



PHASE 3 WIP NEWS

Pennsylvania. Partnership. Progress



TOM WOLF, GOVERNOR • PATRICK McDONNELL, SECRETARY

August 2020

Hello partners for water quality!

We have much news to share on the state Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) and Countywide Action Plans to improve water quality in Pennsylvania's share of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. As you read about the initiatives and programs below, please consider how you or your organization might help support these efforts to reduce nutrient and sediment runoff pollution. And share this newsletter (or the [subscribe page](#)) with others to help spread the word on the progress we're making in Pennsylvania. Thank you for your dedicated work for healthy waters and healthy communities.

For more information on plan development and implementation, visit the [Phase 3 WIP website](#). For a broader look at the challenge of reducing runoff pollution in the watershed, visit [Healthy Waters, Healthy Communities](#). — *DEP Chesapeake Bay Office*

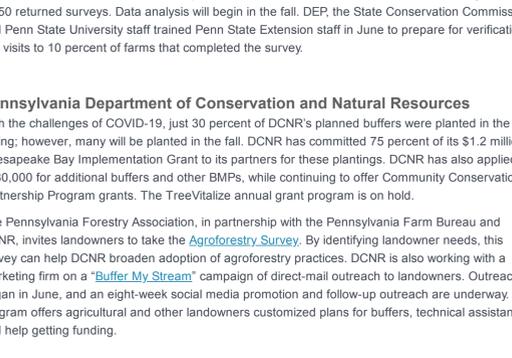
State Team

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Patrick McDonnell, Department of Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding, and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Dunn opened the State Team meeting on July 20. Aware of the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic is presenting to local governments and farms and other businesses, state agencies continue to work to develop as much funding support as they can for best management practices (BMPs) across sectors and to shift training, outreach, and coordination online, while aiming to put boots on the ground for streambank buffer plantings in the fall.

Jill Whitcomb, Director of the DEP Chesapeake Bay Office, [presented updates on Phase 3 WIP programmatic, data management, and reporting actions](#), and identified actions that will be taken in the next three, six, and nine months. Elizabeth Grant and Erin Letavich discussed Countywide Action Plan (CAP) development in Cumberland and Centre Counties. They highlighted progress in building corridors of opportunity and partnerships, as well as COVID-19 challenges, such as virtual outreach to the agricultural sector. Grant is a Planning Specialist for Cumberland County; Letavich is an engineer at Herbert, Rowland and Grubic and the CAP coordinator for the two counties.

The meeting included updates and next steps from the State Action Leaders and a walk-through of the [Draft 2020 Integrated Water Quality Report](#). New in this year's report: Data visualization showing yearly increases or decreases in pounds per acre of nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment and other pollutants in streams and rivers in specific locations. [Comments on the IWQR are invited](#); the comment period ends August 11.

Find the complete agenda and a recording of the meeting on the [State Team web page](#).



State Action Leaders

[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 BMP education and installation in their areas of influence.

County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania

The County Commissioners Association met with the DEP Northcentral Regional Office on July 14 to assist with county CAP planning in the region this fall, noting that counties are inundated with other issues arising from COVID-19 and need additional assistance for CAP planning.

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and State Conservation Commission

Through the Pennsylvania Farm Bill, the new Ag Business Development Center received \$2 million to help farmers develop business, marketing, and succession plans, and the Farm Vitality Grant Program awarded \$1 million to 133 farms in 46 counties. The 2018 Regional Conservation Partnership Program grant for BMP installation in six targeted counties now has 20 contracts signed and over \$2 million assigned.

