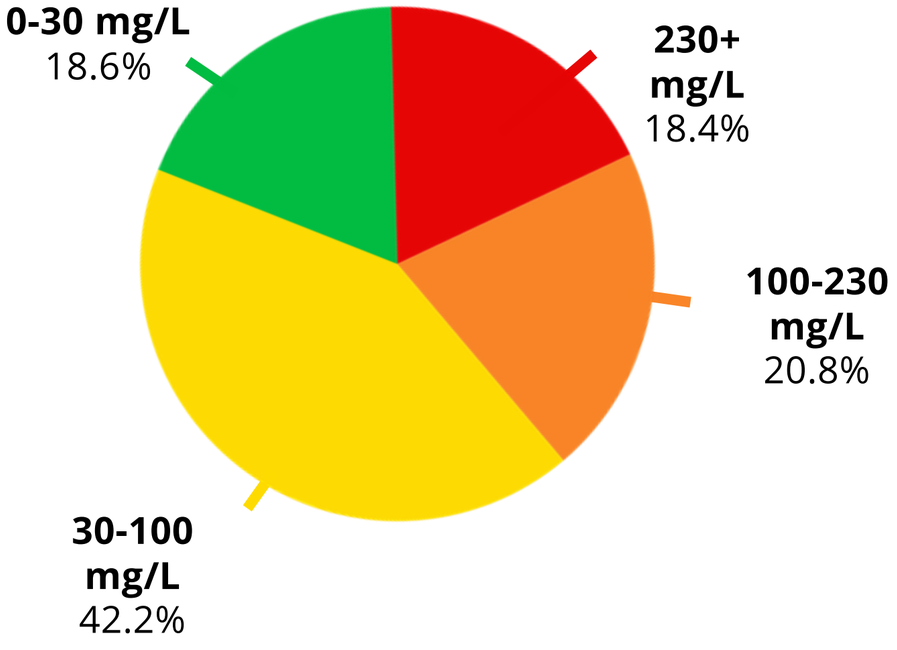


2024-2025 National



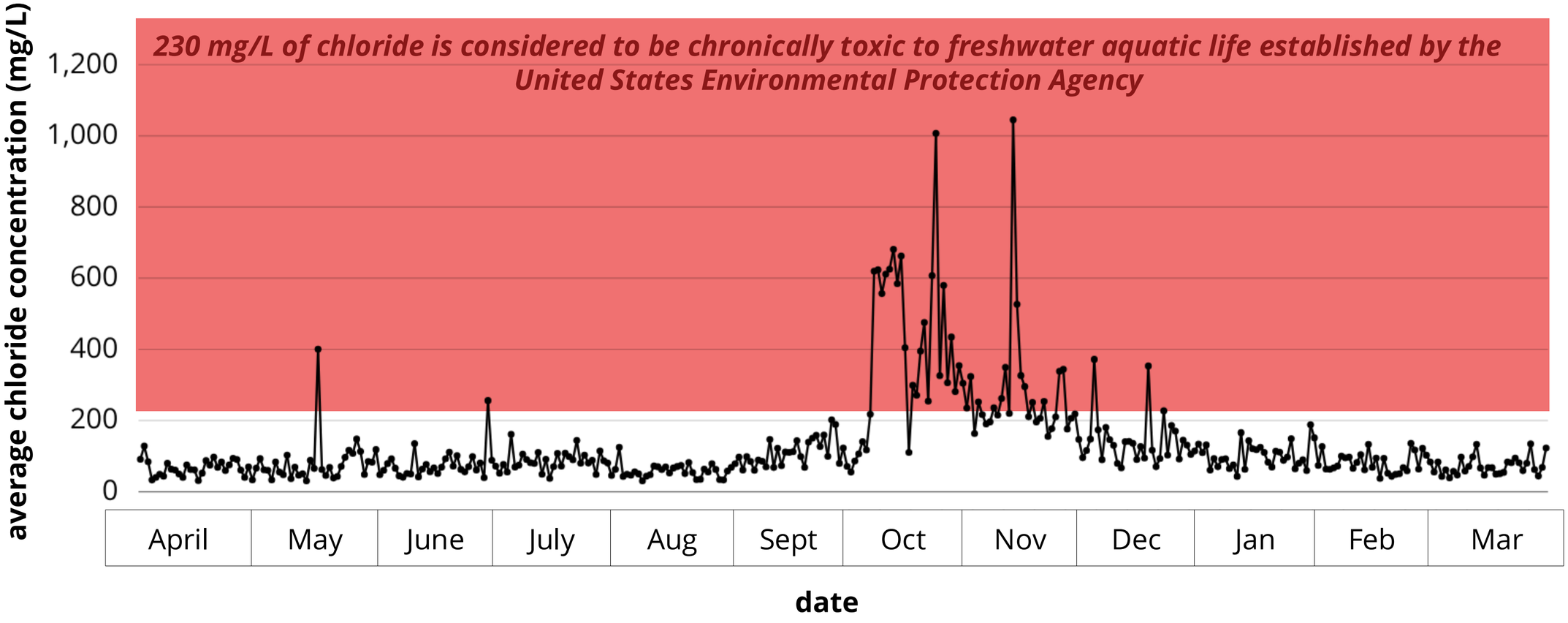
Total chloride readings: **8,689**

- 0-30 mg/L: **1,617**
- 30-100 mg/L: **3,663**
- 100-230 mg/L: **1,811**
- 230+ mg/L: **1,598**

