



Pennsylvania

Department of
Environmental Protection

Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRAC) Meeting
Meeting Minutes | November 4, 2025, 9:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Rachel Carson State Office Building, 400 Market Street Room 105, Harrisburg, PA 17101
and Microsoft® Teams online.

Call to Order, Introductions, & Attendance – Matthew Genchur, Chair

The meeting was called to order by Chair Matthew Genchur at 9:32 a.m. Bob Haines conducted a roll call and of the 14-member committee, 12 members were present. A quorum was established.

The following committee members were present:

Chair Matthew Genchur.....Resource Environmental Solutions (RES)
Vice-chair Beth Uhler.....Center for Watershed Protection
Harry Campbell.....Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Alexandra Chiaruttini.....The York Water Company
Jenifer Christman.....Western Pennsylvania Conservancy
Shirley Clark, Ph.D., P.E.....Pennsylvania State University
Andrew Dehoff.....Susquehanna River Basin Commission
John Jackson, Ph.D.....Stroud Water Research Center
Kristen Kavanagh, P.E.....Delaware River Basin Commission
Theo Light, Ph.D.....Shippensburg University
Cory Miller.....University Area Joint Authority
Dean Miller.....Pennsylvania Water Environment Association

The following committee members were absent:

Myron Arnowitt.....Clean Water Action
Charles Wunz, P.E.....Wunz Associates

Review and Approval of Minutes from September 10, 2025, Meeting (Action) – Matthew Genchur, Chair

Chair Genchur requested consideration of the September 10, 2025, draft meeting minutes.

Motion: Jenifer Christman made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from September with Kristin Kavanagh seconding the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Officer Elections (Action) – Matthew Genchur, Chair

Chair Genchur opened the floor to consider nominations for Chair. Theo Light nominated Matthew Genchur to continue as Chair. Beth Uhler made a motion to nominate Matthew Genchur as Chair with John Jackson seconding the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Chair Genchur opened the floor to consider nominations for Vice Chair. Jenifer Christman nominated Beth Uhler to continue as Vice Chair. Kristen Kavanagh made a motion to nominate Beth Uhler as Vice Chair with Theo Light seconding the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment – Matthew Genchur, Chair

There were no public comments.

“Beyond 2025” – New Chesapeake Bay Agreement Open Discussion (Informational) – Jill Whitcomb, Deputy Secretary, DEP Office of Water Programs

Jill led an open discussion on the revised Chesapeake Bay Agreement. Jill provided a high-level overview of the Agreement’s history and purpose along with background on the reasons for refreshing and revising the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, explaining that the directive came directly from the Chesapeake Bay Executive Council. Jill outlined the priorities and expectations guiding the ongoing revisions.

Harry Campbell asked Jill to discuss ways to build on Pennsylvania’s progress over the past decade. Jill explained that Pennsylvania’s current focus is on implementing the Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) and supporting counties in carrying out their Countywide Action Plans (CAPs). Jill emphasized that clean water at the local and community level remains the Commonwealth’s top priority, with efforts centered on engaging local officials, organizations, and conservation districts.

Jill noted that this local engagement approach has influenced recent updates to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, highlighting agriculture as a central focus. Jill added that the revised agreement reflects the importance of environmental and agricultural literacy, sustainability, and economic vitality. Jill reinforced Secretary Redding’s message that “clean water and sustainable farms are co-equal goals,” emphasizing that both objectives can be achieved together. Jill concluded that Pennsylvania’s efforts have been effective and recognized by partners across the watershed.

Harry emphasized that, given current uncertainties at the federal level, there is growing interest and opportunity to focus on local, community-driven improvements within the Chesapeake Bay Partnership. Harry suggested that future efforts should build from localized successes and emphasize homegrown, locally led progress as the foundation for continued restoration work.

Harry asked whether current federal budget uncertainties might affect the established timeline for completing the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement revisions by the end of 2025.

Jill responded that the short answer is no—the written components of the agreement are complete, and the Principals’ Staff Committee has advanced them for Executive Council consideration on December 2, 2025. Jill noted that implementation will always depend on resource availability, including funding, staffing, expertise, and administrative support from federal partners such as USDA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service.

Jill added that Pennsylvania has already identified barriers to success and continues to collaborate through its Clean Water Action workgroup, which includes conservation districts, academia, and other state agencies like Labor and Industry and Workforce Development. Jill continued that the Commonwealth is also working with the Office of Digital Experience (CODE PA) to simplify access to grant funding. While federal challenges may influence resources, Pennsylvania remains committed to continuing implementation efforts with available funding and personnel.

