

# YORK COUNTY

## Countywide Action Plan for Clean Water (CAP) Overview

### 2025 UPDATE

#### **PLAN HIGHLIGHTS**

The original York Countywide Action Plan for Clean Water (CAP) was developed in 2019 through a collaborative effort of the York County Planning Commission (YCPG), York County Conservation District (YCCD), and the York County Coalition for Clean Waters (YCC4CW). The 2019 Plan identified three Priority Initiatives for York County to make progress toward improving water quality as it relates to Chesapeake Bay TMDL goals. Within each Priority Initiative are clear Actions that must be implemented for York County to meet the goal of reducing Nitrogen loading by 4 million pounds from our streams and waterways. This would reduce our current estimated loading from 11.9 million pounds to 7.9 million pounds. York County has met its Phosphorous reduction goal, and there is not a Bay goal for Sediment. Thus, Nitrogen continues to be the pollutant of concern and the focus of the CAP Priority Initiatives and Actions.

As part of the 2021 CAP Two Year Milestones and Progress Report, Priority Initiative 3, *County Conservation District*, was deleted, but the accompanying action items were incorporated into Priority Initiative 2, *Achieve Pollutant Reductions*. Priority Initiative 1, *Programmatic Initiatives*, was not changed. A brief description of the current initiatives follows.

- Priority Initiative 1, *Programmatic Initiatives*, identifies policy and funding Actions for York County to undertake in order to improve local water quality. In addition, there are Programmatic Initiatives that the State must undertake to achieve water quality improvement and enable the success of the countywide efforts. The State Actions are on a separate *State Programmatic Recommendations* template.
- Priority Initiative 2, *Achieve Pollutant Reductions*, lists Actions for implementation through existing MS4 permittees, the York County Planning Commission, the York County Conservation District, and environmental entities. It also lists concrete Actions for the agricultural community to implement. Each category of Actions relies on partnerships with municipalities; agricultural landowners and suppliers; federal, state, and local agencies; the York County Stormwater Consortium; Master Watershed Stewards; the Lower Susquehanna Riverkeeper; Watershed Alliance of York (WAY); and others.

York County applauds PA DEP for taking a new approach compared to previous WIP efforts. The emphasis in the development of this Plan was, and continues to be, on obtaining local buy in and developing partnerships at all levels, including local, state, and federal agencies. Through this approach, we have seen community awareness of local water quality grow. York County still has far to go, but with ongoing multi-level support and resources, we have the best chance to date of achieving the goal.

## **KEY FINDINGS**

Key findings from the development of the original Plan in 2019 include:

- York County agencies and key stakeholders understand their role within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and the need to improve local water quality. However, that message isn't widely known or understood in the broader community. Simple and consistent messaging from federal and state agencies about the problem, the PA approach to address the problem/reach the goal, and the penalties or backstops if we don't achieve the goal would help broaden the understanding of the importance of the Plan.
- The people and agencies involved in developing the Plan appreciated the "bottom up" approach that PA DEP initiated. It helped broaden the message and develop buy in for implementation. There is a desire to have a similar approach used when developing other water quality efforts, such as MS4 permit regulations and agricultural compliance.
- There is a desire for a more holistic approach to improve water quality in general, and to achieve the Chesapeake Bay goals in specific. A more holistic approach would require programmatic changes at all levels and would include ongoing cooperation and support to maintain partnerships at all levels of government, streamlined permitting for water quality improvement projects within the Bay watershed, consistent enforcement for compliance, recognition of successful efforts, and funding, always funding.

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESS**

York County has several active water quality groups in place that will be key to helping achieve some level of success toward our Nitrogen reduction goal. The York County Coalition for Clean Waters (YCC4CW) developed the first York County WIP in 2013. Thus, they were engaged to develop this Plan as well. However, in 2021, the YCC4CW merged with the Watershed Alliance of York (WAY), which resulted in a more robust organization, rebranding, and the creation of new committees. The mission of WAY is to improve York County's water, making it cleaner and healthier for all, which is in direct alignment with the CAP goals. WAY will be a vital partner in implementing the York CAP and communicating awareness of its success.

The York County Stormwater Consortium (YCSWC) is an established group comprised of 45 municipalities working to implement the York County Regional Chesapeake Bay Pollutant Reduction Plan (CBPRP). The municipalities work together through an intergovernmental cooperation agreement to manage, fund, and implement the Regional CBPRP stormwater BMP projects. The YCSWC also plays a key role in implementing the York CAP.

The YCCD administers various programs that focus on projects to improve water quality. It also has a strong working relationship with the agricultural community, which will be important in promoting the implementation of water quality best practices by farmers.

## **CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTATION**

As an implementation effort of the Phase II PA WIP, the York County Coalition for Clean Waters (YCC4CW) developed a County WIP in 2013. This first York County WIP relied on voluntary implementation efforts to achieve the goals. Through that effort, we learned that voluntary efforts are not enough, and that lesson carries over into the York CAP. This Plan will not be successful if we rely solely on voluntary efforts. To achieve the goals, we will need a designated entity to coordinate, provide assistance, report progress, and assist with verification. This will require funding, staff, and technical resources.

One of our Programmatic Initiatives is the potential formation of a countywide stormwater authority. An authority could not only suffice for the “designated entity” mentioned above, but also provide a funding mechanism to implement the Countywide Action Plan and likewise help the state meet its Phase III WIP. However, the challenge is educating and garnering the support of municipalities, the agricultural community, and the public. Without support, the County Commissioners may not take action to create an authority.