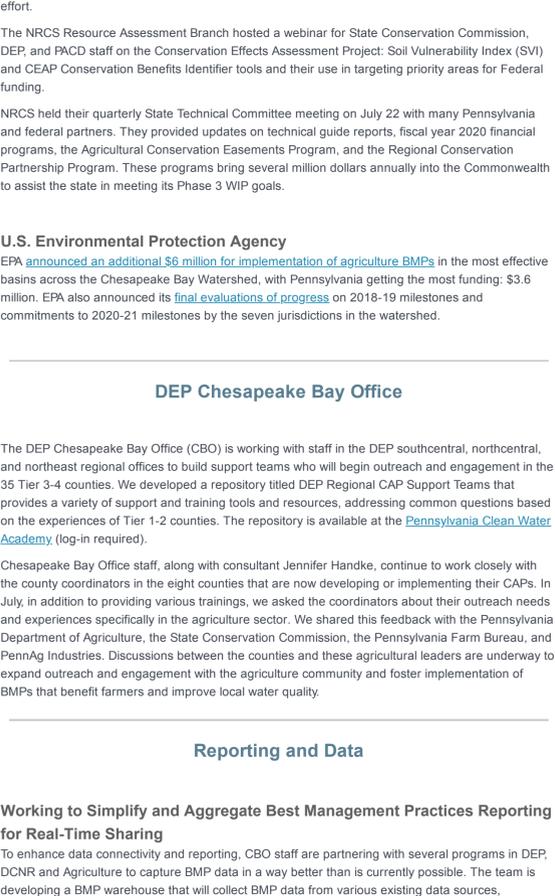
The [Conservation Excellence Grants Program](#) opened on July 1 as a pilot in Lancaster and York counties, with a total of \$2.5 million available to support on-farm measures that reduce erosion and run-off. Funding takes the form of grants and tax credits. Farmers can apply for up to \$250,000, with a simpler process for projects under \$25,000. At this time, the Conservation Districts are not imposing an application deadline.

The 2020 Penn State Farmer Survey, sent to farmers in the four pilot Phase 3 WIP counties (Lancaster, York, Adams, and Franklin) with the deadline extended due to COVID-19, has yielded 1,650 returned surveys. Data analysis will begin in the fall. DEP, the State Conservation Commission, and Penn State University staff trained Penn State Extension staff in June to prepare for verification site visits to 10 percent of farms that completed the survey.

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

With the challenges of COVID-19, just 30 percent of DCNR's planned buffers were planted in the spring; however, many will be planted in the fall. DCNR has committed 75 percent of its \$1.2 million Chesapeake Bay Implementation Grant to its partners for these plantings. DCNR has also applied for \$680,000 for additional buffers and other BMPs, while continuing to offer Community Conservation Partnership Program grants. The TreeVitalize annual grant program is on hold.

The Pennsylvania Forestry Association, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau and DCNR, invites landowners to take the [Agroforestry Survey](#). By identifying landowner needs, this survey can help DCNR broaden adoption of agroforestry practices. DCNR is also working with a marketing firm on a "Buffer My Stream" campaign of direct-mail outreach to landowners. Outreach began in June, and an eight-week social media promotion and follow-up outreach are underway. The program offers agricultural and other landowners customized plans for buffers, technical assistance, and help getting funding.



Pennsylvania Farm Bureau

The Farm Bureau is working with DEP to gain a better understanding of county action planning and implementation and how the bureau can support agriculture engagement efforts at the county level. The state Farm Bureau has reached out to local Farm Bureaus to find out about their involvement in county action plans, and contact with county coordinators has begun.

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) is developing technical assistance guidance in partnership with the DEP Northcentral Regional Office and Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy. This guidance aids in project review, design and permitting, and on-site field construction oversight for stream and riparian corridor habitat improvement projects. As part of the Phase 3 WIP, PFBC is expanding their staff by creating a Chesapeake Bay Watershed Habitat Unit in their Division of Habitat Management. The new staff (four full-time and four seasonal staff) will focus exclusively in the watershed and provide individuals, organizations, and state and federal agencies technical guidance to restore and enhance aquatic and riparian habitats. This work will be done under PFBC's Technical Assistance Program. Despite COVID-19 related delays, PFBC and their partners have improved one mile of stream so far this year.

Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority

After a request for proposals, the PENNVEST Board of Directors selected Keystone Safety Services Inc., for contract negotiations for the planned new Center for Water Quality Excellence. The center will be a one-stop-shop for technical and financial assistance for anything CAP related. Keystone Safety Services, doing business as Land Logics Group, is a small diverse consulting firm established in 2003 that provides expertise in stormwater management, green infrastructure, environmental planning, geospatial technologies, and public engagement. For this project it has assembled a team that includes GHD Engineering, the University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center, the Pennsylvania Rural Water Association, and Krebs Communication and Public Engagement.

Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Association

The association continues to assist municipal authorities in providing services that protect and enhance Pennsylvania's environment. Because a significant number of their member authorities are within the Chesapeake Bay watershed, the association provides regular reporting on Chesapeake Bay and clean water issues, as well as Phase 3 WIP progress updates through their print and electronic publications, website, and social media.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency

CLEAR30 is a new pilot program from the Farm Service Agency that offers farmers and landowners an opportunity to enroll in a 30-year Conservation Reserve Program contract. CLEAR30 is open for sign-ups through August 21. Get details in this [presentation video](#) and [PowerPoint](#).

U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service and U.S. Geological Survey

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and U.S. Geological Survey have entered into a \$500,000 contract to install a super gage station on Chiques Creek and will monitor results over the next 10 years. This station will measure the effects of legacy sediment removal that will take place under NRCS's PL-566 Watershed Program. NRCS has practice standards that work toward getting credit for nutrient and sediment reductions with EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program and recently presented on those standards to the program's Agriculture Workgroup.

NRCS has provided \$4.04 million to the 95 sites in the Watershed Management Program for private property damage as a result of the 2018 flooding. DEP provided a \$1 million match, and local municipalities and Conservation Districts handled the solicitation of bids as part of this emergency effort.

The NRCS Resource Assessment Branch hosted a webinar for State Conservation Commission, DEP, and PACD staff on the Conservation Effects Assessment Project: Soil Vulnerability Index (SVI) and CEAP Conservation Benefits Identifier tools and their use in targeting priority areas for Federal funding.

NRCS held their quarterly State Technical Committee meeting on July 22 with many Pennsylvania and federal partners. They provided updates on technical guide reports, fiscal year 2020 financial programs, the Agricultural Conservation Easements Program, and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. These programs bring several million dollars annually into the Commonwealth to assist the state in meeting its Phase 3 WIP goals.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

EPA [announced an additional \\$6 million for implementation of agriculture BMPs](#) in the most effective basins across the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, with Pennsylvania getting the most funding: \$3.6 million. EPA also announced its [final evaluations of progress](#) on 2018-19 milestones and commitments to 2020-21 milestones by the seven jurisdictions in the watershed.

DEP Chesapeake Bay Office

The DEP Chesapeake Bay Office (CBO) is working with staff in the DEP southcentral, northcentral, and north-east regional offices to build support teams who will begin outreach and engagement in the 35 Tier 3-4 counties. We developed a repository titled DEP Regional CAP Support Teams that provides a variety of support and training tools and resources, addressing common questions based on the experiences of Tier 1-2 counties. The repository is available at the [Pennsylvania Clean Water Academy](#) (log-in required).

Chesapeake Bay Office staff, along with consultant Jennifer Handke, continue to work closely with the county coordinators in the eight counties that are now developing or implementing their CAPs. In July, in addition to providing various trainings, we asked the coordinators about their outreach needs and experiences specifically in the agriculture sector. We shared this feedback with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, the State Conservation Commission, the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, and PennAg Industries. Discussions between the counties and these agricultural leaders are underway to expand outreach and engagement with the agriculture community and foster implementation of BMPs that benefit farmers and improve local water quality.

Reporting and Data

Working to Simplify and Aggregate Best Management Practices Reporting for Real-Time Sharing

To enhance data connectivity and reporting, CBO staff are partnering with several programs in DEP, DCNR and Agriculture to capture BMP data in a way better than is currently possible. The team is developing a BMP warehouse that will collect BMP data from various existing data sources, eliminating the need for users to enter data into multiple systems for reporting. The new system will be able to analyze incoming data to remove duplication. Once data are cleaned and aggregated, this system will provide real-time results that can be shared with the public.

Developing Customized Planning Tools for Tier 3-4 Counties

Chesapeake Bay Office and Susquehanna River Basin Commission staff are continuing to develop Community Clean Water Guides and county-specific technical toolboxes for Tier 3-4 counties. The tools will be completed this fall. The Chesapeake Bay Office is leading a Data Tools Review Team, collaborating with county partners to build and improve data reporting systems to ensure that Pennsylvania receives credit for all the work we're doing in the watershed. County partners will use these tools to report progress. The Data Tools Review Team is finalizing its review of FieldDoc and will soon announce upcoming dates for training on this data management system.