Jenifer Christman thanked Jill for providing a high-level overview of the Beyond 2025 initiative and noted that anyone interested in more detailed information can access a series of webinars hosted by the Chesapeake Bay Program Office. Jenifer added that the webinars focus on Reimagining the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, explore each priority area in depth, and explain how various committees establish and refine those priorities.

Jill thanked Jenifer for highlighting additional resources and emphasized that while developing a plan takes effort, implementation is the greater challenge. Jill explained that Pennsylvania's focus remains on carrying out both regulatory and non-regulatory measures to achieve clean water goals, which includes fulfilling statutory obligations under the PA Clean Streams Law and the federal Clean Water Act, as well as advancing voluntary initiatives through partnerships across state agencies.

Jill highlighted the recently renewed Nonpoint Source Management Program Plan, a five-year statewide plan required under Clean Water Act Section 319, which addresses issues such as abandoned mine land reclamation, stormwater management, and agricultural runoff. Jill stressed the importance of leveraging existing systems, data, and reporting mechanisms—rather than creating new ones—to streamline implementation and reduce administrative burdens.

Jill continued that Pennsylvania is working to simplify its reporting and tracking frameworks, ensuring consistency with federal reporting requirements while allowing local organizations to focus their limited capacity on on-the-ground implementation rather than excessive documentation. Jill concluded by underscoring the need to balance accountability with practicality to make progress more efficient and achievable.

Harry asked Jill to provide some more background on Countywide Action Plans and asked for Jill's opinion on their level of importance.

Jill explained that Pennsylvania's CAPs were developed as part of the Phase 3 WIP process. Jill added that earlier WIP phases (Phase 1 in 2010 and Phase 2 in 2012) were largely top-down and difficult to implement, where in contrast, Phase 3 adopted a bottom-up, locally driven approach, allowing each county to voluntarily develop its own action plan based on state-provided goals rather than mandated targets.

Jill continued that those counties that developed CAPs became eligible for Environmental Stewardship Fund block grants, which DEP has distributed annually since 2020. Jill cited that thirty-four counties now participate, each with a dedicated coordinator (either staff or consultant) serving as the county's primary DEP point of contact and these coordinators help manage

implementation, reporting, and milestone tracking, supported by DEP's administrative, technical, and financial assistance team.

Jill highlighted the mutual trust and collaboration built between DEP and counties, leading to measurable progress. Referencing data from the Chesapeake Assessment Scenario Tool (CAST), Jill stated that in 2009, Pennsylvania's total nitrogen load to the Bay was 112 million pounds, and by 2019, it had only decreased slightly to 111.7 million pounds—a reduction of less than 1 million pounds over ten years. In contrast, from 2019 to 2024, the modeled nitrogen load decreased to 104.5 million pounds, representing a reduction of 7.2 million pounds in just five years. Jill added that much of this improvement stems from agricultural best management practices implemented through county partnerships.

Jill emphasized that while no model is perfect, these results demonstrate significant, accelerated progress in Pennsylvania's efforts to improve both local water quality and conditions in the Chesapeake Bay.

Harry responded that the CAPs serve as a crucial link between state initiatives and local actions and have significantly increased both awareness and engagement in communities, generating measurable excitement and participation. Harry highlighted this as a notable success for Pennsylvania.

Jill added that previous efforts, such as the County Implementation Plans (CIPs), struggled because counties were expected to develop and implement plans without dedicated resources. Jill emphasized that the success of the current CAPs is due to providing both guidance and funding to support counties in achieving their goals. Jill concluded that this approach avoids creating unfunded mandates and demonstrates Pennsylvania's ongoing commitment to supporting local communities and counties, fostering trust and ensuring continued collaboration.

Matt Genchur pointed out the importance of county conservation districts' role in implementing many water quality initiatives.

John Jackson requested a brief future presentation contrasting Pennsylvania's nitrogen reduction efforts over the previous ten years versus the most recent five years. John asked for details on what activities or strategies contributed to the sevenfold increase in nitrogen removal, to better understand the factors driving the accelerated progress.

Jill explained that the increase in reported nitrogen reductions is due to a combination of expanded reporting and more targeted implementation. In the past, only a few entities submitted data to DEP for EPA reporting, but now over 40 programs, agencies, and entities provide standardized, coordinated data, which improves the accuracy of the modeling.

Jill added that projects are being implemented more quickly and deliberately, typically within 12–18 months rather than 3–5 years. This includes efforts tied to regulatory compliance and inspection programs, such as the agriculture inspection program initiated in 2017 under the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Strategy, alongside strategic, well-resourced, on-the-ground actions. Jill noted that

detailed information on specific BMPs and practices implemented over the last five years is publicly available and offered to provide further specifics if needed.