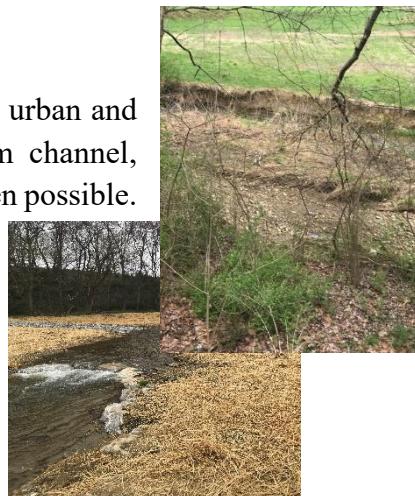
Through development of this Plan, it became evident that achieving compliance and monitoring for ongoing verification is drastically different between sectors. The MS4 permit provides a mechanism to determine compliance and on-going verification for the stormwater sector. The agricultural sector has requirements for Conservation or Ag. E&S Plans, but it is nearly impossible to quantify compliance at the local level. Cooperation and assistance from state and federal agencies is critical if we want to achieve compliance and perform ongoing monitoring and verification of agricultural accomplishments.

The biggest challenge, in our opinion, is implementation of the State Programmatic Recommendations. The recommended initiatives attempt to unify and integrate Pennsylvania’s regulatory agencies so that there is coordination and consistency in providing the technical assistance, support, funding, and direction needed for local efforts to be successful in achieving the Nitrogen reduction goal. It is important to note that these programmatic changes are actually the first steps toward achieving the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) recommendations in Pennsylvania’s State Water Plan and the Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) Comprehensive Plan.

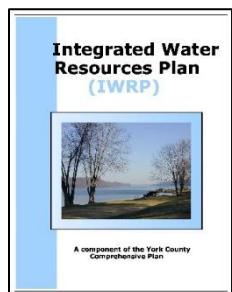


The York CAP includes projects that will install riparian buffers, exclusion fencing, and livestock stream crossings on farms to improve water quality. Nitrogen reductions from such projects are needed to reach the target.

The York CAP also includes stream restoration projects in both urban and agricultural areas. These projects include restoring the stream channel, installing riparian buffers, and reconnection to the floodplain when possible. On livestock farms, they may also include exclusion fencing and stream crossings. Nitrogen reduction amounts vary depending on the components of the project.



Additionally, the York CAP includes non-structural BMPs that focus on planning, local land use regulations, and education/outreach. A few examples include implementation of the County Comprehensive Plan, supporting local initiatives to implement pollutant reducing activities, and encouraging adoption of low impact development and green infrastructure



provisions. Of note are the Growth Management and Integrated Water Resources Plan (IWRP) components of the County Comprehensive Plan. The Growth Management Plan promotes development in established growth areas and focuses on the protection of natural resources in the established rural areas. YCPC staff work cooperatively with municipalities to achieve consistency between local plans/ordinances and the County Growth Management Plan. The IWRP ties everything water related together and also serves as the County Act 167 Stormwater Management (SWM) Plan. As such, its approval by PA DEP required all municipalities in the County to adopt a Stormwater Management Ordinance consistent with the Plan. Together, implementation of the Plan and municipal land use/SWM ordinances address water quality concerns ranging from municipal and industrial stormwater to agriculture and land development practices, including E&S controls and PCSM, as well as illicit discharges. Enforcement, however, is key from an ordinance standpoint. Many municipalities have illicit discharge detection and elimination (IDD&E) programs, in addition to addressing it through their SWM ordinances. The YCPC has also prepared a model Sustainable Landscaping Ordinance and shared it with local municipalities. The model ordinance provisions strive to conserve and restore healthy soils, reduce the use of irrigation for landscapes, improve the quality of surface waters, reduce energy consumption, provide wildlife habitat, and protect and restore Native Plant communities.



## **“BEYOND 2025” INITIAVE: CONCERNS/COMMENTS**

YCPC staff thoroughly reviewed the 2023 *Achieving Water Quality Goals in the Chesapeake Bay: A Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response* (CESR) report. This resulted in many questions

about the Chesapeake Bay clean-up and especially the associated best management practices (BMPs) being implemented. On page 21, the report says “*Estimates of achieving TMDL targets generally assume that expected pollutant responses to BMP implementation are accurate. Given the complexity and uncertainties of reduction pollutant loads across a watershed, this will rarely be the case. A critical technical and policy question to address is the extent to which nonpoint source policy and management actions are as effective as expected. Emerging evidence suggests that nonpoint source management actions have had mixed success in reducing nutrient and sediment loads and that response gaps may exist between expected and observed pollutant reductions.*” The CESR report also put into question whether the Bay goals are achievable even with state programmatic changes. Reviewing the report further solidified why we feel real-time water quality monitoring, and York County becoming a pilot for watershed management, is critical. After five years of continuous water quality monitoring data collection in partnership with USGS, the York County Water Quality Dashboard (<https://rconnect.usgs.gov/york-qw/>) went live during the spring of 2025. York County’s real-time water quality monitoring data has revealed that the Chesapeake Bay Model is not completely accurate and moreover, it could be said that our CAP goals have been met. Now is the time to research and discover new scientific approaches to data management, reporting, water quality, and watershed management. We feel York County is ripe for this scientific research and could play a major role in the advancement of Chesapeake Bay restoration knowledge, concepts, and work.