Environmental Protection Agency's Evaluation of Pennsylvania's 2018-19 and 2020-21 Milestones

Part of EPA's role in the Chesapeake Bay Program's partnership framework is to evaluate and report each jurisdiction's progress toward meeting the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) goal every two years. EPA released its latest evaluation on July 29.

The evaluation assessed progress toward attaining the TMDL goal at the state and state-baseline levels and progress toward meeting sector-specific programmatic commitments for the 2018-19 milestone period. The evaluation also assessed other sector-specific programmatic and numeric commitments (e.g., BMP implementation targets) for the 2020-21 milestone period and the status of the relevant water quality monitoring trends.

EPA noted the milestones Pennsylvania reached in agriculture, stormwater, wastewater, forestry, and local engagement in 2018-19 and the strengths of many goals we were committed to in these areas for 2020-21. EPA also identified key areas to address in 2020-21 and beyond. For details, see [EPA's complete evaluation](#).

Funding and Grants

DEP Small Business Advantage Grant Program Has Over \$1 Million Available

Pennsylvania small businesses can purchase energy efficient or pollution prevention technologies with a 50 percent reimbursement through the DEP [Small Business Advantage Grant Program](#). For-profit businesses with fewer than 100 full-time equivalent employees may apply. Applicants must be located in Pennsylvania and registered with the Pennsylvania Department of State. New this year: Farmers may apply for grants to install solar water pumping projects if they offer off-site watering facilities for livestock in grazing fields. Find more information, all documents needed to apply, as well as instructional videos at the website.

County Progress

Adams (Pilot - Implementation)

Adams County is in the process of hiring a county coordinator and has contracted the Interstate Commission for the Potomac River Basin to assist the coordinator in getting up to speed. MS4 municipalities are moving forward with projects that had been delayed due to COVID-19, and all agriculture staff in the conservation district are back in the office. With the help of Penn State University, the county plans to do more education and outreach with fruit farmers and aims to develop additional BMPs for fruit growers.

Bedford (Tier 2 - Planning)

The Bedford County Conservation District is working with local partners to capture BMPs that are currently ongoing and centralize BMPs that are underway. The county is focusing on catchments and the opportunity acres in catchments. The target date for CAP submission is the end of September; the next steering committee meeting will determine the final timeline. Sadly, we lost Bob Detweiler to COVID-19 in July. Bob was a member of the CAP steering committee; President of the Bedford County Farm Bureau; and a strong advocate for agriculture, community planning, and historical preservation.

Centre (Tier 2 - Planning)

Centre County's CAP team is working on corridors of opportunity, with a focus on collecting BMP data as well as building new BMPs. The county has had several successes this month. The CAP team met with organizational leaders who are interested in implementation and serving on the steering committee. Penn State expressed interest in working with the CAP team on several projects that will enable students to gain field experience in outreach and building BMPs. One professor is interested in working with innovative farmers. The Shannons Watershed Association is interested in working on an acid mine drainage project and seeks a watershed-wide water quality and nutrient snapshot. Farmland preservation is important in Centre County, and the CAP team is talking with two organizations about keeping farmland preserved. One of the county's key priorities and challenges is developing a farm strategy that involves face-to-face coordination to make this a success. Herbert, Rowland and Grubic, the county's contracted coordinator, has hired an on-call employee, Jim Brubaker, to assist with this effort. Brubaker was an innovative farmer with ties to the Plain Sect community.

Cumberland (Tier 2 - Planning)

Cumberland County is identifying available agricultural land and corridors of opportunity. Susquehanna River Basin Commission and CBO staff helped the county map existing and proposed BMP reductions that will be included in the CAP. Several communities have enacted stormwater fees. A local credit policy is being used to incentivize farmers and residents to implement BMPs on their properties to lower their fees, with these BMPs being captured in the CAP. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Master Watershed Stewards have expressed interest in partnering the CAP effort and sharing data from current efforts that can be counted. The CAP team needs assistance with building an agriculture strategy and with outreach in general. The county plans to have its draft CAP ready by the fall and will communicate it to the public via social media and other avenues.

