

Countywide Action Plan Overview

Potter County

Plan Highlights

The Potter County Countywide Action Plan (CAP) establishes guidance and planning for the county and its local partners to work toward the common goal of clean water. This plan was taken on by Potter County to outline initiatives and approaches to amend existing water quality priorities and goals within the county. The local activities that are outlined within this plan will benefit the community while also contributing to the goals of the Chesapeake Bay Cleanup effort. The Potter County CAP is designed to provide direction and guidance for the implementation of clean water projects and initiatives within the county.

The Potter County CAP includes four (4) priority initiative groups as well as programmatic recommendations. Each priority initiative group outlines tangible and quantifiable goals to improve water quality within each area. The programmatic recommendations located within this plan outline changes in current State and regulatory processes that will ease and aid the implementation process of this plan. This plan is designed to be a fluid document that will adapt and evolve overtime based upon application success and updates to local priorities.

The Potter County CAP is designed to achieve these outlined initiatives through the Best Management Practices (BMP) implementation timeframe of 2027, while extending beyond to serve as a long-term planning document to continue to improve the local water quality within the county.

A Potter County Toolbox was developed and provided to the County from the PA Department of Environmental Protection to identify the areas where Potter County is seeing increased nutrient loads, as well as providing an established goal to meet in nutrient reductions through 2025.

Within the Potter County Toolbox, it was outlined that 63% of Potter County's pollutant load is derived from Natural Lands, while only 26% is from Agricultural, 9% is from Developed, 1% is from Wastewater, and 1% is from Septic. This creates a unique challenge to implement BMP's within limited implementation areas without impacting the natural forested lands within Potter County.

This document will not only outline implementation initiatives but will also strive to implement educational programs and engagement within the local community to increase awareness for the value of local resources. Throughout the plan development process, stakeholder involvement has been an integral part to establish local perspectives to ensure a well-rounded and effective plan for Potter County.

Key Findings

Throughout the planning process, Potter County has gained insight and collaboration from many Stakeholders and community members. Stakeholders were an integral part of identifying the county's main goals and outlining projected actions throughout the employment of this plan. In order to meet Potter County's nutrient reduction goals, it will be important to increase reporting of existing BMP's as well as newly implemented BMP's. This is crucial to receiving the correct credit reductions within Potter County due to the limited project areas for new implementations as 92% of the county is natural forested lands.

A key finding within Potter County's plan development was the reporting of Dirt and Gravel Low Volume Road (DGLVR) amounts due to the expansive natural forest lands. Due to the large amount of forest roads and dirt and gravel roads within the county, reporting the ongoing maintenance and management practices of these areas will greatly contribute to the nutrient reduction calculations for the county. The potential for Aquaculture BMP's to be implemented is also a target area for the county. Potter County is second in Pennsylvania for Aquaculture production, and implementation of BMP's in this area will deliver direct benefit to the waterways that house these hatcheries.

Opportunities for Success

The Potter County CAP development included the identification of appropriate collaborations, priority areas, and resources needed specific to the county that would improve the implementation success of the plan while also working to benefit and engage the residents of the county.

Potter County has many opportunities for success that have been identified through the CAP development process. One of these opportunities is updated and increased reporting of previously implemented BMP's within the county. Due to Potter County's expansive forested land use and amount of nutrients reported in the Toolbox that are derived from natural sources, reporting of the existing forest management practices will be of great benefit to Potter County's nutrient reductions.

Another area that Potter County has an opportunity for success is through the implementation of BMP's within existing Fish Hatcheries. Due to the amount of existing Fish Hatcheries within the county, BMP implementation for the improvement of waste management and mitigation will be a beneficial project to implement.

There is also added opportunity within the developed partnership with Tioga County to target the enhancement of the Cowanesque Watershed which is split across county lines. This partnership with a neighboring county will enable the counties to provide assistance to the watershed as a whole resulting in a greater benefit to the water quality. The Cowanesque

Watershed is being prioritized in this partnership due to the shared interest and importance of the watershed between County partners and project area availability for BMP implementation.

Lastly, the updates and amendments to the existing Stormwater regulations within the Act 167 Plan and Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) will greatly improve the stormwater management within new development as well as upgrades to existing infrastructure. These updates and amendments will be reflective of current and predicted storm events to ensure longevity in successful management practice applications throughout the county.

Challenges to Implementation

During the development of the Potter County CAP, there has been countywide collaboration on identifying previous accomplishments, areas that would benefit from assistance, and how to complete the identified goals in a way to accurately measure success.