Announced in 2025 by the Chesapeake Bay Program and embraced by PA DEP was “Beyond 2025.” Currently, at the end of the 2025 reporting year, details of what “Beyond 2025” will entail are not fully understood. In the summer of 2025, YCPC submitted comments on the draft *Chesapeake Bay Agreement Beyond 2025 Revision* which we assume will eventually guide next steps and the future of CAP’s in Pennsylvania. Ultimately, we hope that “Beyond 2025” will allow for scientific advancement in watershed management and continued success in water quality project implementation. As things currently stand, it seems that the future of Bay restoration work is uncertain and that we stand at a turning point; either continue with “business as usual” by being reliant on the less than scientific Model or pivot to a more scientifically driven approach with real-time water quality monitoring data leading actions.

After the 2024 DEP Clean Water Gathering, three Clean Water Progress Teams were created: Staff Building/Staff Retention, Technical and Administrative Assistance Team, and Funding/Multi-Grant Coordination. These Progress Teams were the result of identified issues and challenges at a previous meeting. As a result of the 2025 Clean Water Gathering, DEP created “Success Strategies,” which resulted in the creation of several Clean Water Action Teams charged with identifying goals and solutions to previously identified issues and challenges. We applaud DEP for taking this new approach with all CAP counties and stakeholder agencies involved. Facilitating meetings with stakeholders, agencies, and partners is extremely important especially for advancement of common goals but, this new effort feels somewhat like starting over at the beginning of CAP implementation and continuing with “business as usual.” Through CAP planning, York County identified 10 priority recommendations for State Programmatic Changes. Not only are these no longer annually reported on, and have not been since 2021, but most of the

priority recommendations are not included within the concepts of the newly formed Clean Water Action Teams. York County has been vocal and firm in our belief that without implementation of the recommended State Programmatic Changes, full CAP implementation will never be possible. Even if “Beyond 2025” brings Bay watershed restoration to new scientific approaches, the State Programmatic Changes are still vital and necessary to streamline restoration work within the State.

York County remains committed to watershed restoration and conservation and will continue to work with DEP, EPA, and all agency partners on this ever-important work. We will continue to champion for our innovative initiatives, which we feel can advance the science of the Chesapeake Bay Program restoration and goals.

## **2020/2021 PROGRESS HIGHLIGHTS**

- As a result of the merger of the YCC4CW with WAY, there is now a new organizational structure consisting of a Board of Directors, contributing members, and multiple committees, which are former YCC4CW Action Teams. Current committees include Legislative & Programmatic Changes, Project Implementation, Education & Outreach, Data Management, and Revenue Building. To further augment the Project Implementation Committee, a Watershed Forestry Subcommittee was formed. The Board of Directors meets monthly and all meetings are open to the public. The Committees mostly meet on a bi-monthly basis. Although membership has expanded, there is still a need to bring more farmers and businesses to the table. Thus, participants are being sought to create an Agricultural Committee in an effort to ramp up involvement by the agricultural community. The dedicated work of the Board and Committees resulted in ongoing progress toward implementation of the CAP action items, as reflected in the 2021 Progress Report.
- The YCSWC’s Regional CBPRP was approved by PA DEP and strides were made to implement the water quality best management practice (BMP) projects included in the Plan. This includes completion of 18 projects during the current MS4 Permit cycle, most of which were stream restorations and basin retrofits. Additionally, a number of projects are either under construction or in the design/permitting phase. Although these projects focus on sediment reduction to meet MS4 Permit requirements, they also reduce nutrients, which helps to achieve the CAP nitrogen reduction target. Additionally, some Consortium members are also active members of WAY.
- The YCCD is an active CAP initiative participant, with staff members serving on the WAY Board of Directors, as well as various Committees. The District has made considerable progress carrying out projects that benefit the CAP, such as completing Agricultural Erosion and Sediment (Ag E&S) Plans for farms, issuing project implementation grants, applying for grants to implement projects, and educating farmers on the importance of agricultural BMPs.
- The York County Board of Commissioners designated the YCPC as the lead entity to provide administrative and technical support for CAP implementation, with assistance to be provided by the YCCD. PA DEP subsequently provided funding to YCPC to hire a CAP Coordinator. This position was filled in February of 2020. Thus, we now have a full-time staff member that is dedicated to overseeing the CAP initiative and coordinating the effort at all levels. The CAP

Coordinator has made strides toward increasing awareness and involvement, as well as creating new partnerships. In addition, PA DEP annually awards CAP Block Grant funding to YCPC for project implementation.

