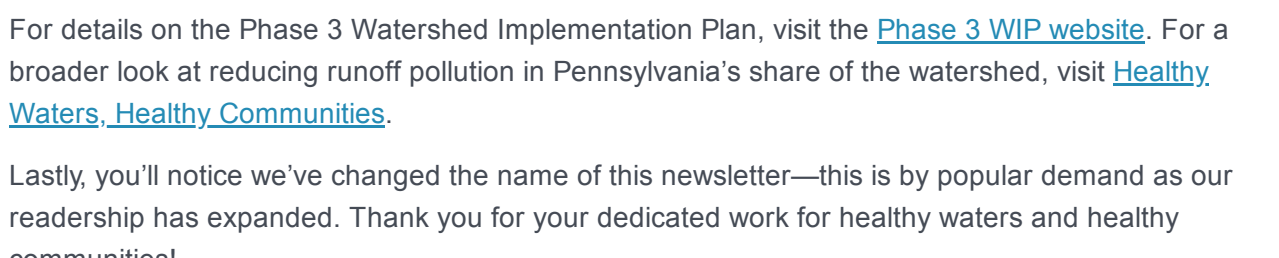


# HEALTHY WATERS

*Pennsylvania. Partnership. Progress*



March/April 2021

## Hello partners for water quality!

We have much news to share on the progress that state, local, and sector partners are making to reduce nutrient and sediment pollution and improve water quality in Pennsylvania's share of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Please consider how you might help support this work. And share this newsletter (or the [subscribe page](#)) with your networks to help spread the word.

For details on the Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan, visit the [Phase 3 WIP website](#). For a broader look at reducing runoff pollution in Pennsylvania's share of the watershed, visit [Healthy Waters, Healthy Communities](#).

Lastly, you'll notice we've changed the name of this newsletter—this is by popular demand as our readership has expanded. Thank you for your dedicated work for healthy waters and healthy communities!

— DEP Chesapeake Bay Office

## State Action Leaders and Partners

[State action leaders](#) guide Phase 3 WIP implementation, review and revise milestones as needed, and support countywide implementation efforts. They're champions for clean water choices and best management practice (BMP) education and installation. The Phase 3 WIP has many partners who are helping move implementation forward.

## National Fish and Wildlife Foundation 2020 grants fund Plain Sect clean water demonstration farm and more Pennsylvania projects

In February, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), announced approximately \$1.2 million in funding for eight Pennsylvania projects by local governments and partners that will improve rivers and streams that connect to the Chesapeake Bay. These funds will generate more than \$2.2 million in matching contributions, for a total impact of nearly \$3.4 million. [Check out all the great projects here](#). A few highlights:

- Restoring a tributary of Codorus Creek in York County to remove more than a half million pounds of sediment per year.
- Restoring the floodplain of the Conoweg Creek and its tributary, Brills Run, in Londonderry and Mount Joy townships (Dauphin and Lancaster counties) to reduce the annual sediment load by 1,524 tons.
- Expanding a cover crop incentive program on farms in Cumberland County.
- Installing animal waste management facilities and barnyard runoff controls as part of a Plain Sect Clean Water Demonstration Farm in Paradise Township, Lancaster County.

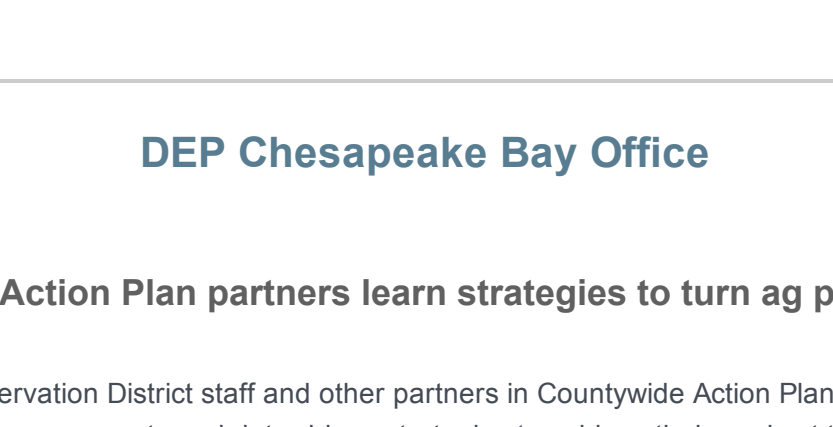
## Pennsylvania's Farmland Preservation Program

Pennsylvania safeguarded 2,370 acres on 26 farms in 16 counties statewide in 2021 through the Farmland Preservation Program of the state Department of Agriculture. Twelve of these counties are located in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, totaling 1,901 acres of preserved farmland. Notable preservations include:

- The Lobaugh Farm, a 27.49-acre crop farm, which supports the larger "Ber-Crk Farms" dairy operation. This small but productive Adams County tract provides valuable hay and corn for feed.
- The Feusner Farm, a 343.99-acre beef operation located in Bradford County. The farm borders a picturesque lake used for recreation and has significant road frontage, making it a target for residential development pressures. The family is committed to conservation and wants to see the farm protected for future generations.