Franklin (Pilot - Implementation)

The county coordinator has developed project and funding tracking spreadsheets, and Conservation District staff have been adding projects and communicating shovel-ready projects. The stream restoration project at Lurgan Lions Club, funded by a DEP CAP Implementation Grant, was completed in July. The coordinator is doing outreach through social media to find additional action team members. Outreach will also include an FAQ in the District's summer newsletter. The CAP steering committee met for the first time in July.

Lancaster (Pilot - Implementation)

Lancaster is working with York County and DEP on watershed-wide permitting and taking steps to bring a project to DEP for further discussion. The county is developing its annual report and will update local planning targets. A communication survey was sent out to ensure the county is doing effective outreach. The county has had some resource challenges due to COVID-19, including new construction site procedures that limit the number of people on a site and extend project timelines. The Lancaster City Alliance has started to implement its street tree planting project. Over 50 potential locations are being evaluated by the city arborist. One of the CAP goals was to have a stellar buffer in every municipality. East Cocalico Township is putting a buffer and meadow on municipal land. Despite COVID-19-related project delays across the county, these projects are now getting back on schedule. The Lancaster Clean Water Partners communications and program manager is creating a one-page case study handbook, with before and after photos, for each completed project. [Lancaster Water Week](#) is August 7-15 and includes self-guided tours, events, and online experiences.

Lebanon (Tier 2 - Planning)

The CAP team is working with various stakeholder initiatives and watershed alliances to get work done. A stakeholder initiative is taking the lead on projects in the Conewago Creek Watershed, and the Quittapahilla Watershed Alliance is planning to use the CAP as the connector between the township and the alliance. A lot of good efforts are going on under the radar in the county, and the CAP team is working to raise awareness of these efforts and capture them in the CAP. In August, the CAP steering committee will identify action teams and categorize assignments by opportunity areas.

York (Pilot - Implementation)

The York County Coalition for Clean Waters continues to meet and has been working with the county conservation district despite issues posed with COVID-19. The CAP coordinator presented a CAP overview and update at the York County Planning Commission and Conservation District board meetings. The second issue of their ReCAP newsletter has gone out, including project story highlights. The North York Rotary Club contacted the CAP team, seeking to learn more about the Bay and water quality. County CAP action teams are experiencing less involvement due to COVID-19 furloughs and recent retirements; lead team volunteers have been stepping up to help, and the CAP coordinator has been filling in the role of leader and co-leader of several action teams. There have been delays on project implementation due to COVID-19; however, both projects that received DEP CAP Implementation Grants are back on schedule and expected to be completed by June 2021.

Legislative Updates

State

The Keystone Tree Fund check-off option is now available to Pennsylvanians during online driver's license and vehicle registration renewals. This gives Pennsylvanians the option of adding \$3.00 to their renewal fee to support DCNR's Riparian Forest Buffer Grant and TreeVitalize programs. In the first six weeks, \$30,000 was raised. The fund was established by Act 76 of 2019.

Senator Gene Yaw (23rd District) has issued a memo seeking co-sponsors for legislation to create an Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP). Modeled after the Dirt and Gravel Roads Program, ACAP would be administered by the State Conservation Commission and implemented through county conservation districts. As a statewide program, it would complement the new Conservation Excellence Grants Program, which is targeted to the Bay watershed. Language is still being developed, and no funding amount or source has been identified yet.

Senate Bill 915, or the "Fertilizer Bill," passed the Senate on May 27 and is now with the House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, chaired by Representative Mark Keller (86th District) since July 7.

Federal

A broad infrastructure package known as the "Moving Forward Act," or H.R. 2, is pending. It would increase authorizations for national water-related programs, such as the EPA Clean Water State Revolving Funds (CWSRF) and Section 319 Non-Point Source Program. It would also increase the authorization level for EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program and water-related investments under other sectors, such as transportation and public lands.

Similarly, a set of appropriations bills moving through the House would increase fiscal year 2021 funding for the Chesapeake Bay Program; CWSRF; the Section 319 program; and U.S. Department of Agriculture conservation operations, including Natural Resources Conservation Service conservation technical assistance.

Congress is not likely to reach consensus on these bills, but they'll serve as a starting point for negotiation in the next Congress.

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