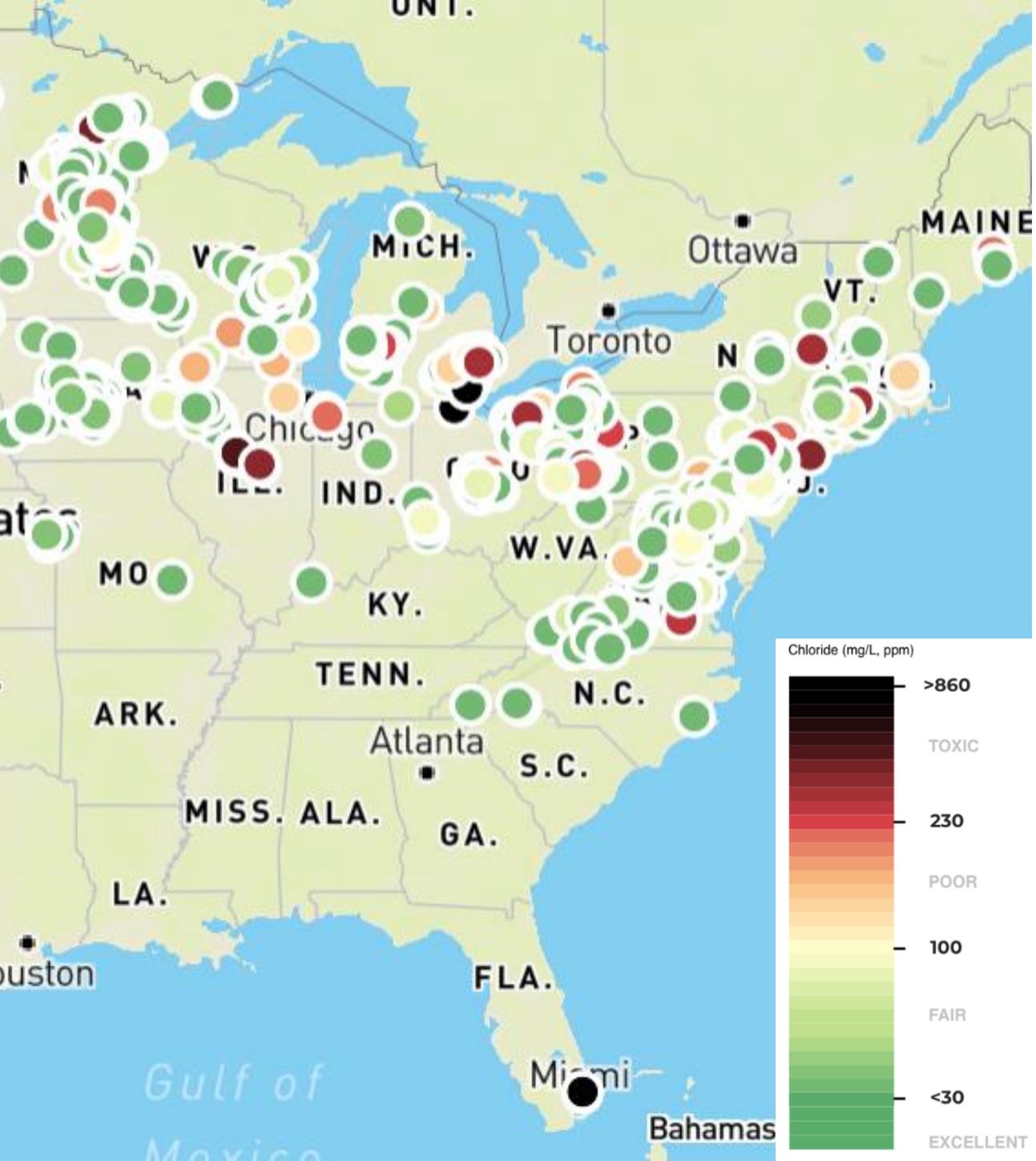


Average chloride (Cl-) concentrations (mg/L) in water reported by Salt Watch volunteers nationwide

