

## Franklin County Clean Water Action Narrative

### **Introduction:**

The Franklin County Countywide Action Plan (CAP) identifies several priority initiatives to enable reductions in nutrient loads and improve water quality to the approved measures set forth by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's (PA DEP) Watershed Implementation Plan, Phase III (WIP3). Each initiative identifies steps that will need to be implemented in order to meet the aforementioned goals of reducing Nitrogen and Phosphorous as established by the PA DEP WIP3. The entity leading the efforts of accomplishing these goals is the Franklin County Conservation District (FCCD). FCCD has established the initiative "Clean Water for Franklin County", or CWFC for short, to unite all water-related efforts from all parts of the county.

Currently, the county has significant capacity limitations within our agencies and a limited number of existing environmental or conservation organizations that handle water issues on a regular basis. There are a number of partners that can be engaged in this process, with missions focusing on environmental education, stewardship and citizen water monitoring in our waterways. While there are a few of these organizations in the county, their focus tends to be local, and there is no countywide organization focused on protecting water resources. CWFC aims to become that countywide initiative which brings together people and resources, countywide, to accomplish mutually beneficial projects and common goals.

Plan implementation and success are dependent on availability of needed funds, trained staff and resources identified in the plan, as well as recommended regulatory changes and landowners' willingness to participate in the CWFC initiative.

### **Opportunities:**

CWFC will not only strive to meet the established goals, but will engage the neighbors of Franklin County in awareness of the value of our water resources. Communications strategies regarding the initiative will emphasize that the quality of local streams and waterways, on which all community members rely, will improve with implementation of the plan. County residents will experience a greater quality of life with cleaner water, which is an important goal of the county's comprehensive plan. To reach our county goals, we must increase awareness of the role that all parties play in improving water quality and how the results impact the county in a positive way.

CWFC provides the opportunity to reinvigorate the local watershed organizations and help them to coordinate efforts around a common mission. An opportunity exists to grow the initiative and establish a countywide organization to focus on conservation initiatives around water resources.

Discussion is already taking place regarding the establishment of a master Watershed Steward Program in Franklin County, and other organizations can also help contribute to this effort. Our stakeholder group suggested forming a collaborative effort to promote water resource values such as a Water Week, or Watershed Snapshots, which would involve water quality monitoring and education for Franklin County neighbors on how they can support clean water and do their part to meet the county goals. Other efforts that could help generate buy-in and interest in the clean water initiative include education and outreach efforts for:

- Local municipal leaders (stormwater management, green infrastructure, etc.); and
- Agricultural communities on best management practices and soil health.

An opportunity exists to learn from the other counties as they develop successful strategies and best management practices. Emphasis should be placed on physical implementation and seeing real results in the goal reductions by landowner adoption of conservation practices. The opportunity exists to incorporate other strategies or planning practices into the CAP process through other planning efforts such as comprehensive planning, open space and greenway planning, and model ordinance development. Stormwater management needs to be evaluated from a more holistic perspective through guidance from the state.

## **Challenges:**

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:

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

One of the greatest challenges is uncertainty with regard to baseline conditions - and which practices and facilities are currently in place - but are not included in the data used to formulate our planning goalposts. We have proposed measures to account for some current unreported practices, and lack of data management structure for BMPs from agricultural and urban sectors, but these are costly and will take significant time and coordination to establish.

The target goals of reducing Nitrogen and Phosphorus entering local waterways are to be met by 2025. The time frame is very ambitious. There is much work to be done at the state level before additional measurable practices can be implemented on the ground at the local level.

Legislation may be needed which can be a cumbersome and slow process with an uncertain outcome. Significant funding needs to be identified and put into place where it can make the most significant impact. Finally, a large enough structure will need to be established at the state level to oversee the implementation of the plan by the 43 counties impacted. While some of these items are in motion, we have further to go.

It will take time to hire and train the necessary staff to carry out the plan. The goals are to be met by 2025. However, the process to actually meet the goals may take a longer time period and the initiative itself will be an ongoing process. BMPs put in place today may not be fully activated/effective for a number of years, and others will age out, needing replacement or updates. It is difficult to prescribe formulaic practices for farmers who must respond quickly to changing weather and soil conditions and seasonal fluctuations to meet their optimal agricultural production goals, and for many, keep their living.

