

PENNSYLVANIA’S CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAMMATIC TWO-YEAR MILESTONES COMMITMENTS
JANUARY 1, 2026-DECEMBER 31, 2027

Narrative Summary:

Overall objectives for this milestone period focus on pilot programs, county partner support, nature-based solutions, workforce building, local and collaborative partnerships, permitting efficiencies and modernization, and data management.

CORE SECTOR ACTIVITIES

Narrative Summary:

Sector objectives for this milestone period focus on grant applications, permitting and grant requirements, addressing barriers to clean water project implementation, and increased public awareness.

CORE SECTOR ACTIVITIES

Milestone Number	Lead Agency	Actions & Deliverables (see details below)	Corresponding DEP Strategic Goal(s)	Corresponding Watershed Agreement Principle(s)	Target Date	Outcomes (e.g., lbs of pollutants reduced, # of people engaged)	Funding Source
1	DEP	Accelerator Pilot Program for Chapter 102 Post Construction Stormwater Management (PCSM) Stormwater Control Measure (SCM) mapping portal	3,4	Science	Spring 2027	Increased reported PCSM SCMs	See Lead Agency
2	DEP	Supporting County Partners in Accessing DEP Water Quality Data for Targeted Watershed Restoration Planning	2,3,4	Science, Restoration & Conservation, Partnership	Fall 2026	Increased targeted restoration for purposes of improved water quality	See Lead Agency
3	DEP, PFBC	Continuing to Lead the Nation in Dam Removal and Nature-Based Solutions	1,2,3,4	Science, Restoration & Conservation, Partnership	Spring 2027	Increased ecological restoration projects	USDA, USFWS, ACOE, DEP, PFBC
4	DEP, SCC, L&I, DCNR, PDA, PDE	Developing Environmental Workforce and Building Capacity for Clean Water Projects	2	Science, Partnership	Spring 2027	Increased entry-level workforce for environmental initiatives	See Lead Agencies

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5	DEP, SCC, DCNR, PDA	Maintaining and Expanding Local Partnership	1,2	Partnership	Fall 2027	Increased funding to Chesapeake Bay watershed counties, continue collaboration to ensure future success with the WIP 4	EPA, DEP, SCC
6	DEP, SCC, PDA, DCNR	Reporting and Tracking through Enhanced Data Management	3,4	Science	Fall 2027	Increased data reporting accuracy	EPA, DEP
7	DEP	Reducing Nonpoint Source Pollution Through Collaborative Partnerships	1,2	Science, Restoration & Conservation, Partnership	Fall 2027	Annual Report submitted to EPA and published every year; At least two Success Stories submitted to EPA annually	EPA, DEP

SECTOR INITIATIVES (I.E., INNOVATIVE ACTIONS)

Milestone Number	Lead Agency*	Actions & Deliverables (see details below)	Corresponding DEP Strategic Goal(s)	Corresponding Watershed Agreement Principle(s)	Target Date	Outcomes (e.g., lbs of pollutants reduced, # of people engaged)	Funding Source
1	Commonwealth Office of Digital Experience (CODE PA), DEP	Modernizing Grant Applications	3,4	Partnership	Spring 2027	Increased complete and accurate applications; decreased time to complete; implement Commonwealth-wide grant efficiency strategies	See Lead Agencies
2	DEP	Streamlining Permitting and Grant Requirements	2,3	Partnership	Fall 2027	Issue two additional watershed-wide permits; implemented agency-wide permitting efficiencies and	See Lead Agency

						modernization strategies	
3	DEP, DCNR, SCC, PDA, L&I, CODE PA, PENNVEST, DCED	Addressing Barriers to Clean Water Project Implementation	2,3,4	Science, Restoration & Conservation, Partnership	Fall 2027	Continued engagement of new and existing partners	See Lead Agencies
4	DEP, PDA, DCNR, PFBC	Increasing Public and Partner Awareness Via Social Media and Publications	4	Partnership	Summer 2027	Increased individual social media postings and publications	See Lead Agencies

**DEP-Department of Environmental Protection; DCNR-Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; SCC-State Conservation Commission; PDA-PA Department of Agriculture; L&I-Department of Labor & Industry; PENNVEST-PA Infrastructure & Investment Authority; DCED-Department of Community & Economic Development; PFBC-PA Fish and Boat Commission*