July 1, 2024 - June 30,2025

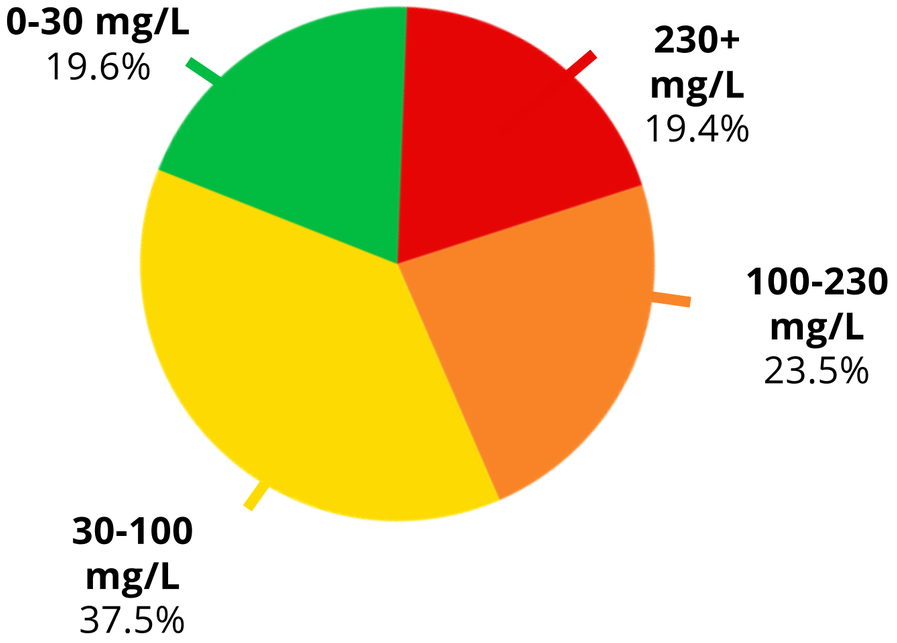


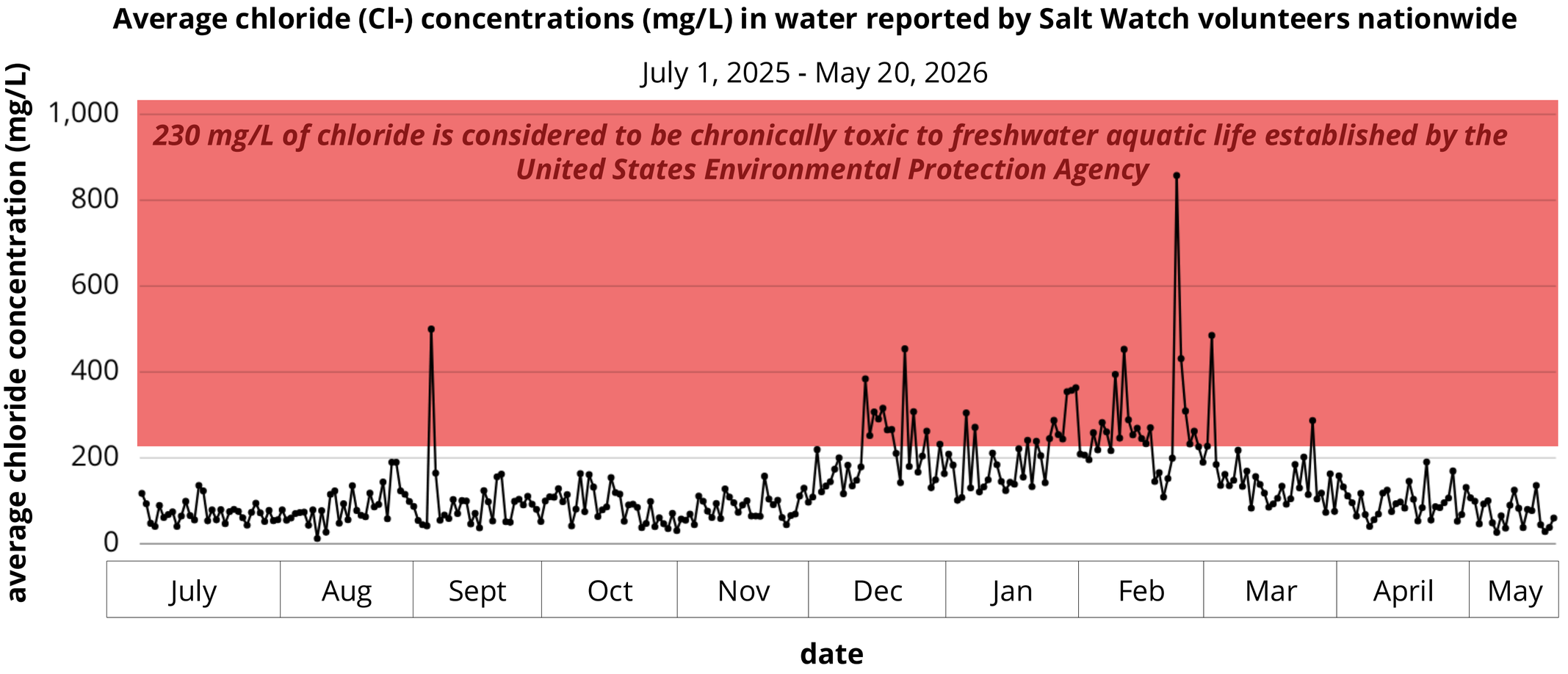
2025-2026 National

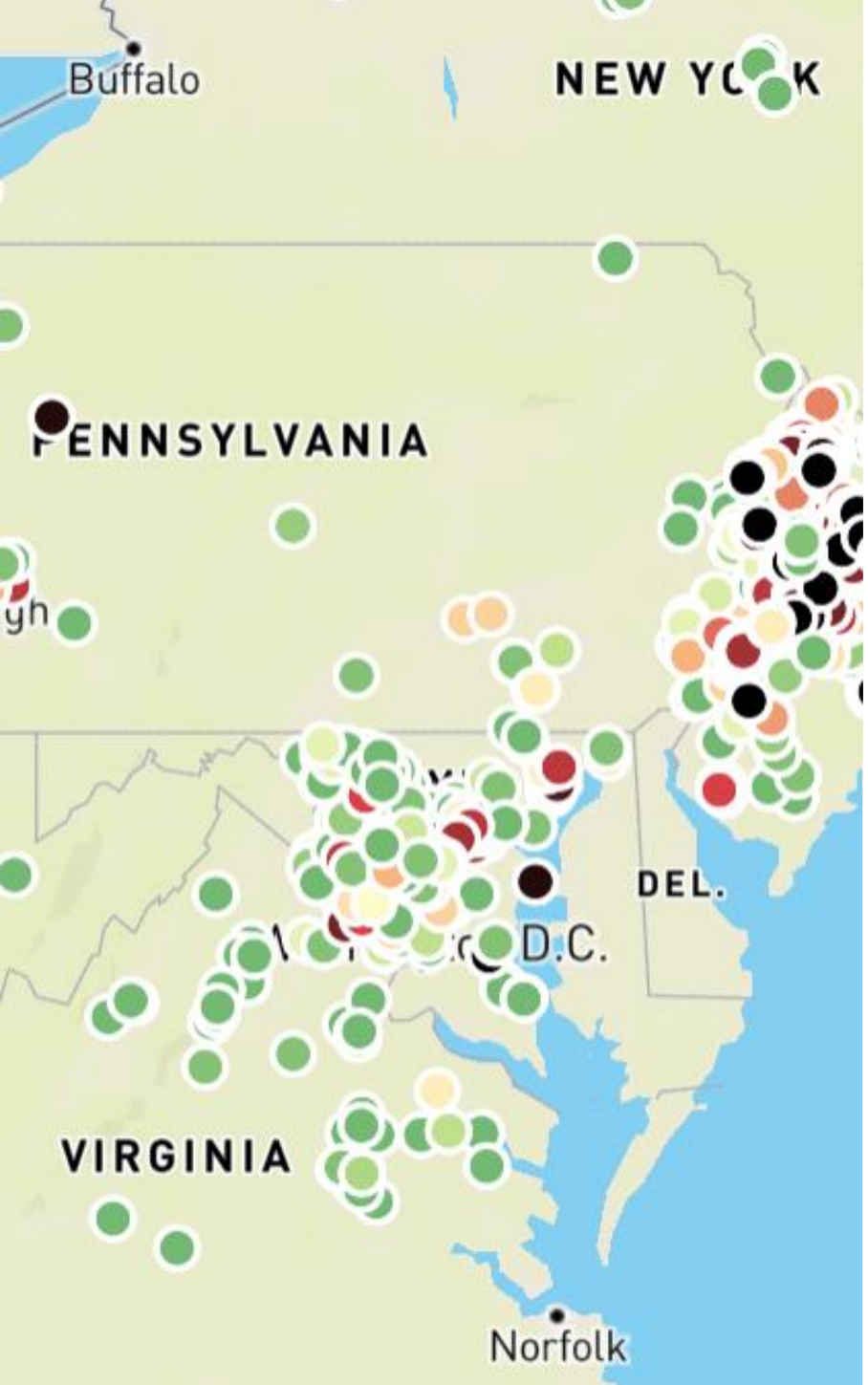


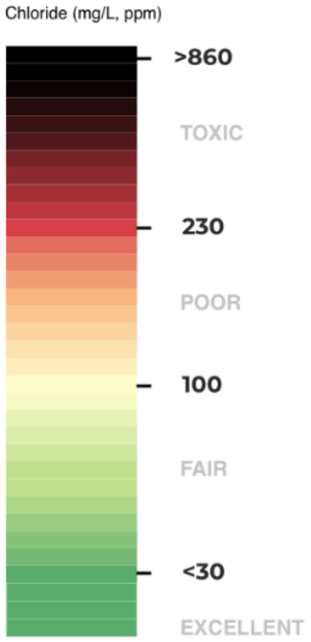
Total chloride readings: **7,863**

- 0-30 mg/L: **1,541**
- 30-100 mg/L: **2,948**
- 100-230 mg/L: **1,845**
- 230+ mg/L: **1,529**