[Find more information on the farms preserved here](#).

Preserved farms, which include crop, cattle, sheep, goat and dairy operations, are protected from future residential, commercial, or industrial development. Since 1988, the Farmland Preservation Program has purchased permanent conservation easements on 5,869 Pennsylvania farms, covering 596,827 acres, in 59 counties, leading the nation in farm preservation. For more information about the program, please go to the [Farmland Preservation Program page](#).



## Pennsylvania's Conservation Reserve and Enhancement Program helps enroll over 1,000 acres in 2020

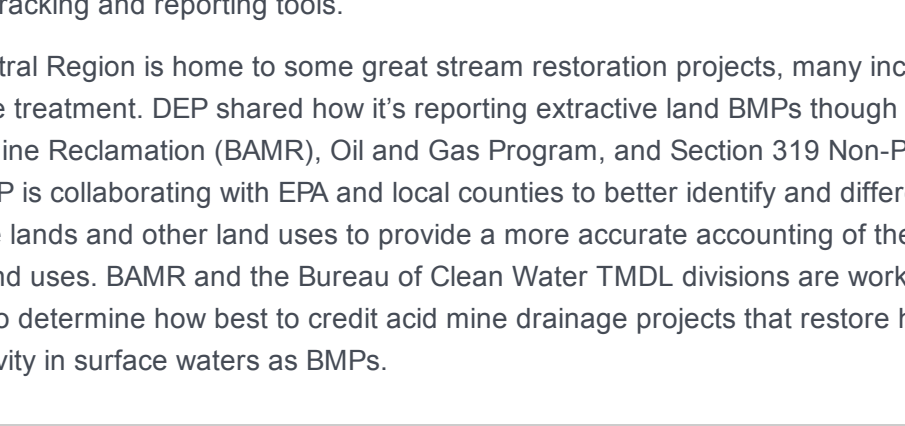
The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency (FSA) funds conservation practices to benefit water quality and wildlife habitat of highly erodible and marginal lands. DEP supplements this federal 50 percent practice cost-share payment by reimbursing farmers up to another 50 percent of the cost or up to the maximum per acre rate for installing conservation practices and maintaining streambank buffers. To receive DEP's cost-share, farmers must install streambank buffers at least 50 feet in width.

FSA data from 2020 show more than 85,000 acres currently enrolled in Pennsylvania's CREP program in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Below is a breakdown of the enrolled acreage and annual load reductions achieved in 2020.

### 2020 Achievements: Chesapeake Bay CREP

Total acres enrolled	New enrollment acres	Re-enrollment acres	Sediment reduced (tons/year)	Nitrogen reduced (pounds/year)	Phosphorus reduced (pounds/year)
85,490	1,049.3	4,025.5	39,206	1,921,332	102,813

*Estimates calculated using FSA data and loading rates and reduction coefficients based on the Chesapeake Bay Watershed model.*



*A streambank buffer planted on a farm in Pennsylvania*

## Chesapeake Bay Watershed Conservation Initiative helps take agriculture best management practices up a notch

Using grant funds awarded by DEP, the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts has provided a 25 percent cost-share through its Clean Bay Watershed Initiative to fund county conservation district agricultural technician positions in Phase 3 WIP Pilot and Tier 2 counties. The objectives of this initiative are to implement agricultural contracts and install agricultural best management practices over and above what is planned by the Commonwealth's other agricultural programs. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides the additional 75 percent cost share.

## DEP Chesapeake Bay Office

### Countywide Action Plan partners learn strategies to turn ag planning into ag action

Nearly 200 Conservation District staff and other partners in Countywide Action Plan implementation learned how to use grassroots and data-driven strategies to achieve their goals at the virtual 2021 Ag Meeting on March 16-17, hosted by DEP and the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts. They learned how farm visits and inspections can build partnerships and lead to new projects; the importance of messaging; how to use DEP's Integrated Water Quality Report tools; what Lancaster and Huntingdon Counties' stream delisting strategies are; how to use PracticeKeeper reports and Data Explorer to target agricultural outreach and implementation; what funding sources are available for agricultural projects, and other topics.