CORE SECTOR ACTIVITIES

Accelerator Pilot Program for a Chapter 102 Post Construction Stormwater Management (PCSM) Stormwater Control Measure (SCM) mapping portal

- This pilot project is led by the DEP Bureau of Clean Water (BCW) and would use CS Datum - a web-based platform that is used by many MS4 BMPs in southcentral PA - for tracking of SCM associated with Chapter 102 permits.
- This will result in mapping outputs matching reporting system input needs for Chesapeake Bay reporting.
- The proposed method is intended to fill the reporting gap for PCSM BMPs implemented and maintained as required under state regulation, Chapter 102, but outside of MS4 areas where such BMPs are currently not being tracked, verified or reported to CAST.
- Continuing a pilot program in select counties to evaluate new procedures for improving the quality of applications received and accelerating the review of Chapter 102 Individual NPDES Permit applications.
- **DELIVERABLE:** Reportable PCSM SCMs

Supporting County Partners in Accessing DEP Water Quality Data for Targeted Watershed Restoration Planning

- The DEP Bureau of Watershed Restoration and Nonpoint Source Management (BWRNSM) will develop two interactive Dashboard applications (Targeted Watershed Restoration Dashboard and Conservation Tillage Dashboard) to make DEP water quality and best management practice (BMP) reporting data more accessible for watershed restoration planning. These tools are designed to support County Conservation Districts (CCDs), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and other partners engaged in restoration efforts.
- The goal is to simplify access to critical water quality and BMP data through centralized, user-friendly platforms. Dashboards reduce the need for specialized knowledge, allow for efficient data exploration, and help identify opportunities for targeted restoration. These tools also address challenges such as organizational staff turnover by providing a standardized training and reference resource.
- **DELIVERABLE:** Clean water tools developed for strategic project targeting.

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Continuing to Lead the Nation in Dam Removal and Nature-Based Solutions

- The DEP Bureau of Waterways Engineering and Wetlands (BWEW), in combination with many other partners, is recognized as a national leader in dam removal, legacy sediment removal and ecosystem restoration through comprehensive watershed-based projects, which has set a solid foundation for improved stream health.
- Dam removal and stream restoration provides a benefit to many communities, collaborating with multiple internal programs (including BWEW's dam safety and flood mitigation programs, BCW's MS4 Program, and BWRNSM's Chesapeake Bay Watershed Restoration Program) as well as external entities like the PFBC and American Rivers.
- Over the past several years, DEP staff have developed significant expertise in both stream and floodplain restoration, which have become central to the advancement of BWEW's mitigation banking and in-lieu fee programs.
- To meet these growing needs, BWEW is adapting by training and reallocating staff, developing new guidance, revising regulations, and collaborating with industry and academia to fulfill training demands.
- **DELIVERABLE:** Increased staffing and training to support restoration professionals for dam removal, ecosystem restoration, and flood mitigation projects.

Developing Environmental Workforce and Building Capacity for Clean Water Projects

- The DEP Bureau of Safe Drinking Water (BSDW) has begun work with PA's Operator Certification Board for Water and Wastewater Operators to convene a group of industry experts to focus on how to improve recruitment and retention of water operators within PA. This effort, in its infancy, with quarterly virtual meetings has been met with much enthusiasm and positivity from industry participants as it will play a key role to improve compliance by attracting, training and retaining more competent individuals into this essential service career.
- The SCC is sponsoring a new Ag Conservation Apprenticeship program with the Indiana County Conservation District through a grant provided by the Department of Labor and Industry. The goals of this program will be to lower barriers for employees entering the agriculture conservation field for public and private sector employment and to provide a robust curriculum that supports on-the-job training as well as classroom coursework for agriculture conservation career development. Through the establishment of this program, apprentices will gain the experience and knowledge necessary to enter the Ag conservation field as Journeymen, whose experience and credentials shall be publicly recorded and transferable for employment across the commonwealth.
- The DEP BWRNSM will continue to assist with increasing the capacity for technical assistance within Pennsylvania's portion of the Chesapeake Bay by providing funding to the Technical Assistance Program (TAP). TAP is contracted through Larson Design, which has administered three program rounds, resulting in over \$250,000 in service awards to projects. To date, this program has awarded technical assistance for eight projects across six Pennsylvania counties. Technical services provided through TAP aid in the implementation of BMPs on agricultural operations.
- **DELIVERABLE:** Increased workforce capacity (e.g. number of credentialed professionals, number of service awards).

