

Clean Water Action Plan Summary

Lycoming County

Introduction

Clean water is important to the people who live and work in Lycoming County. The Lycoming County Countywide Action Plan (CAP) reflects this priority and lays out a strategy for reducing pollution in county waters by 2025. The Lycoming CAP was written to tie county efforts to the statewide goals in Pennsylvania's Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP3). The main focus of the CAP is reducing phosphorus and nitrogen pollution in local waters. Steps taken to reduce those pollutants will also keep other types of pollution out of our waters. The Lycoming County Planning and Community Development Department (PCD) and the Lycoming County Conservation District (LCCD) teamed up to lead this effort.

To be successful, the CAP team will have to overcome some obstacles. The county has limited funds and capacity. Creativity will be required to increase staff capacity and find the funding to do the work the CAP requires. There are organizations with a clean water focus in the county who are enthusiastic about the CAP, but their work tends to be highly localized. Fortunately, the CAP provides a framework for coordinating their efforts across the county. In addition, the CAP team will look beyond county borders to identify partners with shared clean water goals.

As a partner on the clean water path, **the CAP identifies some ways the state can help make a difference.**



Specifically by making some changes to current statewide regulations. County landowners have a role in cleaner water, too. Much of the plan's success hinges on their willingness to make some changes in the way they manage their land that will keep nutrients out of the water and soil in its place.

Plan Highlights

Over 150 stakeholders helped develop the CAP! Their input led to the projects, programs, and initiatives in the plan. This group includes: Federal, State, and local governments, non-profit groups, colleges, and other environmental/conservation entities. Projects were included in the CAP based on how well they reduced nutrient loading (directly or indirectly).

Priority Initiative 1: Achieve Pollution Reduction Goals (these projects work directly toward TMDL reductions).

- A. Agriculture
 - a. Increase cover crop BMPs
 - b. Soil conservation and water quality plans
 - c. Animal waste management systems
 - d. Increase rotational/prescribed grazing
 - e. Increase no-till/conservation tillage BMPs

- f. Increase buffer BMPs
- g. Ag nutrient management
- h. Implement NRCS projects
- B. Developed/Urban
 - a. Turf field nutrient management
 - b. Green infrastructure, buffers, and plantings
 - c. Dirt and gravel roads
- C. Natural
 - a. Stream/streambank restoration
- b. Floodplain restoration
- c. Trout Unlimited projects
- d. Sylvan Dell improvements
- e. Pine Creek Valley improvements
- f. Municipal park improvements
- g. Trail/greenway projects
- h. Trail and boat access sites/parking lot improvements
- i. Northcentral PA Conservancy projects

Priority Initiative 2: Coordination, Education, Outreach, and Training (these projects re-enforce projects that directly reduce TMDL's).

- A. Outreach and Education
 - a. Use County Farm for education – BMP tours
 - b. Use County Farm for education – Annual field days
 - c. Attend events and increase in-person outreach to increase BMPs
 - d. Expand social media presence to increase BMPs
- e. Expand existing resources and technical assistance
- f. Expand inter-agency collaboration
- g. Reduce fertilizer use – School outreach, landowner outreach, and business/nonprofit outreach
- B. Research and Training
 - a. Improve County stormwater training

Priority Initiative 3: Reporting and Tracking (these projects help improve reporting systems and cross-sector efficiency).

- A. Increase planning efficiency, reduce duplicative work, and to better target and coordinate projects - Establish project map at county level, improve project tracking, watershed/wetland tracking
- B. Maintain an ag operator list
- C. Turf field Nutrient Management – Tracking

Priority Initiative 4: Programmatic, Policy, and Regulatory Changes (these projects include high-level policy changes that systematically help reduce TMDL's).

- A. Reassess parking requirements in ordinances to reduce the amount of impervious surface
- B. Reassess stormwater ordinances
- C. Stormwater Ordinance update (Act 167)
- D. Integrate Hazard Mitigation Plan Update
- E. Continue MS4 Programs
- F. Improve planning effectiveness and efficiency

Key Findings:

- Heavy emphasis on education and outreach, and building off of work that is already being done
- Establishing and improving collaborative partnerships is a strong theme
- Resources that will increase capacity are requested
- Local, State, and Federal policy recommendations that could improve project efficiency and effectiveness are requested

Opportunities for Success

To reach our CAP goals, Lycoming County will work beyond our borders, reaching across county lines to work with our neighbors and achieve success.