Jill asked for clarification on whether John wanted more policy and programmatic efforts or more on the ground best management practices.

John noted that his focus is not on policy-level outcomes rather on on-the-ground implementation. John expressed interest in understanding what practices and funding combinations are being emphasized now compared to the past, particularly given how the agricultural community's perspective has evolved over the last 15 years.

John also suggested considering a retrospective review to identify gaps in the first ten years, acknowledging that the model only reflects reported activities. John recognized it may be impractical to track all past projects but emphasized the importance of ensuring credit is given where due for efforts already implemented by partners.

Jill responded that Pennsylvania's farm inspection program provides a mechanism to verify on-the-ground practices, as the state is required by EPA to inspect at least 10% of farm acres in the Chesapeake Bay watershed annually. Jill added that verification is critical because the Chesapeake Bay model only counts practices that have been confirmed, and some historically implemented practices lose credit if they are not re-inspected.

Jill continued that to address gaps, Pennsylvania has collaborated with Penn State, conservation districts, and PDA to identify and document previously unreported or underreported practices, while maintaining federal privacy and confidentiality requirements. Jill emphasized that properly tracking and documenting these practices is essential for credibility and for demonstrating progress.

Jill also highlighted the importance of water quality monitoring, noting recent discussions with York County officials and stakeholders on using monitoring data to assess trends and outcomes. Jill stressed that knowing which practices are implemented on the ground, combined with monitoring data, is critical to achieving the ultimate goal of clean water for Pennsylvania and the Chesapeake Bay.

Jill added that Pennsylvania's Phase 3 WIP has focused on cost-effective best management practices (BMPs) strategy in the agricultural sector. The primary BMPs include nutrient management, cover crops, and conservation tillage, chosen for their ability to achieve significant nitrogen and phosphorus reductions across the millions of agricultural acres in Pennsylvania and the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Matt added that the Committee would be interested in a presentation on the details that led to Pennsylvania's improvements with nutrient reductions to the Bay as requested by John Jackson.

Interstate Water Resources Management Division Update (Informational) – Jason Minnich, Environmental Program Manager, Bureau of Safe Drinking Water

Jason provided an update on the Interstate Water Resources Management Division. This update highlighted the Division's responsibilities, including the State Water Plan, Drought Monitoring, River Basin Commissions, the Great Lakes Program, and Coastal Zone Management.

Harry Campbell asked Jason to discuss any coordination or collaboration between Lake Erie and Chesapeake Bay efforts.

Jason noted that his team frequently communicates with DEP's Chesapeake Bay staff to share ideas and see what strategies have been effective, though there are no formal cross-program collaborations currently. Jason mentioned that the Great Lakes Commission is developing a water resources and agriculture GIS application focused on the Great Lakes region, which could potentially be adopted statewide in Pennsylvania. Jason said his team may engage with both the Great Lakes Commission and Chesapeake Bay partners to explore how the tool could support broader water and agricultural management efforts.

Jill noted that close collaboration occurs between program leads on various commissions where Pennsylvania is represented, ensuring active participation in grant programs and initiatives such as Coastal Zone Management and lessons learned from Growing Greener. Jill added that this collaboration extends across divisions, including nonpoint source management and source water protection, creating more opportunities to share best practices and lessons learned across bureaus and geographic regions.

Alex Chiaruttini added that, based on prior experience, working with all the Interstate Water Resource groups can be challenging and applauds Jason and his division's efforts.

Review of 2026 Proposed Meeting Dates – Matthew Genchur, Chair

The Committee reviewed and accepted the meeting dates for 2026.

General Discussion/Agenda Topics Request – Matthew Genchur, Chair

Chair Genchur mentioned the resignation of Kent Crawford and Shirley Clark from the Committee and asked about the number of members allowed as it is not clearly defined in the bylaws. Bob Haines informed the Chair that he was not sure and would look into it. Chair Genchur encouraged current members to identify any new individuals who may be interested in applying for vacancies on WRAC.

Chair Genchur and Bob Haines both reminded members to submit their letter of interest and resume/CV for reappointment to Bob by the end of the week.

Bob Haines informed the Committee that past agenda item requests made by the Committee are still being coordinated and will be added to upcoming meeting agendas.

Jill Whitcomb asked if the Committee would be interested in an update on DEP's permitting modernization initiatives. Chair Genchur affirmed that they would be interested, and Jenifer Christman reminded the group that a SPEED update was provided at the last (September 2025) meeting.

Adjournment – Matthew Genchur, Chair

Motion: Theo Light made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dean Miller seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 11:18 a.m.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 14, 2026