## **Summary:**

On the following pages are a summary of the three primary initiatives as outlined in the Franklin County CAP. The initiatives include programmatic, policy, and regulatory changes, achieving pollution reduction goals, and implementing education and coordination/outreach.

## **Priority Initiative 1: Programmatic, Policy and Regulatory Changes**

- Integrate Chesapeake Bay planning efforts with county planning through dedicated personnel available to support local goals, implementation and address capacity issues on a county by county basis
- Create a central location for data collection and reporting regarding implemented BMPs, county conservation plans, restoration project permits, grant applications, 4R practices, etc.
- Implement a survey process for capturing current agricultural best management practices that are unreported.
- Create a systematic process and database for inventorying stormwater management practices and facilities in MS4 and non-MS4 municipalities.
- Evaluate feasibility of a multi-municipal or county entity to implement stormwater management practices on a regional scale.

## **Priority Initiative 2: Achieve Pollution Reduction Goals**

- Establish a set of BMPs that will achieve nutrient load reduction in an efficient and cost effective manner. [Note: See Template 2 Detailed BMP Entry Form]

### Priority BMPs: Agriculture Sector

- Tillage Management
- Cover Crop
- Soil and Water Conservation Plans
- Precision Rotation/ Prescribed Grazing
- Nutrient Management
- Manure Transport
- Non- Urban Stream Restoration
- Forest Buffers with Exclusion Fencing
- Grass Buffer with Exclusion Fencing
- Forest Buffers
- Grass Buffers
- Wetland Restoration
- Off Stream Watering
- Land Retirement to Agriculture Open Space
- Tree Planting
- Barnyard Runoff Control
- Loafing Lot Management
- Animal Waste Management Systems

## Priority BMPs: Municipal Sector

- Bioswales
  - Infiltration Basin
  - Bioretention/Raingardens
  - Stormwater Performance Standard – Runoff Reduction
  - Stormwater Performance Standard – Stormwater Treatment
  - Urban Stream Restoration
  - Forest Buffer
  - Permeable Pavement
  - Street Sweeping
  - Wetland Restoration
  - Tree Planting – Canopy
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- Evaluate the current system of incentives/penalties for agricultural practices and define an enhanced incentive program for BMPs with the greatest impact on nutrient loads to get landowners buy in.
  - Identify key areas for the installation of BMPs with the greatest net effect. Define priority areas for riparian buffers.
  - Prepare GIS mapping of proposed installation of all BMPs for WIP III.
  - Implement a better documentation program for commercial and homeowner nutrient applications on developed lands.
  - Evaluate the feasibility for the establishment of ordinances on a countywide or multi- municipal level to promote best management practices for stormwater management.
  - Develop or revise model ordinances to reflect current pollution reduction targets and BMPs.
  - Develop an incentive program for voluntary adoption of BMPs in urban or developed areas and consider an offset program for implementation of high- impact BMPs in agricultural areas on a cost benefit basis.

## **Priority Initiative 3: Implement Education and Coordination/Outreach**

- Develop a communication strategy to communicate parallel goals of WIP III and local goals such as environmental health, economic growth, improved quality of life and so forth.
- Utilize existing resources to engage educational objectives.
- Develop a focused effort to promote BMPs in the agricultural community.

## **Conclusion:**

Franklin County anticipates working closely with the PA DEP as we strive to meet the established water quality goals. The CAP and CWFC initiative provide an opportunity to bring stakeholders and partners together to not only focus on water quality but also to embrace and incorporate other environmental and planning matters more inclusively. For this initiative to be successful it will take the involvement of the many partners: local, state, and federal government, the agriculture community, private businesses, and non-profit organizations. An extensive outreach and educational campaign is needed to create an awareness and understanding of the importance of the issues dealing with water quality and soil health and the role that we all play in meeting these goals. We need change in the regulatory process, program development at the state and local level, staff hired and trained, and some type of funding or incentive program created for the installation of BMPs. By all appropriate parties working together in a cohesive manner, these goals become achievable and the quality of life for Franklin County neighbors will be improved.