Potter County has identified a few major challenges to plan execution including the shortage of staffing, financing for plan implementation, receiving adequate credits for innovative nutrient reduction implementations, and land availability to implement outlined projects. Several opportunities for initiative achievement are contingent on gaining necessary resources outlined for successful plan execution.

The target goals of reducing 342,000 lbs. of Nitrogen and 49,000 lbs. of Phosphorus loads entering local waterways are to be met by 2027.



Previously completed stream bank stabilization project within Potter County

Implementation Update - 2023

Potter County has been effectively implementing projects that align with the outlined priority initiatives and have been securing additional funding to elevate project selection and increase project abundance.

Due to limited resources, the following priority initiatives have been removed from the scope of project completion through 2025, although are still of importance to Potter County. These projects will be pursued as resources becomes available to support these actions.

Wastewater

Previous Priority Initiative 4.1 – Private Septic/Sewer Maintenance

Previous Priority Initiative 4.1a – Private Septic/Sewer Education

Previous Priority Initiative 4.3 – Private Septic upgrades in Little Kettle Creek Watershed

Please view the updated Priority Initiatives under the Plan Summary.

Implementation Update – 2025

Potter County has met or exceeded performance targets, resulting in the creation of sustainable programs and resources. As a result, the following Priority Initiatives are now recognized as completed, having achieved their intended outcomes and established ongoing support to ensure long-term impacts.

Agriculture

Completed Priority Initiative 1.1 - Implement Nutrient Management Analysis Program to Agricultural Landowners

Completed Priority Initiative 1.1a – Soil Sampling Program, Manure Testing Program, and Agronomy Assistance/Analysis Program

Completed Priority Initiative 1.2 – Increase Reporting and Verification of Existing BMP's

Completed Priority Initiative 1.3b – No-Till Equipment Reimbursement Program

Completed Priority Initiative 1.8 – Aquaculture/Fish Hatchery Maintenance and Nutrient Planning

Stormwater

Completed Priority Initiative 2.2 – Update and Amend Local SALDO

As project implementation occurs, Potter County has identified Priority Initiatives that are completed simultaneously, due to the similarities in performance targets. To better track, prioritize, and implement these Priority Initiatives, the following will be combined.

Agriculture

Previous Priority Initiative 1.3a – Increase No-Till Equipment Availability *will be combined with* Priority Initiative 1.3 – Enhance No-Till Use Throughout County *to include performance targets from both priorities.*

Previous Priority Initiative 1.7 - Riparian Buffer and Stream Fencing *will be combined with* Priority Initiative 3.2 – Non-Urban Stream Restoration and Stabilization *to include performance targets from both priorities.*

Previous Priority Initiative 1.9a – Manure Injection Equipment Reimbursement Program *will be combined with* Priority Initiative 1.9 – Manure Injection Equipment Rental Program *to include performance targets from both priorities.*

The following Priority Initiative description has been changed to better align with the goals of the County.

Stormwater

Previous Priority Initiative 2.3 - Nutrient and Fertilizer Planning for Turf Grass *updated to* Priority Initiative 2.3 – Nutrient Planning and Lawn Conversion for Turf Grass

Please view the updated Priority Initiatives under the Plan Summary.

Plan Summary

The implementation of the Potter County Action Plan (CAP) will center around four (4) priority initiatives, 1) Agriculture, 2) Urban Development and Stormwater, 3) Natural, and 4) Wastewater, as well as outlined Programmatic Initiatives. Potter County Stakeholder groups were established with the purpose of organizing teams for oversight and focus point development within each Priority Initiative. Priority Initiatives denoted with **green** have been successfully completed as of the plan year 2025.

Priority Initiative 1 – Agriculture

- **Priority Initiative 1.1** – Implement Nutrient Management Analysis Program for Agricultural Landowners
 - Create a program for farmers to apply for soil sampling, manure analysis, and agronomic assistance to allow for technical assistance and recommendations for nutrient management implementation.
- **Priority Initiative 1.1a**
 - Activity 1: Develop Soil Sample Collection and Analysis Program
 - Activity 2: Develop Manure Testing and Analysis Program
 - Activity 3: Develop Agronomic Analysis Program
- **Priority Initiative 1.2** – Increase Reporting and Verification of Existing BMP's
 - Collect data using landowner reporting forms and verify existing BMP's on Agricultural Operations.
- Priority Initiative 1.3 – Enhance No-Till Use throughout Potter County
 - Promote No-Till on operations through education, outreach events, and increased equipment availability. Expand the use of the county owned No-Till equipment.
- **Priority Initiative 1.3b** – No-Till Equipment Reimbursement Program
 - Establish a rental fee percent reimbursement program for completing an implementation reporting form.
- Priority Initiative 1.4 – Provide Alternative Species Cover Cropping
 - Create a program to promote cover cropping and education of alternative species.
- Priority Initiative 1.4a – Increase Cover Cropping Species Availability
 - Increase cover cropping implementation by increasing species availability of Cover Crops specific to Potter County climate and producer needs.
- Priority Initiative 1.5 – Cost Share Liming Program