### Pilot and Tier 2 counties kick off "Year of Action"

The DEP Chesapeake Bay Office met individually with the eight Tier 1 and 2 counties to kick off their "Year of Action." Discussions focused on short, middle, and long-term goals and key areas of focus for implementing their Countywide Action Plans:

- Applying for and utilizing CAP Implementation Grant funding
- Applying for and utilizing Conservation Excellence Grant funding
- Project tracking spreadsheets
- Data management and reporting
- Priority watershed engagement and outreach
- Building partnerships and action teams

Throughout 2021, the Chesapeake Bay Office will continue to meet with these county CAP partners as they work to accelerate implementation of their plans.

### Tier 3-4 Counties

The Chesapeake Bay Office hosted the first virtual Coordinator Training Academy for Countywide Action Plan coordinators and local participants in the Tier 3-4 counties on March 4-5. Over 80 people attended this training, which provided information, skill building, tools, and connections to key people that coordinators and other county partners need to be successful in developing realistic Countywide Action Plans driven by their counties' priorities.

## Reporting and Data

DEP CBO presented at the February 18 Northcentral Roundtable for the Tier 3 and 4 counties on the technical aspects of reporting best management practices (BMPs) to the DEP Chesapeake Bay Office for subsequent reporting to EPA. The presentation covered the who, what, when, and how BMPs are reported to DEP. The electronic platforms PracticeKeeper and FieldDoc were highlighted as important tracking and reporting tools.

The Northcentral Region is home to some of the great stream restoration projects, many incorporating acid mine drainage treatment. DEP shared how it's reporting extractive land BMPs through our Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation (BAMR), Oil and Gas Program, and Section 319 Non-Point Source Program. DEP is collaborating with EPA and local counties to better identify and differentiate between mine lands and other land uses to provide a more accurate accounting of the nutrient load from those land uses. BAMR and the Bureau of Clean Water TMDL divisions are working to "follow the science" to determine how best to credit acid mine drainage projects that restore healthy biological activity in surface waters as BMPs.

## Funding Sources

### Small Watershed Grants available from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

NFWF is soliciting proposals under the Small Watershed Grants (SWG) program for projects within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed that promote community-based efforts to protect and restore the diverse natural resources of the bay and its tributary rivers and streams. NFWF estimates awarding \$8-10 million in grants, contingent on the availability of funding.

Implementation Grants of \$50,000 to \$500,000 will be awarded for projects that result in direct, on-the-ground actions to protect and restore water quality, species, and habitats in the watershed.

Planning and Technical Assistance grants up to \$50,000 will be awarded for projects that enhance local capacity to more efficiently and effectively implement future on-the-ground actions through assessment, planning, design, and other technical assistance-oriented activities.

**Deadline:** Full proposals must be submitted through NFWF's Easygrants system no later than Thursday, April 22. For more information, contact Jake Reilly at [jake.reilly@nfwf.org](mailto:jake.reilly@nfwf.org) or (202) 857-0166.

### Funding available for a variety of projects from Commonwealth Financing Authority

The Commonwealth Financing Authority is accepting applications for grants funded by Act 13 drilling impact fees for a variety of water quality improvement and outdoor recreation-related projects:

- Watershed Restoration:** Funds for projects that restore and maintain restored stream reaches impaired by the uncontrolled discharge of nonpoint source polluted runoff, and ultimately to remove these streams from DEP's Impaired Waters list.
- Abandoned Mine Drainage Abatement and Treatment:** Funds for projects that involve the reclamation of abandoned mine well(s), construction of a new AMD site, remediation and repair of existing AMD project sites, operation and maintenance maintaining current AMD remediation sites, establishment of a trust fund to ensure ongoing maintenance, and monitoring of water quality to track or continue to trace nonpoint source load reductions resulting from AMD remediation projects.
- Orphan or Abandoned Well Plugging Program:** Funds to clean out and vent abandoned and orphaned oil and gas wells, stray gas mitigation systems, and well plugging projects.
- Baseline Water Quality Data:** Funds for water sample collection and analysis to document existing groundwater quality conditions on private water supplies.
- Sewage Facilities Program:** Covers costs associated with the planning work required under Act 537 Sewage Facilities Act.
- Flood Mitigation:** Projects authorized by a flood protection authority, DEP, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, or identified by a local government for flood mitigation are eligible for the program.
- Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program:** Projects that involve development, rehabilitation and improvements to public parks, recreation areas, greenways, trails and river conservation.