Average chloride (Cl-) concentrations (mg/L) in water reported by Salt Watch volunteers nationwide
July 1, 2025 - May 20, 2026
average chloride concentration (mg/L)
1,000
800
600
400
200
0
230 mg/L of chloride is considered to be chronically toxic to freshwater aquatic life established by the United States Environmental Protection Agency
July
Aug
Sept
Oct
Nov
Dec
Jan
Feb
Mar
April
May
date

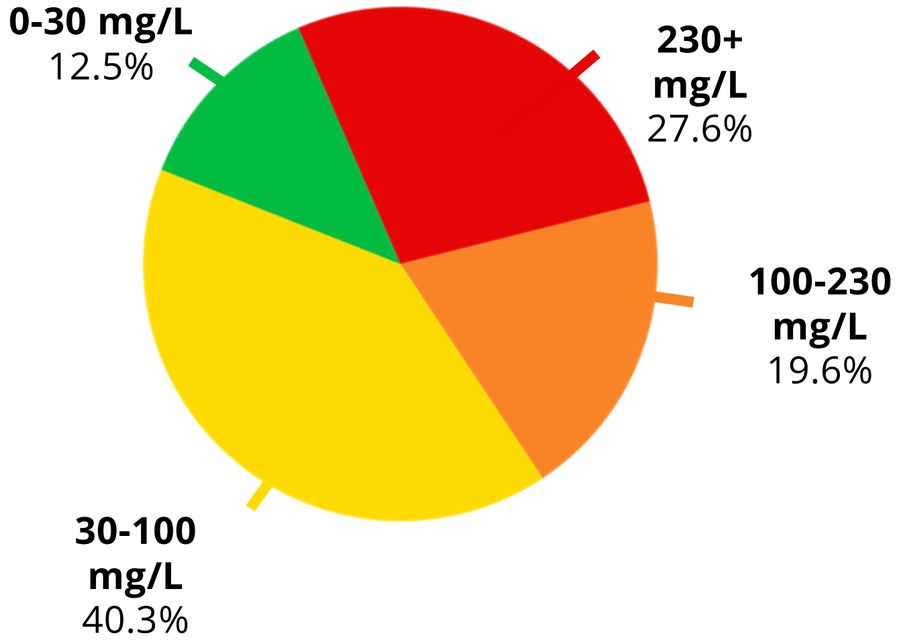




2024-2025 Chesapeake Bay

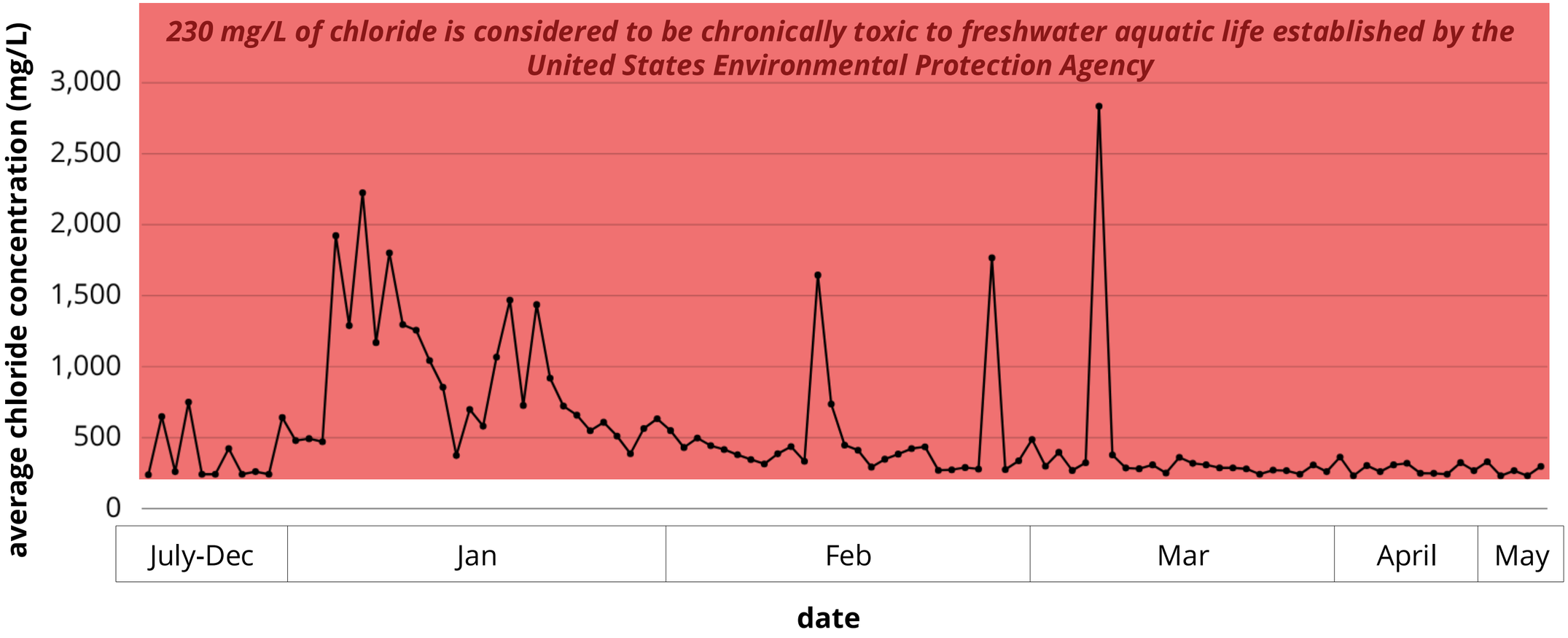
Total chloride readings: **3,234**

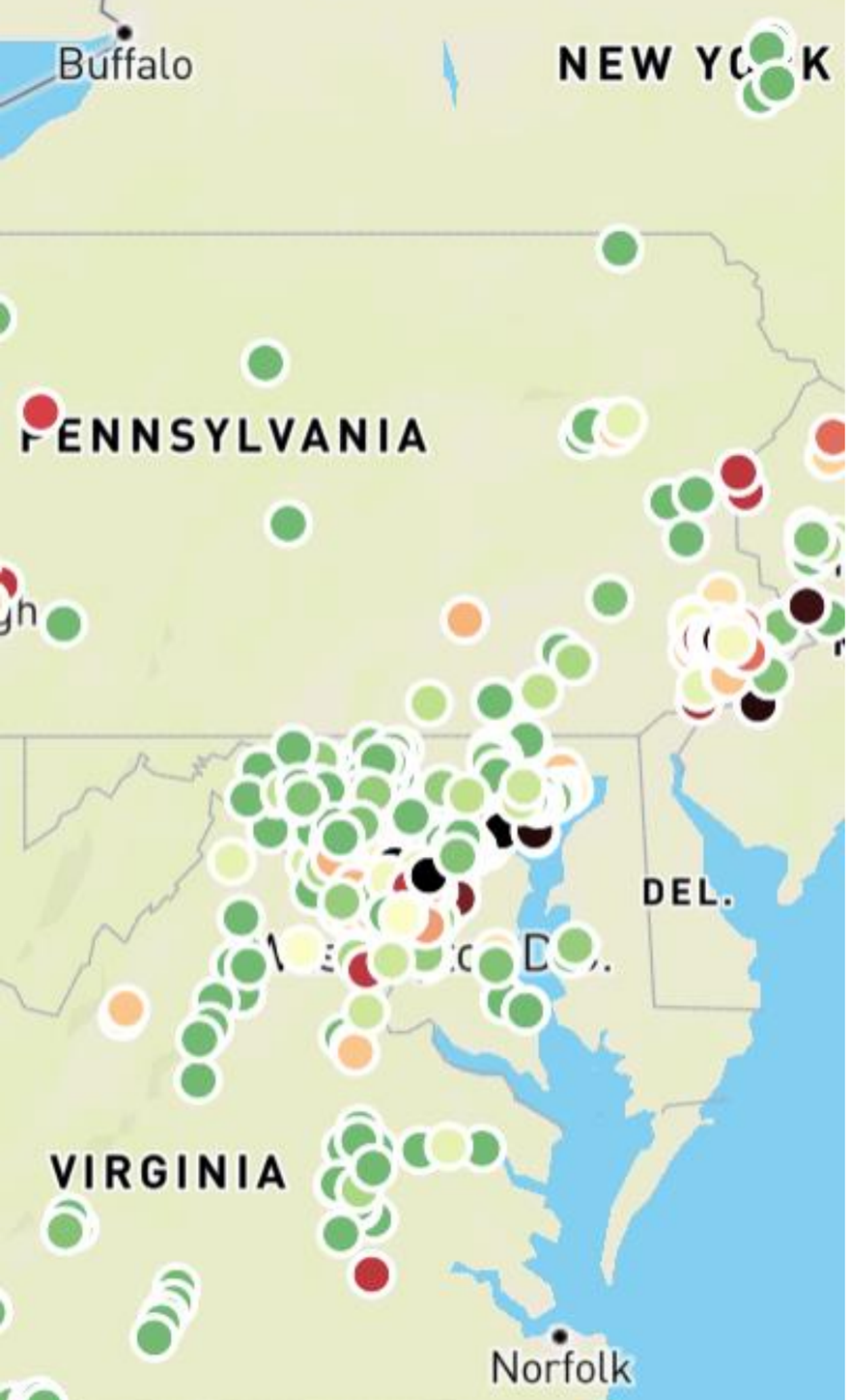
- 0-30 mg/L: **405**
- 30-100 mg/L: **1,304**
- 100-230 mg/L: **633**
- 230+ mg/L: **892**



Average chloride (Cl-) concentrations (mg/L) in water reported by Salt Watch volunteers in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed

July 1, 2024 - June 30,2025

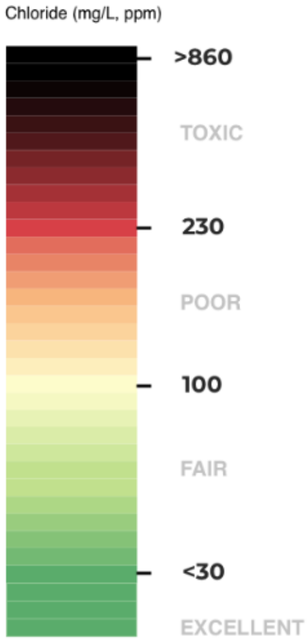


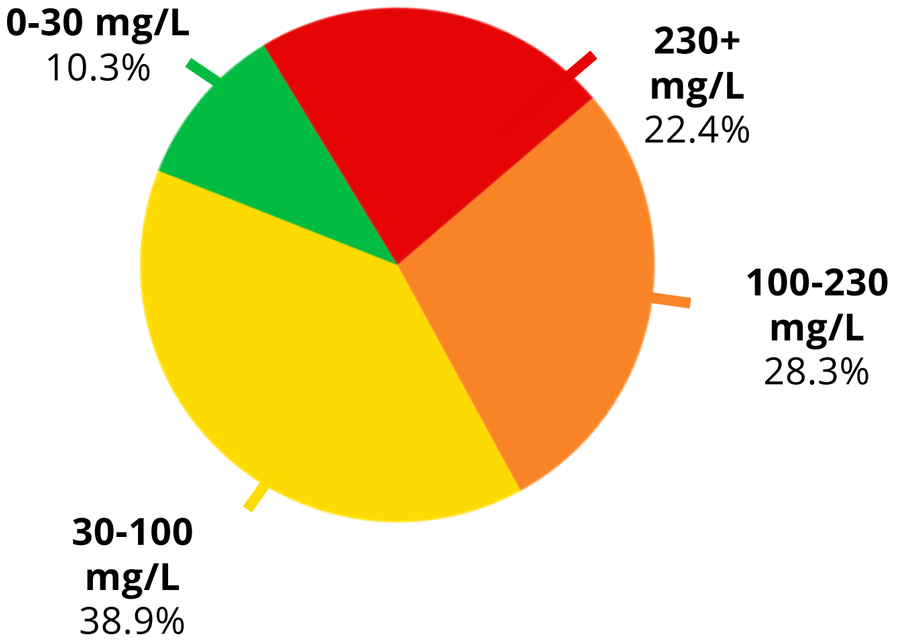


2025-2026 Chesapeake Bay

Total chloride readings: **3,511**

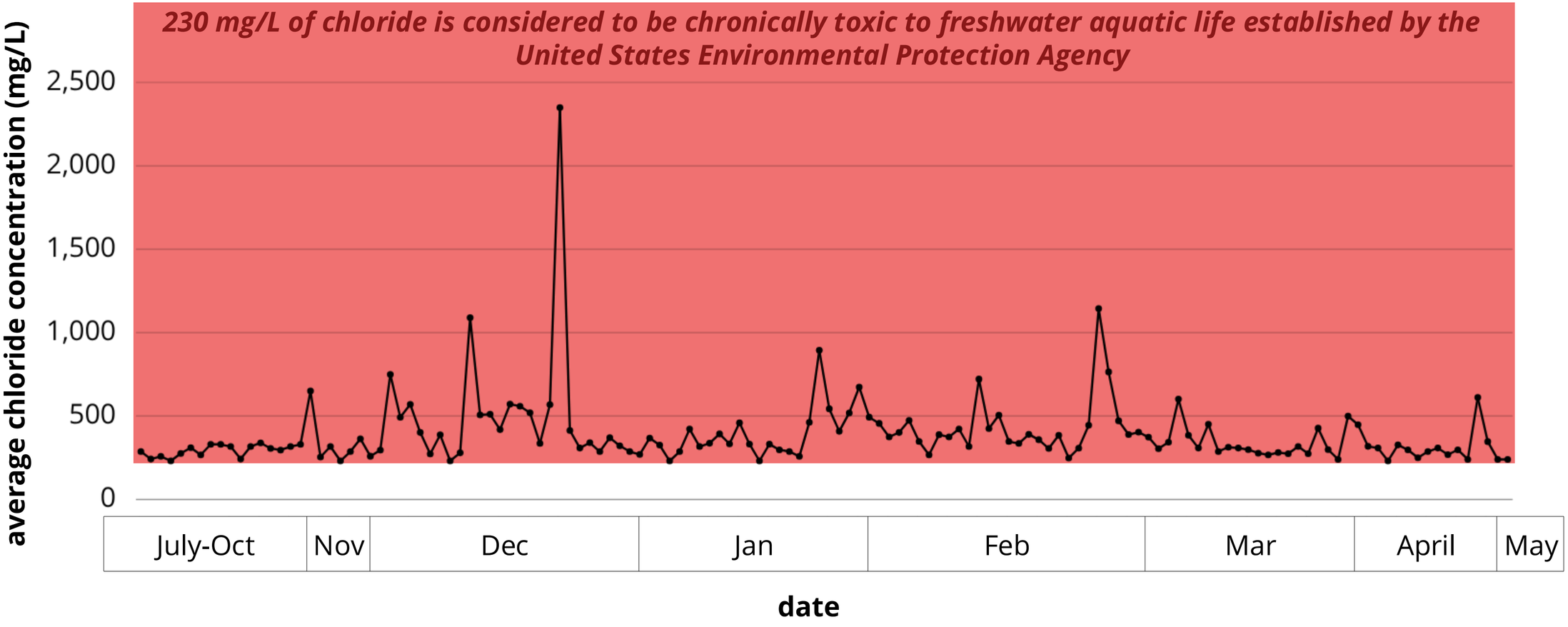
- 0-30 mg/L: **362**
- 30-100 mg/L: **1,367**
- 100-230 mg/L: **994**
- 230+ mg/L: **788**





Average chloride (Cl-) concentrations (mg/L) in water reported by Salt Watch volunteers in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed

July 1, 2025 - May 20, 2026



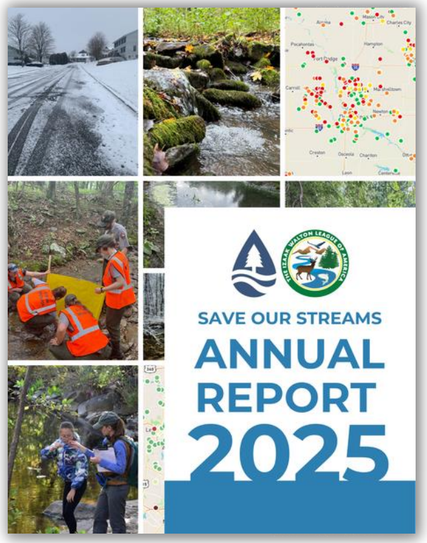
Data Use

Government Agencies

- Available to government agencies and water quality organizations to...
  - identify areas in need of further study, restoration
  - track impact of BMPs
  - track progress of restoration
- Integrating into the Chesapeake Monitoring Cooperative

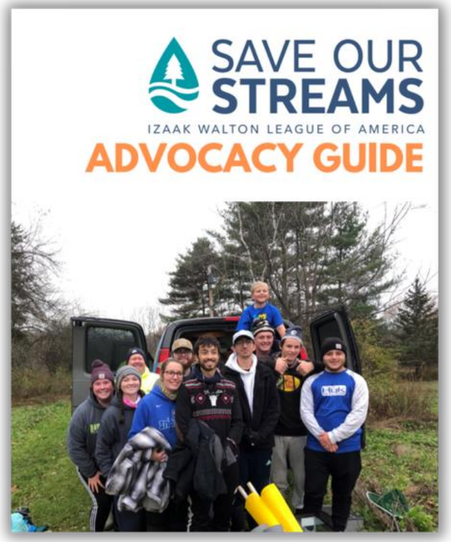
IWLA Clean Water Team

- Annual report
- Updates to volunteers
- Outreach to media sources



Clean Water Advocates

- Letters to the editor
- Contacting local representatives
- Educating community members