Good communication is key to the success of the Lycoming County CAP. CAP outreach will emphasize how we can all work together to keep pollution out of our precious shared resource: water.

With cleaner water comes improved quality of life for everyone who lives and works in Lycoming County. This aligns well with a similar goal in the County Comprehensive Plan. It also benefits our neighbors downstream. In addition, it provides a way for local watershed groups to rally around a common mission, and work together to reach shared goals. In the long run, the CAP, and all the work it includes, may lead to the creation of a countywide organization focused on clean water and related conservation efforts.



We will maximize our efforts by following a synergistic approach to clean water. Clean water goals fit well within comprehensive plans, open space and greenway planning, and model ordinance development. In addition, stormwater management could benefit from a more holistic perspective at the state level.

Counties across Pennsylvania are part of the WIP3, and are working on similar clean water plans. As we (the WIP3 counties) move forward, there is an opportunity to share successes and lessons learned for the benefit of all. Importantly, sharing real-world experiences with highly successful nutrient reduction programs can help everyone reach their goals more quickly and efficiently.

Challenges to Implementation

Several factors need to be addressed to reach our county goals, including, but not limited to:

- Technical assistance;
- Reliable data; and
- Funding.

During the development of the plan there has been much discussion on:

- What has been done;
- What needs to be done; and
- How to get it done in order to measure success.

One of the biggest challenges we face is uncertainty about what the current conditions on the ground really are. Unfortunately, not all of the best management practices and other pollution reduction efforts in the county are documented. This means there are gaps in the data used to formulate the plan, and plan goals. We have proposed ways to account for this in the Lycoming CAP, but even those steps are costly and will take a lot of work to complete.

The 2025 nitrogen and phosphorus reduction goals are very ambitious and the timeline is short for reaching them. This does not leave much time for the state to do the work it needs to do to help the counties move forward at the local level.

Legislation may be needed in order to make it possible for counties to achieve their goals. This can be a slow and cumbersome process. It will take a significant amount of funds targeted at impactful projects to significantly lower pollution in the WIP3 target counties. To make all this happen, a comprehensive structure

will need to be set up at the state level to coordinate the WIP3 across all 43 counties. While some of this is in the works, more still needs to be done.

Finally, it will take time to hire and train staff members to carry out the plan. The county and state goals have a target date of 2025. Realistically, it may take longer to reach the goals. It is likely that the initiative itself will need to be ongoing in order to maintain the reduced pollution levels once they are reached. To do this best management practices (BMPs) will need to be maintained and replaced and farmers' changing needs and circumstances will have to be accounted for.

Conclusion

The Lycoming County CAP team will work closely with PA DEP to meet our shared clean water goals. The



Lycoming County CAP provides a way for stakeholders to lead and take part in local clean water projects. We expect more county environmental plans to include clean water efforts in the future. The CAP will be successful through ongoing work with: local, state, and federal government agencies, the agricultural community, private businesses, and non-profit organizations.

Clean water is good for everyone. The Lycoming County CAP will improve the quality of life for all who live and work here. The initiative will work across organizations and communities, aiding success by sharing resources and knowledge. **Expected benefits include:**

- Improving local water quality
- Reducing flooding
- Enriching partnerships
- Supporting farmers
- Bolstering the local and regional economy
- Leveraging funding opportunities
- Avoiding regulations and higher costs for compliance

Reaching our goals will be easier with support from the whole community. As part of this effort we will spread the word about the steps each of us can take to keep local waters clean and soil in its place.

Ultimately, we will find success through a series of steps at both the state and local levels: changes to state regulations, new clean water focused partner driven programs, new staff ready to lead clean water tasks, and funding or incentives for installing BMPs. Through cooperation, outreach, and partnerships we will reach our goals, and those who live and work in Lycoming County will enjoy the many benefits cleaner water brings.

All projects and planning materials, meeting information, newsletters, and stakeholder resources can be found on our web page here: <https://www.lyco.org/CWAP>. For questions, contact Eve Adrian by email at eadrian@lyco.org or by phone at 570-329-4761.