

Improving Local Water Quality in Pennsylvania and Restoring the Chesapeake Bay

CHALLENGE: Pennsylvania is obligated to reduce annual loading of nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment entering the Chesapeake Bay, and return Bay waters to state water quality standards by 2025. Despite efforts and investments, Pennsylvania will not meet 2015 and 2017 reduction targets for nitrogen and sediment.

STATUS: Since 1985, Pennsylvania invested more than \$4 billion toward restoration efforts. Phosphorous is down 25 percent, nitrogen down 6 percent, sediment reduced nearly 15 percent; with significantly reduced discharges of nutrients from point sources, such as wastewater treatment plants.

PENNSYLVANIA-CENTRIC FOCUS: A new plan, developed by the Pennsylvania departments of Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), and Environmental Protection (DEP), as well as the State Conservation Commission and other stakeholders, aims at improving local water quality in Pennsylvania, and by virtue of that, the Chesapeake Bay.

STRATEGY: Focus and increase resources and technical assistance, reinvigorate partnerships, organize for success, expand data gathering, improve program coordination and capacity, and create a culture of compliance.

SIX ELEMENTS TO PLAN:

1. Address pollutant reduction by: a) meeting the EPA goal of inspecting 10 percent of farms and MS4s in the watershed annually, b) ensuring development and use of manure management and agricultural erosion and sediment control plans, and c) enforcement for non-compliance
2. Quantify undocumented Best Management Practices in watersheds impaired by agriculture or stormwater and put more high-impact, low-cost BMPs on the ground
3. Improve reporting, record keeping and data systems to provide better documentation and obtain maximum credit toward Bay goals
4. Identify legislative, programmatic or regulatory changes to provide the additional tools and resources necessary to meet federal pollution reduction goals by 2025
5. Establish a DEP Chesapeake Bay Office to coordinate development, implementation and funding of Commonwealth's Chesapeake Bay efforts
6. Obtain additional resources for water quality improvement

VALUE OF THIS APPROACH:

- Retarget existing resources to where they're needed most
- Strengthen ability to seek additional resources
- Restructure existing partnerships and create new ones
- Address chronic data gaps and get PA farmers credit they deserve
- Improve DEP management focus on local water quality improvement and the Bay
- Enhance ability to innovate through tools like credit trading
- Improve information technology

CONSEQUENCE: Because of Pennsylvania's lack of attainment in meeting interim goals, the U.S. EPA is withholding \$2.9 million in funding, and will consider additional actions to increase federal role in inspections, permitting and compliance.