

PA Clean Water Gathering 2025 Action Gets Traction

Growing Connections and Commitments

On January 23, 2025, Pennsylvania's second annual Clean Water Gathering brought together more than 120 dedicated individuals—ranging from state agency and county action leaders to policymakers and community partners—all united by a shared commitment to protect and restore the Commonwealth's waterways.

Championing Strategies for Clean Water

This action-driven summit built on the momentum generated in October 2023 by unveiling 25 Strategies for Success, detailed recommendations developed in 2024 by over 60 contributors who collectively devoted 1,000 hours to strengthen Pennsylvania's clean water progress.

Leaders from the Departments of Environmental Protection, Conservation and Natural Resources, and Agriculture took the stage to champion these strategies, promising to support innovative funding solutions and grow the conservation workforce.

Their pledges, echoed by Senator Scott Martin and Representative Nikki Rivera, underscored the state's resolve to achieve meaningful, long-term protection for local streams, rivers, and the vast Chesapeake Bay watershed. By embracing a collaborative, community-focused approach, the Gathering affirmed that Pennsylvania's success will hinge on steady partnership and deliberate action at every level—urban to rural, local to statewide.

Next Steps

- DEP's Bureau of Watershed Restoration and Nonpoint Source Management (BWRNSM) will facilitate action teams around the 25 Strategies for Success.
- BWRNSM will provide quarterly status updates, spotlighting key milestones, celebrating successes, and identifying any barriers to progress.
- The state will pursue dedicated, flexible funding initiatives to spur local and regional projects—essential for everything from infrastructure improvements to workforce expansion.
- Policymakers and agencies aim to bolster staffing and training programs, to actively support local clean water efforts.



"I think the key to success is learning to be okay with change...this is our opportunity to be more open to different suggestions, possibilities, and ideas." - Erica Tomlinson, Tioga County Conservation District Manager



"Pennsylvania's clean water successes are rooted in collaboration—state, local, federal, non-governmental partners, landowners—everyone is rowing in the same direction. Without that, we wouldn't be where we are today."
- Jill Whitcomb, PADEP



Strategies for Success

Theme 1: Use digital tools to support funding decisions and streamline grant application and administration.

1. Develop a centralized funding decision support tool.
2. Develop a single grant application and management portal for state and federal grants.
3. Use a public-facing website to educate and assist applicants and sub-awardees on federal and state funding requirements and other project resources.

Theme 2: Streamline best management practices.

4. Streamline and standardize re-verification of best management practices.

Theme 3: Research ways to improve programs, partnerships, project support and hiring.

5. Survey funding agencies on program flexibility.
6. Conduct a gap assessment of engineering providers to determine areas of improvement.
7. Assess partnerships in PA's Chesapeake Bay watershed region for potential private-public partnership.
8. Analyze environmental workforce.
9. Analyze environmental job advertisements.
10. Analyze hiring practices at the organizational level.
11. Survey existing educational resources.
12. Survey county partners to find what kind of regional staff would be the most helpful.
13. Review program specific reporting requirements.

Theme 4: Advocate for adequate and consistent funding to support clean water project implementation.

14. Provide stable, multi-year funding for project installation.
15. Provide stable funding to support engineering programs.
16. Provide additional funding to county partners for grant-related administrative staff.
17. Partner with banks to provide capital in advance to partners.

Theme 5: Form a workgroup or develop a network to support clean water project implementation.

18. Form a workgroup to evaluate changes in Act 367.
19. Create new regionalized county conservation district staff positions.
20. Form a workgroup to address block permitting.
21. Create a consistent knowledge base across state agencies and local/regional partners for project funding.
22. Strengthen peer to peer knowledge sharing.
23. Expand network of engineers capable of working in the field of conservation and agricultural engineering.

Theme 6: Enable and encourage leadership and staff development.

24. Refresh and update current leadership training modules.
25. Prioritize cross training at county conservation districts.