- Although no action has been taken to create a countywide stormwater authority (SWA), the Commissioners did take action to implement other recommendations included in the SWA Implementation Plan. A measure particularly beneficial to the CAP is a water quality monitoring program, initiated in 2019 through a partnership with USGS, which includes six continuous state-of-the-art monitors that capture readings from about 90% of the water flow leaving the County. The collected data is used to measure nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment. There is also a synoptic monitor to track hotspots in the data and determine the cause. The data gathered will inform us of the County's actual water quality and where projects to improve water quality are needed. The Commissioners also provided additional funding to the YCCD to fill staff positions that will benefit CAP implementation.
- PA DEP issued a CAP Reporting and Verification FAQs report as a starting point and ongoing discussions and updates on this topic continue at the state level. Additionally, it is our hope that the water quality monitoring data being collected in York County will ultimately be accepted as proof that local BMPs are operational, sound, and improving water quality.
- Implementation of the State Programmatic Recommendations remains a key challenge, but the doors of communication are open. Representatives of PA DEP are periodically invited to participate in Legislative and Programmatic Change Committee meetings to provide input and guidance. In 2021, the Committee submitted a final draft concept for creation of a Watershed Permit to PA DEP for consideration. Legislative and programmatic changes are also a point of discussion during meetings of YCPC, YCCD, and the PA DEP Chesapeake Bay Office team. Additionally, PA DEP continues to host Permit Pre-Application meetings and developed a permitting guide to help expedite the permitting process and get water quality BMPs implemented more quickly.
- The CAST 2019 model showed that the York CAP achieves 79% of the Nitrogen target, which is an improvement as compared to CAST 2017. It also showed that progress was made toward achieving the BMP quantity for all but four (4) of the structural BMP actions in the CAP.
- YCPC received a NFWF Small Watershed Grant in 2020 to develop a long-term CAP messaging strategy and messaging tools. This project continues and will be completed in the Fall of 2021. Among the progress to date is a new Watershed Alliance of York (WAY) logo, messaging campaigns to reach the target audiences, an update to the WAY website is underway, photo shoots were conducted to provide local photos for use in messaging materials and social media posts, and a variety of educational handouts are under development. We have already seen positive results and expect our education and outreach efforts to continue flourishing.
- With funding from the York County Community Foundation. YCPC initiated a two (2)-year pilot project to "Advance Agricultural Outreach in the Codorus Watershed." This project will focus on the Barshinger Creek subwatershed and will educate approximately 34 farmers about the CAP water quality goals and provide technical assistance regarding implementation of Ag BMPs. The Codorus Partnership, consisting of agri-business representatives and others, will



also be created to assist with hosting a field day to showcase Ag BMPs and soil health techniques. Additionally, 10 farmers will be awarded a \$1,000 voucher to work with an Ag advisor to implement BMPs. The YCPC contracted with Land Logics Group, LLC, to assist with this effort.

- The four (4) projects funded with the 2020 DEP CAP Block Grant funding, which includes three (3) stream restorations and one (1) raingarden, will be completed by October 2021. The 2021 CAP Block Grant funds were awarded to three (3) stream restoration projects and one (1) bioretention/buffer planting project. Two (2) of the stream restoration projects are completed and the other is scheduled to begin construction in the Fall of 2021. Construction of the bioretention/buffer planting project is underway.
- The YCCD initiated a Pilot Ag Plan BMP Data Collection Project and is currently working with four (4) municipalities to collect Ag BMP information using Practice Keeper criteria. The data collected will be entered into Practice Keeper so it will count toward local progress. Based on the success and lessons learned from this initial outreach, the intent is to expand the project and gather data in other municipalities.
- The YCCD awarded CEG funds for several projects and started a Cover Crop Program with CEG funding.
- The reCAP newsletter continued to be produced bi-monthly, and the distribution list has increased significantly. The newsletters include highlights of WAY Board and Committee activities, BMP spotlights, success stories, and more.
- Conducted outreach to various farmers and the York County Farm Bureau.
- The Data Management Committee prepared a BMP Guide and template to collect data on implemented unreported BMPs. As data is collected, it will be entered into FieldDoc for credit.
- Conducted outreach to schools and municipalities, regarding interest in buffer and/or rain garden projects that could provide an educational opportunity for students. Several have expressed interest.
- Formed a partnership with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay to implement riparian buffer projects in York County. The Alliance is playing a vital role in the newly created Watershed Forestry Subcommittee.
- Established a York County branch of Riparian Rangers as part of the Watershed Forestry Subcommittee. The rangers received training and committed to monitoring, maintaining, and ultimately boosting tree survivorship for local reforestation efforts.
- The 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Watershed Week will be held September 16-25 to increase public awareness about the importance of local watersheds to community health, sustainable economies, and environmental quality. A mix of over twenty (20) virtual and in-person family friendly events are planned throughout the County.

## **GOALS FOR 2022**

- Continue to expand involvement in CAP implementation through the Watershed Alliance of York (WAY), its Committees, and other partnerships. This includes establishing a robust Agricultural Committee, attracting stakeholders to serve on Committees that are waning, and spearheading the development of Ag and urban BMPs.

- Host an Ag Field Day as part of the Codorus Watershed Ag Outreach Pilot Project and award a voucher to 10 farmers to work with an Ag consultant and/or implement Ag BMPs.
- Continue to implement YCCDs Pilot Agricultural BMP Data Collection project and expand it to include additional municipalities.
- Continue to pursue implementation of State and local programmatic/legislative changes considered necessary to meet CAP goals.
- Educate landowners and municipalities about unreported BMPs to determine where such projects may exist. Once identified, the BMP Guide and template will be used to gather the information necessary to obtain nitrogen reduction credit through FieldDoc.