Applicants are strongly urged to contact their local legislators to ask for endorsement of their application.

**Deadline:** May 31. For more information, visit [Commonwealth Financing Authority Act 13 Programs](#) or call 717-787-6245.

## County Progress

### Tier 1-2

#### Bedford County: Identifying Projects for Upcoming CAP Implementation Funds

The Bedford Countywide Action Plan team is finalizing details for the CAP Implementation funds, including details for the schedule, timeline, grant contract steps, etc. for a three-phased funding approach. Phase 1 is for Partner Assistance Projects intended for shovel-ready or active projects in need of some additional money in order to get them in the ground in 2021 (decisions on Phase 1 projects will be made by the end of March); Phase 2 is for Demonstration Projects that are identified through the CAP Action Teams and priority will be for projects that can get in the ground in 2021 (the proposed project list for Phase 2 will be finalized by the end of March and project selection will be made by April 15th); and Phase 3 is for Sub-Grant Projects that anyone in the county can apply for (the RFP for this will be released and distributed around April 1 with applications due on April 25th and decisions made by April 30).

The Bedford CAP Action Teams continue to identify potential projects for 2021 and beyond; organize outreach efforts and distribute materials; and work with county partners to capture existing BMPs that are currently absent from the CAP.

#### Centre County: Helping municipalities report stormwater management practices

The Centre Countywide Action Plan team presented their completed plan to their municipalities. Some municipalities indicated they are interested in being prepared for potential future MS4 stormwater management compliance. The CAP team is working with them to develop protocols to report existing BMPs, which will set them up for future compliance.

The Moshannon Creek Watershed Association is partnering with the CAP team to take the lead on acid mine drainage efforts on the western side of the county. The Moshannon Creek Watershed covers parts of Centre and Clearfield Counties, and the association is developing projects in both counties. The association is interested in creating a study area to track nitrogen and how it relates to AMD clean-up efforts.

The Regional Planning Council of Governments has a climate action initiative that includes several water quality goals. The CAP Coordinator is working to align this climate initiative with the CAP water quality goals to maximize results for both.

#### Cumberland County: Building partnerships for plan implementation

The Cumberland Countywide Action Plan coordinator has been presenting to several groups, including the Planning Commission, MS4 workgroup, and the South Mountain Partnership, to involve them in plan implementation. The county is focusing on BMP remote sensing, and is partnering with NRCS in this initiative.

As part of the CAP team, Gordon Hoover with Lancaster Farmland Trust is continuing farm visits to encourage participation in water quality initiatives.

County staff are creating a web-based map to track visits and phone calls with farmers and other landowners. The CAP team is working with the county communications department to discuss options to develop a "Clean Water Cumberland" brand this year.

#### Franklin County: Successful outreach to ag industry professionals

[Clean Water for Franklin County](#) (CWFC) is excited to report that the county clean water coordinator and Conservation District staff held their first Agricultural Industry Meeting on February 19.

Ag industry professionals learned about nutrient reduction goals and best management practices (BMPs). They also learned about a variety of funding sources to support farmers in their efforts to reduce nutrient runoff pollution. Participants earned educational credits from Penn State Extension and left with informational handouts on nutrient reduction and BMPs to share with colleagues and clients. The event was successful in expanding conversation around clean water work, and CWFC hopes to hold similar events in the future.

CWFC has been hard at work getting BMPs constructed on the ground and finding monetary resources to assist with costs. The Conservation District was recently awarded [two PACD nonpoint source adult education grants](#) and just finished accepting applications for the [Conservation Excellence Grant Program funds](#).

#### Lancaster County: Success story for the House at Climber's Run

[Lancaster Clean Water Partners](#) is accepting applications for 2021 Clean Water Fund Grants to help municipalities and nonprofits with stream restoration, farm conservation, and stormwater management projects. [Click here for information on applying for funding](#).

#### Rapid Stream De-Listing Initiative

The Lancaster Clean Water Initiative and Countywide Action Plan team continue work on their rapid stream de-listing initiative. They're focusing on BMPs and outreach in identified priority areas to accelerate progress on clean water improvement goals. As part of the initiative, the county is exploring watershed-scale project collaborations to increase sediment and nutrient reductions, and we continue to see progress with the strategy from both an agricultural and a stormwater perspective. The work the partners have done since the fall has resulted in a coordinated approach this spring in outreach to landowners in Tier 1 catchments, as well as a way to align the best funding opportunities with the best projects to boost water quality improvement results.

Lancaster shared the delisting strategy with multiple audiences through online events in February and March, as it's getting a lot of positive attention.

