

Healthy Waters

Healthy Communities



The Power of Countywide Action Planning

The Pennsylvania Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) taps into the power of local solutions to lower nutrient and sediment pollution in Pennsylvania's streams, rivers, and lakes. County partners have teamed up across Pennsylvania's Chesapeake Bay watershed in path-breaking collaborations to develop Countywide Action Plans (CAPs) and carry out best management practices (BMPs) that contribute to a collective impact. By working closely with county partners and utilizing the CAPs they have created, state and federal partners are identifying trends and responding to needs and recommendations to help drive progress. This synergy of mutual accountability and support has set Pennsylvania well on its way to achieving its pollutant reduction goals and bringing the benefits of healthy waters to our communities.

For more detailed information about Pennsylvania's Countywide Action Plans, visit www.dep.pa.gov/pacountywideactionplans

Common Trends and Needs Identified by County Partners

Taking a holistic approach to clean water requires changing roles, new and innovative approaches, and more collaboration and flexibility.

Funding:

- Dedicated funding is needed.
- Improved state and federal grant coordination and timing are needed. Counties need more block grants and more ability to fit grants together to start projects promptly and keep them moving.

Workforce Creation:

- Establish and fund a workforce program to train specialized staff and ensure positions are filled. Needs:
 - ◇ An "army" of trained CAP champions—people who can help at every stage of the process: reach out and engage landowners, provide one-on-one assistance, and lead landowners through a holistic approach to clean water.
 - ◇ Flexibility and creativity in who can do the work (e.g., BMP verification, engineering, technical assistance).
 - ◇ People to do grant coordination and administration.

Data Reporting and Verification:

- Data reporting should be simplified, ideally into a one-stop-shop format.
- Back-reporting is important: BMPs need to be entered into the PracticeKeeper system to give agriculture credit for what's already been done but not yet counted.
- Federal coordination to address Section 1619/NRCS data privacy is needed.
- Bay Model reporting and BMP crediting should be improved:
 - ◇ To better capture what's on the ground.
 - ◇ To reflect Pennsylvania water quality data and trends.
 - ◇ To provide sufficient credit for some BMPs—acid mine drainage remediation, mushroom farming, horse farm pasture management, commodity cover crops, nutrient trading, others.
 - ◇ To accurately estimate volumes/loads from combined sewer overflow systems.
- BMP verification faces challenges:
 - ◇ More technology is needed to manage the scale of BMP verification.
 - ◇ Staffing is limited.
 - ◇ Standards should be simplified.



County Highlights: Progress in Action in Pennsylvania's Chesapeake Bay Watershed

There are hundreds of County level clean water efforts in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed underway. This work is being accomplished through strategic partnerships and a willingness by local stakeholders to get outside and get dirty to get practices on the ground.

- ◇ Pursuing stream-delisting strategies in priority areas to enlist multiple landowners with connected sections of a stream to install a variety of best management practices (BMPs) at the same time.
- ◇ Prioritizing small restoration areas with a special emphasis on Section 319 watershed grant projects (present and future).
- ◇ Developing incentive programs, such as nutrient management, buffer bonuses and equipment rental discounts for farmers who report BMPs.
- ◇ Monitoring water quality at local level.
- ◇ Promoting and expanding dirt and gravel road programs.
- ◇ Supporting whole-farm restoration projects that maximize nutrient reductions and help the farm.
- ◇ Promoting and expanding cover crop/no till programs.
- ◇ Developing soil sampling programs/kits with a focus on the 4Rs of soil health: Right fertilizer source at the right rate, at the right time, and in the right place.
- ◇ Expanding work within one mile of municipal stormwater areas.
- ◇ Expanding streambank fencing programs.
- ◇ Increasing public awareness by highlighting recreation and public access to healthy waters.
- ◇ Working on more acid mine drainage projects and improving reporting.
- ◇ Merging CAPs with county hazard mitigation plans, with special emphasis on buffers to assist with flooding issues.
- ◇ Developing urban nutrient/fertilizer planning programs.
- ◇ Discussing local ordinances to reduce stormwater and wastewater impacts, such as low impact development, increased pervious surfaces, and septic and sewer improvements.
- ◇ Building and strengthening coalitions by increasing education, engagement, and outreach to a larger and more diverse circle of stakeholders.

Programmatic Recommendations from County Partners

How state and federal action leaders can help countywide teams reach their clean water goals.

Incentives and Technical Assistance:

- Expand funding opportunities for regional technical assistance and engineering positions to support CAP priority initiatives.
- Expand flexible block grant allocation-based funding programs.
- Provide dedicated Act 537 Sewage Facilities funding.
- Support and increase funding for Act 167 Stormwater Management.
- Improve wellhead protection and prioritize funding for BMP implementation or land acquisition where it would benefit groundwater protection.
- Consider tax incentives statewide for BMP implementation and support legislative action that would provide landowners a tax credit for long-term BMP implementation.
- Reinstigate and provide funding for the DEP streambank fencing program and support legislative action to revise Clean Streams Law to allow for regulatory agencies to require fencing along streams.

BMP Verification and Monitoring Assessment:

- Expand the Penn State Voluntary Producer/Farmer Survey to document non-cost-shared BMPs.
- Promote and institute data sharing between federal and state agencies.
- Integrate state and federal monitoring data and trends into modeling tools to capture real on-the-ground efforts.
- Continue to improve and merge statewide tracking and reporting tools to yield real-time progress tracking.
- Expand the types of BMPs that receive credit.

Accelerate Project Implementation:

- Continue education and outreach to promote water quality efforts to the public, local governments, and agricultural integrators and producers.
- Support nutrient reduction efficiencies associated with dirt, gravel and low volume road implementation.
- Set requirements for fertilizer application and professional applicator training and certification through legislative action.
- Support expanded definition of cover crops to include other successful, accepted approaches that are working in Pennsylvania.
- Encourage manure transport to abandoned mine lands to aid in natural succession.
- Offer more flexible permitting.