### **PROGRESS UPDATE OF 2022 GOALS**

- WAY has continued to build on the momentum of CAP implementation that came with the successful rebranding in 2020-2021. To date, WAY has obtained several grants that will implement projects for CAP credits and has expanded the Riparian Rangers group. The Committees of WAY continue to meet but the waning of participation continues. The formation of the Ag Committee has not progressed as there is currently no clear task for a committee to work on. YCCD and other County Ag partners continue to lead the charge of Ag outreach and technical assistance throughout the County.
- YCPC's Ag Field Day funded by the York County Community Foundations Ag and Codorus Endowment Committees and in partnership with the Center for Water Quality Excellence was a success and well received in the Ag Community. Several projects on the 2023 CAP funding request are in the concentrated Barshinger Creek area where the direct outreach occurred for this project.
- YCCD has continued outreach in the selected municipalities for the Pilot Agricultural BMP Data Collection project. The Ag Land and Preservation Board assisted in sending out letters to landowners/farmers to garnish data. Unfortunately, there has not been very much interest in information sharing without incentive. Nonetheless, this has not hindered YCCD in data collection/entry into PracticeKeeper as they continue to create a robust Ag BMP data warehouse for York County Conservation.
- York County's Water Quality Monitoring program in partnership with USGS continues to prove to be a valuable programmatic change, one that is identified in York's CAP as a local and State change. In 2022, EPA requested a stream-side demonstration of York County's monitoring program. Appropriate conversations with state and federal agencies are starting to happen.
- The true value of FieldDoc has not been identified. No unreported BMP's have been found or identified to report in FieldDoc for CAP credit. However, the unreported BMP collection template that WAY's Data Management Committee designed in year one of CAP implementation has proven valuable in the current BMP Verification work that YCPC is completing with funding from DEP.

### **GOALS FOR 2023**

- Complete DEP funded BMP verification work.

- Continue to expand involvement in CAP implementation through the Watershed Alliance of York (WAY), it's Committees, and other partnerships.
- Continue to pursue conversations and opportunities with USGS and appropriate agencies around the use of York County's water quality monitoring program as a pilot for advancement and change in the Chesapeake Bay watershed as it pertains to watershed management.

## **PROGRESS UPDATE OF 2023 GOALS**

- With BMP Verification funds provided by DEP, YCPC worked with a local contractor to verify stream restoration projects that had aged out of the Chesapeake Bay model. Overall, of the 32 stream restorations identified to possibly re-verify, 19 were re-verified. The contractor provided a detailed verification report and photos for each. The data was entered into PracticeKeeper and the projects were mapped.
- Watershed Alliance of York (WAY) continues to be the public facing entity implementing the CAP for York County. In 2023, WAY was the recipient of four CAP funded project contracts. This was a first for WAY and there is no doubt that the organization has grown in this capacity due to the ongoing work of the CAP Coordinator and YCCD Watershed Specialist. WAY also received a capacity building grant from Chesapeake Bay Trust. With the funding from the capacity building grant, WAY will work with a contractor to assess organizational processes and policies and develop updated standards of practice to ensure organizational efficiency, fiscal responsibility, and effective regulatory compliance. WAY also was the recipient of a \$1.5m grant award from SRBC for a very large stream restoration project at Terra Farms. Work began and is underway for this multi-year project that is proving that WAY is capable of expansion and implementation on a large scale.
- YCPC staff were invited and participated in several Science and Technology Advisory Committee (STAC) meetings. They recognize YCPC staff as being an expert on a variety of water issues that will add insight to the meetings and facilitate achievement of common goals. We continue to advocate for science-based results and the use of real-time water quality monitoring. We continue to pursue having York County's water quality monitoring program as a pilot for advancement and change in the Chesapeake Bay watershed as it pertains to watershed management.
- With funding provided by the York County Community Foundation for our Better Farms Cleaner Water Pilot Project, vouchers valued at \$1,800 were awarded to 7 farmers for the implementation of ag BMPs in the Barshinger Watershed. This was the final component of the Pilot Project.
- CAP Block Grant funding was awarded for the implementation of 5 stream restoration projects, 3 of which were completed.
- With CAP Block Grant Funding, created a WAY "Watershed Forestry Program." It provides a financial incentive (reimbursement) to landowners for planting riparian forest buffers.
- WAY hosted a very successful Watershed Week with over 20 activities. One of the activities was a Water Quality Monitoring Field Day with USGS, which was attended by EPA and DEP staff, as well as a County Commissioner and several other key stakeholders.

- WAY participated in the Keystone 10 Million Trees Program resulting in the planting of over 10,000 trees in the County.
- A BMP Operations and Maintenance Training was held for municipalities in partnership with the Center for Watershed Protection. Over 60 people attended.
- In partnership with the Center for Water Quality Excellence (CWQE) and with a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, a workshop to educate HOA's regarding stormwater management responsibilities was held.
- Continued production of the reCAP Newsletter and expanded its distribution list to keep people informed and invite them to become engaged.

## **GOALS FOR 2024**

- Continue to expand involvement in CAP implementation through the Watershed Alliance of York (WAY), it's Committees, and other partnerships.
- Continue to pursue conversations and opportunities with USGS and appropriate agencies around the use of York County's water quality monitoring program as a pilot for advancement and change in the Chesapeake Bay watershed as it pertains to watershed management.
- Continue to promote implementation of CAP BMPs and provide financial and/or technical assistance, when possible.
- Through WAY and with the assistance of CAP funding, continue to implement the "Watershed Forestry Program" that provides a per acre reimbursement to landowners for planting a Riparian Forest Buffer in accordance with Program criteria.
- Continue to work with the Western PA Conservancy to carry out a Mussel Feasibility Study on select York County streams.
- Continue to work with WAY to host the Annual Watershed Week that offers many educational opportunities and showcases BMPs.