Be a Smart Salter

Once you put salt down, it doesn't go away...

Salt alters the soil, harms plants, and weakens infrastructure like bridges and roads.

It gets into our streams, lakes, and rivers, putting aquatic life and human health at risk.

It only takes **1 teaspoon of salt...**

...to pollute **5 gallons of water**

Salt applied by cities, businesses, and homes adds up.

SALT WATCH
IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA

Wisconsin Salt Wise

Reduce your salt use to protect our water!

Do your own salt application?

1. Shovel
Clear snow from sidewalks and parking lots before it turns to ice. The more snow you remove, the less salt you'll have to use - and the more effective it will be!

2. Scatter
If you use salt, scatter it so there's space between the grains. A coffee mug of salt is enough to treat an entire 20 foot driveway!

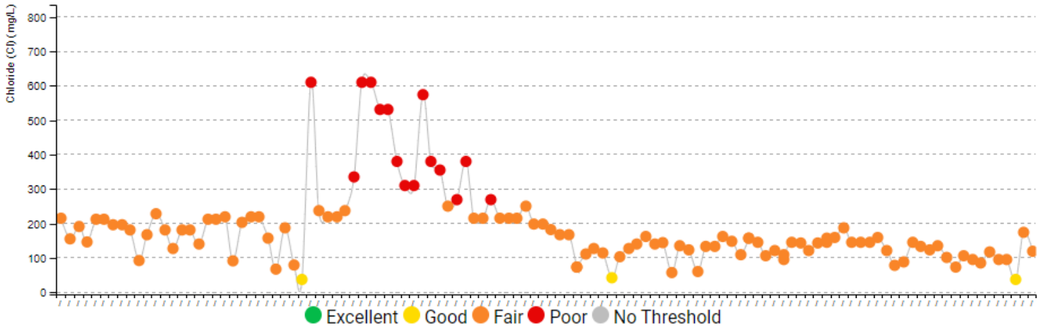
3. Sweep
Once the salt has done its job, sweep up the extra so you can reuse it for later storms - and prevent it from washing away.