#### Grant-Funded Success: The House at Climber's Run

The arrival of spring has meant that CAP reseeded, tree plantings, and green infrastructure projects that began in 2020 are wrapping up. Here is a recent success story:

The owners of the [House at Climber's Run](#), a retreat center and rental space, used to dread heavy rain, because it meant the stream on their property would flood, causing significant erosion, safety concerns, and increased pollution. Because the property is in a valley, the water could rise four to five feet in a single rainfall.

[Donegal Trout Unlimited](#) offered a solution – stream restoration and riparian buffer plantings to strengthen the streambanks, reduce erosion, and provide a lush forested area with clean water for their guests. DTU came to Lancaster Clean Water Partners with the idea for the project. Not only would it reduce streambank erosion at the retreat center, but it would also connect four contiguous projects along the stream in southern Lancaster County.

With dollars from the Lancaster County Community Foundation's Clean Water Fund, LCWPF was able to grant DTU enough funding support to restore 1,530 linear feet of stream and plant 2.45 acres of riparian buffers.

Restoring the stream and planting native trees and shrubs has already proved successful, with the property owners reporting less flooding and loss of land. Now all guests, and especially families with children, who stay at the House at Climber's Run can enjoy a lush, green space where it's safe to be in the water and perfect to reconnect with nature.

#### Lebanon County: Setting sights on Upper Hammer watershed

Now that the Countywide Action Plan has been written, Lebanon County is excited to be transitioning to implementation. To kickstart implementation, the county is developing a watershed-wide plan of action for the Upper Hammer watershed.

The CAP Data Management Action Team is collaborating with county GIS staff to create a database to track projects and funding. Making the connection between funding sources and potential/interested landowners will aid the county in its implementation goals. Also, you can now learn more about and get involved with the Lebanon County CAP on their new [website](#) and [Facebook page](#)!

#### York County: Agriculture outreach catapults into action

York County's Data Management and Education and Outreach action teams, as well as county IT staff, are working on a template and guide for unreported BMPs that will help the county collect currently unreported, non-agricultural BMP data to be entered into FieldDoc. This is important because there are potentially many unreported projects across the County that homeowners, business owners, municipalities, and more have implemented for water quality. Credit for that work is deserved. The efforts of the Data Management and Education and Outreach action teams will be quintessential in the success of finding these unreported projects.

The decision was made to join two locally strong groups—York County Coalition for Clean Waters and the Watershed Alliance of York—together for a purposeful rebranding.

York County Planning Commission was recently awarded funding from the York County Community Foundation Ag and Codorus Endowment Committees. The funding supports development of a pilot ag outreach program in a targeted part of the Codorus Watershed in York County. The funding also supports a part-time ag outreach specialist position, as well as \$1,000 vouchers for 10 farmers to receive guidance from an agribusiness advisor on implementing ag BMPs on their farm.

York County Conservation District in partnership with Watershed Alliance of York has kicked off a pilot ag BMP data collection program. We are beginning this pilot program with four MS4 municipalities and will focus on gathering PracticeKeeper data while also assisting with education, outreach, and technical assistance to landowners.

Action has been immediate: Planting of a six-acre and more than 10,000 tree riparian buffer at Horn Farm began on April 11.

### Tier 3-4

#### Union County: Native wetland reestablished

Union County Conservation District partnered with Donald H. Eichhorn Middle and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to reestablish a native wetland habitat next to the middle school in Lewisburg. Project benefits include:

- Slowing down the stormwater runoff from school roofs and parking lots;
- Filtering pollutants out of runoff water;
- Allowing rain to absorb naturally back into the ground;
- Benefiting pollinators;
- Provide an outdoor learning area for lessons on soil awareness, food webs, predator-prey relationships, and scientific method;
- Promote cross-curriculum educational opportunities, such as art and writing.

The group received a DEP Growing Greener grant in early 2019, wetland construction occurred in fall 2019, and the native buffer was installed in spring 2020 with trees and shrubs donated by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation as part of its Keystone 10 Million Trees initiative.



*Throughout the pandemic, we have seen vividly how crucial our farms are for food in our stores and on our tables. Ensuring that farms stay farms instead of becoming warehouses or parking lots is an investment in all of our futures, and one of the most effective partnerships among farmers and government at every level.*

- Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding on the Farmland Preservation Program



Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, 400 Market Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101



Share this email:

Manage your preferences | Opt out using TrueRemove™  
Got this as a forward? Sign up to receive our future emails.  
View this email online.

400 Market Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17101 US

This email was sent to:  
To continue receiving our emails, add us to your address book.

[Subscribe](#) to our email list.