## **PROGRESS UPDATE OF 2024 GOALS**

- WAY obtained a grant from Chesapeake Bay Trust to complete capacity building. Findings presented at the conclusion of that work included hiring a full-time staff person for WAY, restructuring, and the need for future strategic planning. WAY has started to obtain pledged funds for a Director position. WAY continues to serve as a 'pass-through' organization that works directly with landowners to obtain grants to complete water quality projects on private land. CAP funding continues to be spent through WAY including but not limited to the successful WAY Watershed Forestry Program.
- York County and USGS renewed our water quality monitoring agreement for another five years. York continues to pursue conversations and opportunities with appropriate agencies around the use of York County's water quality monitoring program as a pilot for advancement and change in the Chesapeake Bay watershed as it pertains to watershed management.

- In 2024, YCPC was able to allocate DEP CAP funding to 8 projects. Throughout the year, YCPC provided consistency letters to a number of partner organizations for projects that would continue the advancement of CAP goals.
- The WAY Watershed Forestry Program has implemented over 88 acres of riparian forest buffer since it's inception in fall 2023. WAY presented the success of the program at the 2024 Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Forum in Shepherdstown, WV.
- Western PA Conservancy mussel experts and scientists were able to complete a second year of surveying York County's waters for freshwater mussels. Plans for more surveys are underway for 2025. The goal of these surveys is mainly for restoration of freshwater mussels in our waterways. Secondary goals are heavily focused on scientific discovery and research around freshwater mussels and their relationship to water quality using York's state-of-the-art USGS water quality monitoring program. Through this work, staff has also become involved in the SRBC led Mussel Partnership and has been asked to be involved on an education and outreach committee.
- WAY hosted the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Watershed Week on September 21<sup>st</sup> through 27<sup>th</sup>. This year, a dozen events were featured with the purpose of increasing awareness about the importance of clean water to community health. This was WAY's most successful Watershed Week event to date with nearly \$20,000 in sponsorship funds raised and more than 250 people attended events over the week.

## **GOALS FOR 2025**

- Continue to expand involvement in CAP implementation through the Watershed Alliance of York (WAY), it's Committees, and other partnerships.
- Continue to pursue conversations and opportunities with USGS and appropriate agencies around the use of York County's water quality monitoring program as a pilot for advancement and change in the Chesapeake Bay watershed as it pertains to watershed management.
- Continue to promote implementation of CAP BMPs and provide financial and/or technical assistance, when possible.
- Through WAY and with the assistance of CAP funding, continue to implement the "Watershed Forestry Program" that provides a per acre reimbursement to landowners for planting a Riparian Forest Buffer in accordance with Program criteria.
- Continue to work with the Western PA Conservancy to carry out a Mussel Feasibility Study on select York County streams.
- Continue to work with WAY to host the Annual Watershed Week that offers many educational opportunities and showcases BMPs.
- Continue to work with WAY on public education and outreach of CAP concepts and initiatives including the hosting of events throughout the year, presentations, educational field trips, and partnerships.
- Support WAY as deemed necessary through its continued growth and expansion, in particular strategic planning and the hiring of a Director.
- Close out this iteration of the Phase 3 WIP and thus CAP in York County.

## **PROGRESS UPDATE OF 2025 GOALS**

- The Watershed Alliance of York (WAY) remains the public facing entity implementing the concepts of the CAP. In 2025, WAY took on more grants than ever before. It was also the first year since 2020 that all Executive Officer seats were filled.
- The York County Water Quality Dashboard (<https://rconnect.usgs.gov/york-qw/>) went live in the spring. Since then, new conversations with DEP and others have begun. York County partners continue to meet with USGS on a quarterly basis and as of fall are working to develop concrete goals for being a pilot for advancement and change in the Chesapeake Bay watershed as it pertains to watershed management.
- With 2025 CAP funds, YCPC was able to allocate funding to four water quality projects. YCPC continues to provide technical assistance, especially to municipalities through the YCSWC. In partnership with YCPC for CAP implementation, WAY has become a technical and financial assistance provider working directly with landowners. WAY is managing several grants and continues to apply for new funding streams to assist in achieving clean water goals.
- WAY continued the implementation of its “Watershed Forestry Program,” which saw its third year and an additional 25 acres of new Riparian Forest Buffer.
- Although freshwater mussel surveying with Western PA Conservancy did not take place in 2025, partnership with them continued through their assistance to WAY in writing a NFWF-SWG application. YCPC and WAY attended a CBF hosted Mussel and Buffer Symposium where we shared our initiatives through a poster board session.
- WAY hosted the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Watershed Week on September 13<sup>th</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup>. This year, 19 events were featured with the purpose of increasing awareness about the importance of clean water to community health. WAY raised \$10,000 in sponsorship funds to support the events and organization. More than 250 people attended events over the week.
- Many educational outreach events, presentations, and field trips took place this year. To highlight a couple of opportunities...WAY continued partnering with the Lower Susquehanna Riverkeeper Association in the spring and fall and guided many stream study field trips with school children from 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. With YCPC, there were multiple career days where water quality planning was included in presentations by the CAP Coordinator. In partnership with YCPC, a presentation on CAP and MS4 was given followed by a guided stream restoration tour field trip with York College Engineering students. WAY tabled multiple educational events, presented watershed concepts at several summer camps, and led stream studies. Each opportunity for educational outreach of any kind was seized throughout the year.
- In 2025, WAY applied for funding for strategic planning but did not receive the grant. Another application for 2026 will be submitted. Through the capacity building that was completed in 2024, it became clear that short-term strategic plan concepts were being implemented. The act of further strategic planning will be for a broader understanding of long-term organizational goals. WAY was successful in hiring an Executive Director in the

spring. YCPC continues to support the efforts of WAY and through the process of hiring the Executive Director, the address for WAY's operations changed to YCPC's location.