Maintaining and Expanding Local Partnerships

- The voluntary, county-led, Countywide Action Plan (CAP) approach has yielded impressive results and growing momentum within just five years of initiating the Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP). The 34 Bay watershed counties with the highest nutrient reduction goals are implementing their unique action plans. Each one is making progress by implementing projects and programs that are their own, in places that they prioritize, and building partnerships every step of the way. Simultaneously, the DEP BWRNSM provides crucial support and coordination through open communication, training, technical assistance, and funding, building on a strong foundation of trust and long-term collaboration. The Phase 3 WIP and CAPs are founded on Partners, Projects, and Progress. By collaborating with diverse stakeholders and guided by the principle that clean water is "Great for PA, Good for the Bay," the DEP recognizes the Phase 3 WIP process as an opportunity to serve residents and businesses by

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cleaning local waterways, mitigating flood risks, and enhancing the quality of life in local communities. Success hinges on the belief that local efforts supported by a network of partners working across the Bay watershed will collectively move Pennsylvania toward its 2025 pollution-reduction targets. This work will result in a comprehensive CAP case study that will serve as a guide for others to implement similar programs.

- The funding for project implementation is allocation based; counties receive funds based on their percent of Pennsylvania's nitrogen load and impaired stream miles. The CAP Grant combines federal and state funds for allocation.
- Explore increases to state funding to continue work funded through federal IJA.
- Expand communication regarding the successes of the Phase 3 WIP utilizing the monthly Healthy Waters Newsletter.
- Adjust grant timeline to best serve county partners in their implementation funding strategy.
- Develop and release a spending tracker tool to aid CAP partners in the management of their CAPs in order to increase implementation.
- Update CAP Snapshot to improve readability for use by county partners in their outreach efforts.
- Develop and distribute CAP Summary Documents for each county partner to use as a public friendly communication and outreach tool.
- **DELIVERABLE:** Increased block grant funding to existing CAP counties, increase Healthy Waters Newsletter click through rate by 2%, align grant timelines for increased customer service, implement spending tracker tool, develop and distribute CAP snapshot, develop and distribute CAP Summary Documents, continue to build on and expand partnerships in preparation for WIP 4.

Data Management Reporting and Tracking

- Explore further coordination with EPA, USDA, and USGS for increased BMP verification and accounting.
- Work with EPA and NRCS to enable Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and other federally-funded projects to be reportable for Chesapeake Bay numeric progress.
- Increase and explore use of innovative solutions and technology for BMP verification in additional sectors, such as developed/urban stormwater.
- Increase access to aggregated BMP information through the Commonwealth's Open Data Portal for incorporation into Model My Watershed.
- Continue to submit conservation tillage and cover crop BMP data from the Remote Sensing Pilot Project, utilizing the most up-to-date technology available.
- Increase manure treatment technology implementation and verification, as well as quantify freshwater mussel stocking and AMD remediation projects, to inform nutrient reduction modeling for WIP 4 (Phase 7 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Model).
- Continue outreach to communicate why good data reporting is important.
- Fund Agriculture Data Communication and Training Specialists.
- **DELIVERABLE:** More robust modeling and accounting of innovative nutrient reductions to inform WIP 4 development, conduct at least three outreach events, and onboard four regional data communication and training specialist positions.

Reducing Nonpoint Source Pollution Through Collaborative Partnerships

- View the most recent ([FFY 2025\) Commonwealth of PA Nonpoint Source Management Plan](#). Reports and success stories are submitted to EPA and published annually.
- Continue implementation-scale watershed monitoring to evaluate BMP efficacy.
- The DEP BWRNSM has created a dedicated e-mail address to direct all monitoring related questions, inquiries, and communications. As the Bureau continues to expand its monitoring program, inter- and intra-agency coordination, and partnerships in the effort to track water quality improvements in impaired watersheds statewide, this account will streamline internal and external communications for the bureau.
- **DELIVERABLE:** Annual reports and at least two Success Stories for Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management program; a central, one-stop-location to send customer service inquiries that will facilitate ongoing coordination of resources and collaboration across agencies.