- Provide a cost sharing program and education to increase liming practices and increase overall pH on farmlands.
- Priority Initiative 1.6 – Existing BMP Maintenance Program
 - Assist producers with maintenance of existing BMP's to keep them functioning through cost-share labor or funding.
- **Priority Initiative 1.8** – Aquaculture/Fish Hatchery Maintenance and Nutrient Planning
 - Complete Nutrient Management Planning and upgrades to a minimum of two fish hatcheries within the county.
- Priority Initiative 1.9 – Manure Injection Equipment Rental Program
 - Purchase manure injection equipment and administer an education program to promote practice. Reimbursement % for rental fee cost for filling out reporting form.
- Priority Initiative 1.10 – Partnership – Potter and Tioga County Cowanesque Watershed Agricultural BMP Upgrades
 - Implement Agricultural BMP's across Potter and Tioga County to assist the Cowanesque Watershed as a whole.

Priority Initiative 2 - Urban Development and Stormwater

- Priority Initiative 2.1 – Update and Amend Act 167 Plan
 - Make all Stormwater Ordinances consistent with the County Stormwater Management Plan for implementation.
- **Priority Initiative 2.2** – Update and Amend Local SALDO
 - Update the local SALDO to include proven BMP's to be utilized in projects to prevent increased stormwater and nutrient discharges.
- Priority Initiative 2.3 – Nutrient Planning and Lawn Conversion for Turf Grass
 - Develop and implement plans and guidance for Turf Grass. BMPs included are Conservation Landscape Practices and Nutrient Management Planning.
- Priority Initiative 2.4 – Dirt and Gravel Low Volume Roads Maintenance
 - Improve quality and runoff from DGLV roads and Forestry roads to reduce stormwater runoff.
- Priority Initiative 2.5 – Residential Rainwater Maintenance
 - Provide rainwater maintenance for residential properties with large amounts of driveways and impervious areas.

Priority Initiative 3 – Natural

- Priority Initiative 3.1 – Forest Management Plans
 - Create forest management plans for private landowners.
- Priority Initiative 3.2 – Non-Urban Stream Restoration
 - Restoring quality stream banks and channels within forested and agricultural areas.
- Priority Initiative 3.3 – Forest Land Conservation Management
 - Integration of State Forest and State Game Lands BMP's to capture existing management plans.

Priority Initiative 4 – Wastewater

- Priority Initiative 4.1 – Upgrades and Maintenance on Public Sewer
 - Complete necessary upgrades on two Water Treatment Plants and implement proper maintenance on the remaining plants within the county.

Programmatic Initiatives

- Action 1.1 – Update Clean Stream Law to allow for regulatory agencies of the Commonwealth to require fencing along streams to reduce pollution from grazing livestock.
 - This action would be a state level law change that would allow Districts to achieve nutrient reductions and improve local water quality.
- Action 1.2 – Update Act 38 and Chapter 91 to prohibit mechanical land application of manure or nutrients on frozen or snow-covered ground.
 - This update would reduce excess nutrients running off into streams and encourage needed management changes on operations that would have mutual benefit for local water quality and the farmer.
- Action 1.3 – Allow PFBC to raise license fees for the purpose of providing funding to implement habitat improvements and erosion reduction.
 - The sustained revenue source would fund much needed projects and increase fishery values within the county.
- Action 1.4 – Support PA SB 465 and 1272 or similar legislation to provide agriculture cost share funding.
 - This is an existing bill that needs support from all sectors to provide much needed funding.
- Action 1.5 – Change program standards for Chesapeake Bay Program Technician.

- This change in program would allow for no inspection requirements within the Chesapeake Bay Technician Job duties while maintaining other job aspects at a county level.
- Action 1.6 – Revise Stormwater regulations to include 30% overdesign culvert replacements to account for increased flooding events.
 - This revision will allow for the replacement of culverts to be 30% overdesigned to account for increased flood events from climate change.
- Action 1.7 – Dedicated Staff from DEP or Conservation District to Verify and Report BMP's.
 - Dedicated staff members at district level or state level to verify and report BMP's implemented within Potter County into Practice Keeper.
- Action 1.8 – Dedicated Funding Source for Municipalities to Support Stormwater Management and Act 167 Plan.
 - Dedicated funding source for municipalities to implement stormwater BMPs and Act 167 Plan guidance.