4. Switch
Salt doesn't work when the pavement temperature is 15 degrees or lower. Switch to sand or use a different deicer that works at low temperatures.

Hiring a snow removal contractor?

Choose a contractor who is certified through a winter salt certification program.

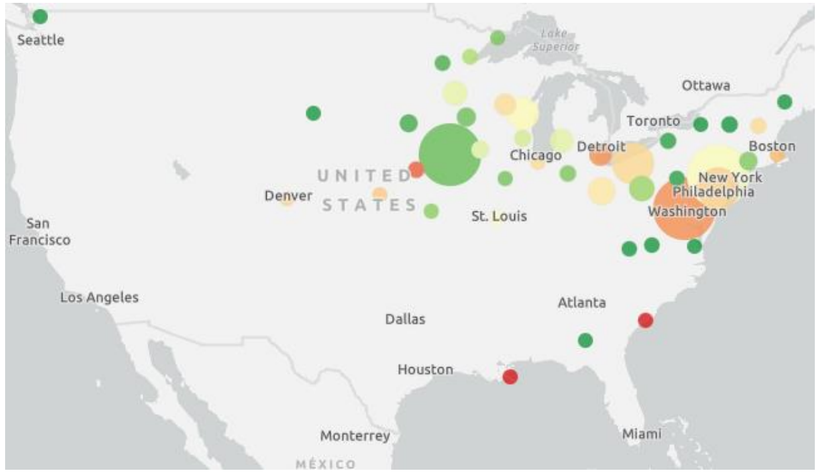
Find out about salt application courses from your state Department of Transportation or visit www.saltwatch.org!



TTF Streamkeeper Testifies at Philadelphia City Council about Road Salt

Jamilee Hoffman
Mar 17, 2022

Data Action



The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

Local Opinions

Opinion: The true cost of salt on the D.C. area's roads

An Annapolis city employee spreads salt on the downtown sidewalks as a slow-moving winter storm dumped snow and ice across the region in February 2021. (Jonathan Newton/The Washington Post)

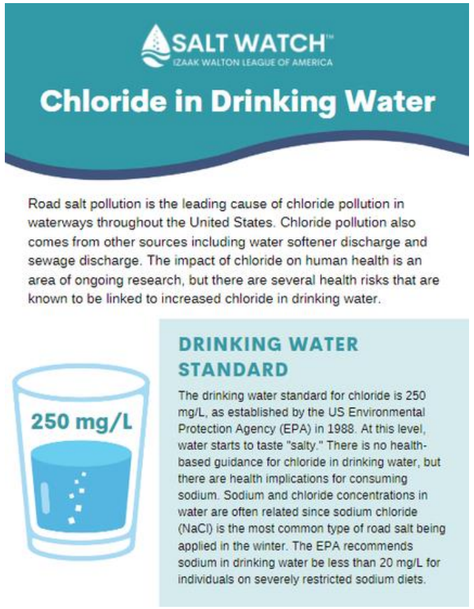
By Karl Van Nesse
January 19, 2022 at 2:46 p.m. EST

Keep freshwater fresh for future generations!

Abby – Stand up for clean water in Minnesota by reducing salt pollution! In many areas of the United States, road salt is used in the winter to create safe travel conditions, but excessive salting is a growing problem. Excess road salt ends up in our waterways, creating toxic conditions for aquatic life and threatening human health.

You can take action on this pervasive problem! **Let your state representatives know that you would like to see reduced road salt pollution in Minnesota.**

Resources


SALT WATCH™
IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA

Chloride in Drinking Water

Road salt pollution is the leading cause of chloride pollution in waterways throughout the United States. Chloride pollution also comes from other sources including water softener discharge and sewage discharge. The impact of chloride on human health is an area of ongoing research, but there are several health risks that are known to be linked to increased chloride in drinking water.

250 mg/L

DRINKING WATER STANDARD

The drinking water standard for chloride is 250 mg/L, as established by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1988. At this level, water starts to taste "salty." There is no health-based guidance for chloride in drinking water, but there are health implications for consuming sodium. Sodium and chloride concentrations in water are often related since sodium chloride (NaCl) is the most common type of road salt being applied in the winter. The EPA recommends sodium in drinking water be less than 20 mg/L for individuals on severely restricted sodium diets.

Fact Sheets


Be a Smart Salter

Once you put salt down, it doesn't go away...

Salt alters the soil, harms plants, and weakens infrastructure like bridges and roads.

It gets into our streams, lakes, and rivers, putting aquatic life and human health at risk.

It only takes 1 teaspoon of salt...

...to pollute 5 gallons of water

Salt applied by cities, businesses, and homes adds up.

Americans use **20 million tons** of road salt every year.

SALT WATCH™ IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA

Wisconsin Salt Wise

Reduce your salt use to protect our water!

Do your own salt application?

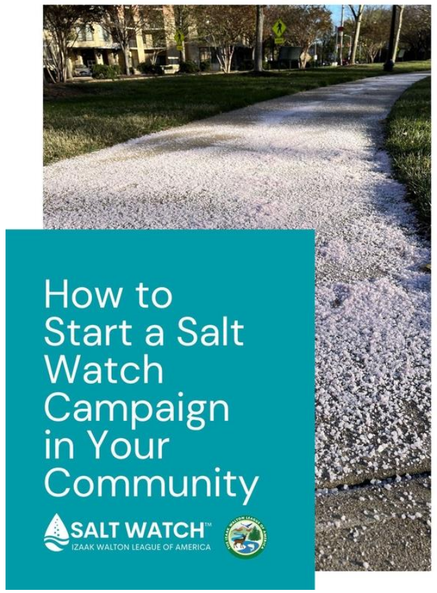
1. **Shovel** Clear snow from sidewalks and parking lots before it turns to ice. The more snow you remove, the less salt you'll have to use - and the more effective it will be!
2. **Scatter** If you use salt, scatter it so there's space between the grains. A coffee mug of salt is enough to treat an entire 20 foot driveway!
3. **Sweep** Once the salt has done its job, sweep up the extra so you can reuse it for later storms - and prevent it from washing away.
4. **Switch** Salt doesn't work when the pavement temperature is 15 degrees or lower. Switch to sand or use a different deicer that works at low temperatures.

