

# The Blue-Green Connection

**Boston Light, Little Brewster Island:**  
*The quintessential New England lighthouse—a timeless symbol of the connection between people, land, and sea.*

When I was visiting my brother and sister-in-law in San Francisco a couple of years ago, they told me to only flush the toilet if it really needed to be flushed. *Really needed to be flushed?* What? I am afraid that I am like the neurotic lawyer, John Cage

on *Ally McBeal*, who flushed a toilet that had nothing in it before using it, explaining, “I like a clean bowl.” I am not and will most likely never be an “if it’s yellow let it mellow” person. But I do try to make up for this in other ways. I reuse my resealable snack bags. I keep a glass, a fork, and spoon at work so I don’t have to use disposable utensils or cups. I will go without coffee rather than buying it from any place that serves it in a styrofoam cup. And, when the weather is warm, I save water by turning off the shower for the three minutes that my conditioner takes to (allegedly) work. I recycle my paper products and I don’t put toxins down the drain. But I am very much living on the grid, and have no plans to live off it. Ever.

Climate change, global warming, and man-made environmental problems make headlines on a regular basis and have been the subject of debate in political and personal arenas for years. Regardless of where you stand on these issues, it is clear that life on land (and in the waters) as we have known it is changing. To see a connection between what we do on land impacting the world’s rivers, streams, and oceans, look no further than our bathrooms. Pharmaceutical and Personal Care Products as Pollutants (PPCPs)—i.e., prescription and over-the-counter drugs and products like shampoo and deodorant—end up in the nation’s waterbodies. Researchers believe that the growing phenomenon of gender mutations in some fish species, as well as increased fertility problems in humans, are a direct result of these PPCPs.

We are devoting this edition of *Coastlines* to exploring the blue-green connection. With more than six million people living in Massachusetts alone, never mind the rest of the globe, how can the actions of any one person really make a difference? Well, think about this: if everyone in the Bay State made an effort—even if it’s just with small things like switching to non-toxic cleaning products and using a travel mug for coffee and tea—all the combined efforts could make a difference. Less landfill space, fewer fish kills, cleaner beaches, healthier homes—with a bit of effort, all of these things are attainable. (See *30 Easy, Every Day Tips for a Greener, Bluer World* on page 38 and *Real People Redefining Reduce, Reuse, Recycle* on page 54 for some ideas to add to your routine, or get started with one.) In the words of musician and eco-activist Sting (aka Gordon Sumner), “If you really want to define ‘civilization,’ it should be a culture that doesn’t destroy its own environment.” I’m sure the fish would agree.

Arden Miller  
Editor, *Coastlines*