- It remains unclear what “Beyond 2025” will be for the CAP’s. We feel that revising the plans could be a good idea but would like to see some changes. The Annual Progress Update reporting Word document needs some serious re-thinking. There are BMP numerical goals in them, yet those numbers are not reflected anywhere or even discussed in the reporting. The reporting of the Annual Progress Update is very redundant and for York County, it is not useful. There is no way to see “progress” of BMP implementation numbers other than CAST runs. This narrative, which is optional to update, with goals and progress highlighted annually, shows the work being done in a more efficient manner and is more useful to our County. The County’s water quality monitoring program, in partnership with USGS, has also brought to light conversations that need to take place. For example, our extensive data indicates that our CAP goals have been met. Thus, continuing with the narrative that CAST creates is now confusing to stakeholders and the public. A goal of 2025 was to close out this iteration of the Phase 3 WIP and thus CAP in York County but it’s now known that the CAP program will continue beyond 2025 thus York County looks forward to transitioning our CAP involvement and Phase 3 WIP efforts to align with updated Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals and timelines once a clear path forward is determined.

## **GOALS FOR 2026**

- Move into “Beyond 2025” and identify new CAP goals and initiatives, while reorganizing current/past CAP implementation goals and ways of reporting.
- Continue to use CAP funding to implement BMPs that focus on cleaning up impaired streams.
- Continue to work with the YCCD to implement Ag BMPs.
- Continue to pursue conversations and opportunities with USGS and appropriate agencies around the use of York County’s water quality monitoring program as a pilot for advancement and change in the Chesapeake Bay watershed as it pertains to watershed management.
- Continue to work with the Western PA Conservancy to carry out a Mussel Feasibility Study on select York County streams.
- Continue to expand involvement in CAP implementation through the Watershed Alliance of York (WAY), its Committees, and other partnerships.
- Through WAY and with the assistance of CAP funding, continue to implement the “Watershed Forestry Program” that provides a per acre reimbursement to landowners for planting a Riparian Forest Buffer in accordance with Program criteria.
- Continue to work with WAY to host the Annual Watershed Week that offers many educational opportunities and showcases BMPs.
- Continue to participate in Chesapeake Bay Program meetings to keep abreast of program goals, progress, and new initiatives.

- Continue to work with WAY on public education and outreach of CAP concepts and initiatives, including hosting events, presentations, and educational field trips, as well as building partnerships.
- Support WAY as deemed necessary through its continued growth and expansion.

## **PLAN SUMMARY**

The York County Clean Water Action Plan consists of four (4) parts: this Narrative the State Programmatic Recommendations Template, the York County Planning and Progress Template, and the York County Detailed BMP Template. Summarized below are the Action items on the State Programmatic Recommendations and the York County Planning and Progress Templates.

### **State Programmatic Recommendations Template**

This template only includes one priority initiative, which is Recommendations for State Programmatic Changes. The Actions listed are of utmost importance for implementation of the countywide actions and achievement of the Nitrogen reduction goal by 2025.

- Action 1.1 Establish an integrated planning program at DEP within the Chesapeake Bay or Planning office to spearhead implementation of the programmatic changes listed below.
- Action 1.2 Develop a method /model/template to capture and report non-permitted BMPs at the municipal level for credit in model/ permit.
- Action 1.3 Develop a method/model /template to capture and report non-manure nutrient management.
- Action 1.4 Develop a Standardized/Centralized system to collect and report all BMP data for credit in the Model, including O & M
- Action 1.5 Provide flexibility to combine MS4/ TMDL/WIP III requirements into a single Plan. Implement ONE plan in order to meet all requirements.
- Action 1.6 Develop a regulatory model that allows for meeting water quality goals under a results oriented program vs. the current performance based program.
- Action 1.7 Establish watershed permits to expedite/ simplify permitting process for similar BMP projects.
- Action 1.8 Enforce Act 167.
- Action 1.9 Create/establish incentives (positive-economic/water quality; negative- noncompliance penalties) for all stakeholders to comply with State law.
- Action 1.10 Utilize Bay Model to establish assigned MS4 Permit baseloads/reduction requirements/ BMP credits so as to eliminate the need for permittee calculations, justifications, and rationale.

### **York County Planning and Progress Template**

This template includes three priority initiatives: Programmatic Changes, Achieve Pollutant Reductions, and York County Conservation District Clean Water/Healthy Watersheds Program. Below is a summary of these initiatives and accompanying Action items.

#### Priority Initiative 1 - Programmatic Changes

The York County Clean Water Action Plan identifies Programmatic changes for local agencies to implement. The projects and efforts to improve water quality in York County streams are not coordinated across watersheds, across agencies, or between the different water sectors as identified in the Chesapeake Bay program. Consequently, progress in and by York County is difficult to identify and quantify. The Actions identified in Priority Initiative 1 would create a coordinating entity that would identify priority locations for improvement, fund projects, and monitor water quality to identify and quantify improvement.