SECTOR INITIATIVES (INNOVATIVE ACTIVITIES)

Modernizing Grant Applications

- DEP BWRNSM continues to enhance the Countywide Action Plan (CAP) Implementation and Coordinator Grants applications using Survey123.
- Survey 123 allows for a combined application for both Coordinator and Implementation grants, reducing the collection of redundant applicant information.
- Survey 123 integrates spatial data and mapping of project locations to streamline efforts during the application process.
- **DELIVERABLE:** Increased complete and accurate applications; decreased time to complete; increased application and review efficiencies.

Streamlining Permitting and Grant Requirements

- DEP will continue to implement the Streamlining Permitting for Economic Expansion and Development (SPEED) Program, initiated by law beginning FY24-25. SPEED is a staff augmentation program by which Qualified Professionals (QPs) can be selected to expedite permit review and approval. DEP launched SPEED on June 30, 2025, with Chapter 102 NPDES Individual Permits. On August 19, 2025, Chapter 102 General Permits and Chapter 105 Individual Permits were added along with Dam Safety Permits. In FY25-26, Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) NPDES Permits were added to SPEED. All three permit types are applicable to multiple sectors, including agriculture and the developed/urban sector.
- In early 2026, DEP released a new tool that would provide a process and options to aid the applicant/plan preparer in the stormwater analysis required by 25 Pa. Code §102.8(g). The result of that work was the development of group of “SCM Suites” that provide the applicant/PCSM plan preparer with options and enhance the process of selecting the most efficient stormwater control measures in a timely manner for proposed projects, including those on agricultural operations.
- Increase watershed-wide permitting. To date, DEP BWEW has issued two watershed-wide restoration permits, both in Lancaster County. Each project identifies project areas or phases of the overall project to lessen or reverse the degradation or discontinuity through implementation of restoration, rehabilitation, and enhancement construction techniques to address the predominant causes of degradation. The watershed-wide permit is agile and allows the permittee to adapt to potential project funding sources and provide an expedited restoration approval process.
- Continue to hold multi-program, multi-agency Funding Collaborative meetings and workshops to ensure greater lines of communication and identification of common areas for improvement.
- **DELIVERABLE:** Issue two additional watershed-wide permits; implement agency-wide permitting efficiencies and Commonwealth-wide modernization strategies, specifically those related to Chapter 102, Chapter 105, and CAFO permits and watershed restoration grant programs.

Addressing Barriers to Clean Water Project Implementation

- The Success Strategies identified in early 2025 address barriers to clean water project implementation identified by federal, state, and local action leaders as well as non-profit and private sector conservation partners. DEP BWRNSM staff facilitate discussions and take on tasks/action items to move these strategies forward.
- Nine Clean Water Action Groups are each working toward one or more action items:
 - Streamline grant applications and create funding decision tools
 - Develop/maintain a Clean Water Partner website/education and resources
 - Develop a sustainable “Clean Water Workforce”
 - Cultivate Public/Private Partnerships
 - Survey and support Conservation Districts and Other Partners: Staffing, Funding, Educating

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- Create a Funders communication network/regional peer network for project funding
- Conservation District Program Reporting Requirements and Best Management Practice Re-verification
- Exploring “Block Permitting” Opportunities (e.g. Watershed-Wide permits)
- Establishing Bank Partnerships
- **DELIVERABLE:** Continued engagement of new and existing partners.

Increasing Public and Partner Awareness Via Social Media and Publications

- In 2026, the DEP BWRNSM solidified a plan to formalize and increase social media efforts across the bureau in cooperation with DEP’s digital team. This initiative will result in increased public exposure to and awareness of bureau efforts.
- Collaborative communication efforts across programs and agencies allows for amplification of social media, cross-postings, and connecting through publications and other outreach opportunities.
- Publish a booklet / brochure related to dam maintenance, rehabilitation and/or removal.
- **DELIVERABLE:** Increased individual social media postings, amplification of success stories, and greater availability of publications.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Empower a Future-Ready Workforce through Innovation, Learning, and Leadership
2. Elevate Customer Experience in Support of Environmental Outcomes
3. Modernize Operations and Foster a Unified, High-Performing DEP
4. Build a Transparent, Data-Driven Organization