Hiring a snow removal contractor?

Choose a contractor who is certified through a winter salt certification program.

Find out about salt application courses from your state Department of Transportation or visit www.saltwatch.org!

Flyers



Advocacy Guide

Spanish Resources


Bonus: Letter to State Representative
(edit with your own experience and voice)

Dear Representative/Senator **[your rep's name]**,

Every winter, snowy weather creates dangerous conditions on our roads. Since the 1940s, communities across the U.S. have been spreading road salt on streets, sidewalks and parking lots to melt ice and create safer traveling conditions. Road salt is effective when used correctly, but we have fallen into a pattern of over-applying and misusing road salt in ways that have damaging side effects on wildlife, human health and the environment. I am asking that you work towards salt reduction in **[the name of your community/state]**.

Road salt inevitably ends up in our streams, rivers and lakes. USGS monitored 30 streams from 1960–2011 in Wisconsin, Illinois, Colorado, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Texas and the District of Columbia and found that 84 percent of those streams experienced high chloride concentrations due to road salt. And once road salt enters bodies of water, it is extremely difficult and expensive to remove; it's simply not feasible to filter it out at water treatment plants.

Road salt threatens our water quality in multiple ways, by contaminating drinking water, corroding pipes and leaching metals into our water. High levels of chloride are dangerous to human health, especially for people with pre-existing conditions such as high blood pressure. Chloride is also toxic to aquatic life and can degrade vegetation and soil. All told, our current road salt practices cost the U.S. $16–19 billion a year in damages.

It's possible to reduce salt usage without endangering travelers; some communities are already doing it. Minnesota, for example, has substantially reduced salt usage without seeing any loss of safety on the roads. They've accomplished this through strategies including training salt applicators in smarter salting practices, offering a smart-salting certification to professional applicators and private property owners, drafting model contracts between applicators and owners (https://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/smart-salting-training), and requiring applicators and manufacturers to properly store salt supplies.

[Your community/state] can take these steps too. By supporting smarter salting practices, you will be protecting water quality for generations of **[Marylanders/Iowans/etc.]** to come. Please **[insert specific action you want legislator to take: introduce a bill requiring smarter salting practices, co-sponsor an existing bill, etc.]**.

Sincerely,

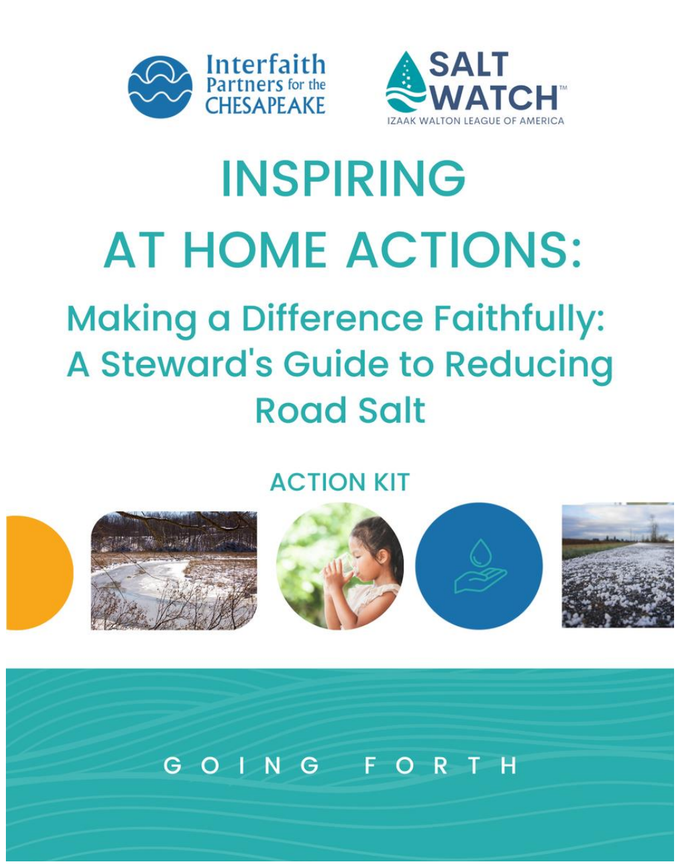
[Your Signature]

[Your Name]

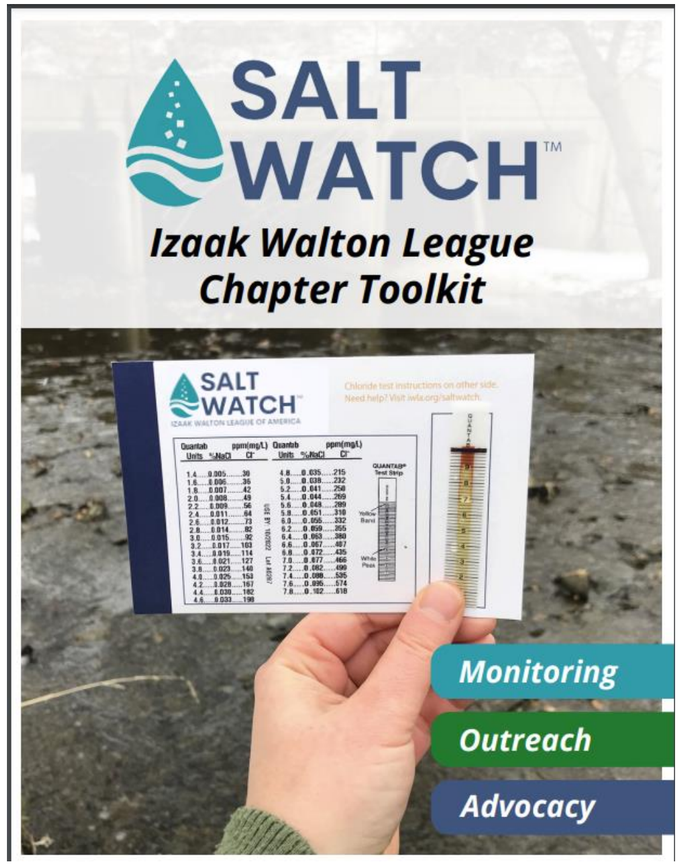
29

Template Letters

Toolkits



Faith-based Communities



IWLA Chapters

Paint the Plow

Salt Watch Resources

Check out the Resources Library!

www.saltwatch.org

Business Outreach

Virtual Webinars

Farmers Market Tabling

Regional Outreach Workgroups

SALT RESPONSIBLY

Visit:
www.saltwatch.org

Email:
saltwatch@iwla.org