- Action 1.1 Form a Countywide Stormwater Authority in order to develop a sustainable, efficient, responsible County entity that can fund, administer, coordinate, and achieve Countywide water quality/flooding efforts on behalf of all County stakeholders including the agricultural community, municipalities, industrial/commercial entities, and residents.
- Action 1.2 Continue to implement the County Comprehensive Plan that calls for development/land use strategies that restore/preserve water resources.
- Action 1.3 Establish staffing/funding program that provides realistic resources to achieve agricultural planning and implementation obligations.
- Action 1.4 Establish a sustainable real time stream monitoring network Countywide that will establish local water quality trends, impairments, hotspots, and restoration BMP needs. In the future, this system should indicate/verify countywide progress toward WIP 3 goals.

#### Priority Initiative 2 - Achieve Pollutant Reductions

Priority Initiative 2 includes Actions proposed by municipalities that are MS4 permittees and are participating in the York County Stormwater Consortium to implement projects from the Regional Chesapeake Bay Pollutant Reduction Plan. It is important to note that while these projects have a dedicated funding source for implementation, that funding is not sufficient to implement the full array of projects. Participating municipalities are seeking additional funds, such as grants, to carry out projects. Additionally, many of these projects focus on maximizing sediment reduction (local waterways goal) while the York County goal for the Phase 3 WIP is Nitrogen reduction (Chesapeake Bay goal). There are also numerous Actions listed for agricultural projects, which provide greater reductions in Nitrogen, but do not have a dedicated funding source identified or property owner approval for implementation. Both categories of Actions need dedicated staff to manage the projects through implementation and on-going verification.

- Action 2.1 Establish a set of BMPs that will achieve desired pollutant reductions in an efficient and cost effective manner (see BMP template)
- Action 2.2 Encourage and provide support to municipalities to incorporate green infrastructure (GI) and Low Impact Development (LID) into land use ordinances
- Action 2.3 Support local and County initiatives for pollutant reducing activities

- Action 2.4 Develop/advertise a performance-based RFP seeking bids to site, design, install, operate, and maintain BMPs to reduce a specified amount of sediment to meet PRP goals and shortfall of WIP 3 nitrogen goals in the County.
- Action 2.5 Tree Planting - Canopy
- Action 2.6 Bio swale
- Action 2.7 Forest Buffer
- Action 2.8 Wetland Restoration
- Action 2.9 Infiltration Basin
- Action 2.10 Bio retention/ Raingardens
- Action 2.11 Stormwater Performance Standard- Stormwater Treatment
- Action 2.12 Stormwater Performance Standard - Runoff Reduction
- Action 2.13 Urban Stream Restoration
- Action 2.14 Nutrient Management Plan (urban)
- Action 2.15 Land Retirement to Ag Open Space
- Action 2.16 Nutrient Management Core N
- Action 2.17 Nutrient Management Core P
- Action 2.18 Nutrient Management N Rate
- Action 2.19 Nutrient Management N Timing
- Action 2.20 Tillage Management- High Residue
- Action 2.21 Tillage Management-Conservation
- Action 2.22 Cover Crops Traditional
- Action 2.23 Animal Waste Management System
- Action 2.24 Barnyard Runoff Control
- Action 2.25 Precision Intensive Rotational/ Prescribed Grazing
- Action 2.26 Non-Urban Stream Restoration
- Action 2.27 Grass Buffer (ag)
- Action 2.28 Forest Buffer (ag)
- Action 2.29 Manure Incorporation
- Action 2.30 Off Stream Watering without fencing
- Action 2.31 Tree Planting
- Action 2.32 Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans
- Action 2.33 Wetland Restoration – Floodplain (ag)
- Action 2.34 Erosion & Sediment Control Level 2
- Action 2.35 Dirt & Gravel Road (DGR) Erosion & Sediment Control-Driving Surface Aggregate + Raising the Roadbed [includes Low Volume Road (LVR) projects]
- Action 2.36 Forest Buffer with Exclusion Fencing
- Action 2.36 Dirt & Gravel Road Erosion & Sediment Control - Driving Surface Aggregate with Outlets (includes LVR projects)
- Action 2.37 Dirt & Gravel Road Erosion & Sediment Control - Outlets only (includes LVR projects)
- Action 2.38 Forest Buffer
- Action 2.39 Forest Buffer-Streamside with Exclusion Fencing
- Action 2.40 Grass Buffer – Streamside with Exclusion Fencing

- Action 2.41 Forest Buffer – Narrow with Exclusion Fencing
- Action 2.42 Grass Buffer – Narrow with Exclusion Fencing
- Action 2.43 Grass Buffer
- Action 2.44 Grass Buffer- Narrow
- Action 2.45 Non-Urban Stream Restoration – Floodplain
- Action 2.46 Urban Stream Restoration
- Action 2.47 Wetland Restoration – Headwater
- Action 2.48 Wetland Restoration – Floodplain
- Action 2.49 Wetland Creation – Floodplain
- Action 2.50 Wetland Creation – Headwater
- Action 2.51 Wetland Enhancement

#### Priority Initiative 3 - York County Conservation District

Priority Initiative 3, which included Actions for implementation by the York County Conservation District (YCCD) through the Dirt and Gravel Road (DGR), Low Volume Road (LVR), and other programs, was deleted as part of the 2021 CAP Progress Update. However, the Priority Initiative 3 Actions (3.1 – 3.18) were incorporated into Priority Initiative 2 for ease of tracking and reporting. Thus, the overall BMPs to be implemented to achieve CAP goals remain the same.