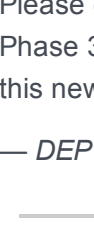




HEALTHY WATERS

Pennsylvania. Partnership. Progress



TOM WOLF, GOVERNOR • PATRICK MCDONNELL, SECRETARY

September 2021

Hello partners for water quality!

We have much news to share on progress by state, local, and sector partners to reduce nutrient and sediment pollution and improve water quality in Pennsylvania's share of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

For the state leaders, complete plan document, and more details on the Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan, visit the [Phase 3 WIP website](#). For a broader educational look at nutrient and sediment pollution in local streams, rivers, and lakes in the watershed, including tips and success stories, visit [Healthy Waters, Healthy Communities](#).

Please consider how you might join in or help support this work. Anyone interested in their county's Phase 3 WIP County Wide Action plan can [sign up to get involved](#). And help spread the word! Share this newsletter or the [subscribe](#) page.

— DEP Chesapeake Bay Office

Programs and Projects by State Partners

Governor Wolf and Secretary Redding call on U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to implement \$737 million Chesapeake Bay Resilient Farms Initiative

On September 7, [Governor Wolf called on USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack to implement the Chesapeake Bay Resilient Farms Initiative \(CRFI\)](#) to support Pennsylvania farmers in their fight against the impacts of climate change. In late August, [Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding joined agriculture secretaries from all Chesapeake Bay watershed states in signing his support](#) for a proposal by the Chesapeake Bay Program [commission to the USDA](#) which would create the [Chesapeake Bay Resilient Farms Initiative \(CRFI\)](#) funded at \$737 million to support the efforts of the agriculture industry in the six Chesapeake Bay watershed states over the next decade. And on September 15, the presidents of the Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, New York, Virginia, and West Virginia Farm Bureaus also called on Secretary Tom to implement the CRFI initiative.

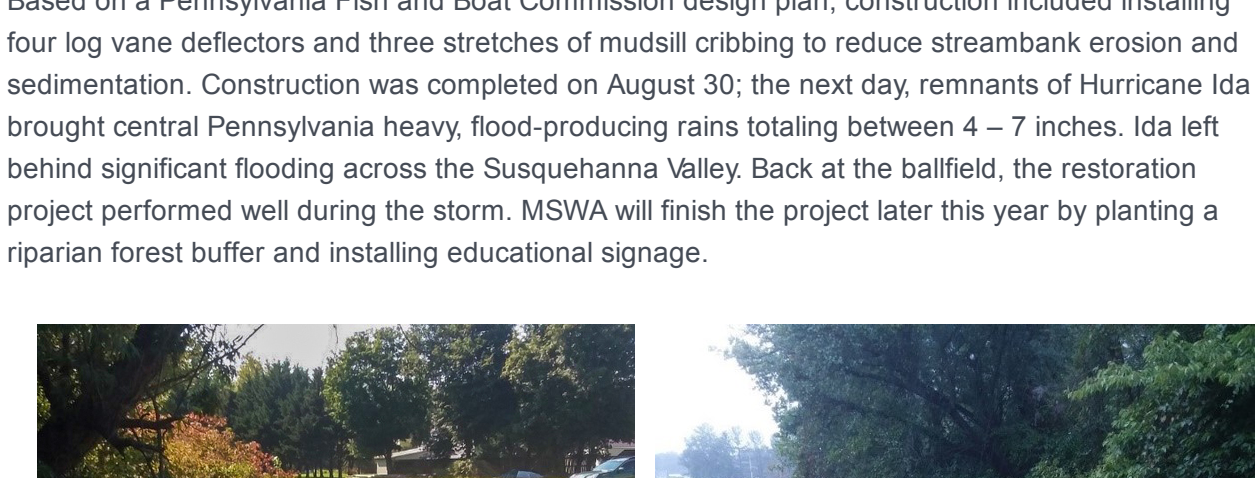
The CRFI would help implement sustainable, on-farm agriculture practices that reduce nitrogen output, improve water quality, and effectively decrease negative impacts of climate change on agriculture. With the agriculture industry responsible for 80 percent of nitrogen reductions, this program is critical to increasing capacity and making this goal feasible for the industry to accomplish. The proposed CRFI program is modeled after the USDA-funded [Mississippi River Basin Initiative](#) and targets the sub-watersheds – particularly the Susquehanna River – that have the greatest impact on the Chesapeake Bay and offer the most cost-effective solutions.

Center for Water Quality Excellence hosting open house to launch support center

The Center for Water Quality Excellence has scheduled an open house on September 30, 2021, from 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. to launch their support center at 430 Walnut Street, Suite 303, Columbia, PA 17512. The support center is being set up to help farmers, local governments, businesses, and organizations better understand and navigate planning, implementation, and funding opportunities in urban and agricultural stormwater management in Lancaster and York counties. [More information can be found here.](#)

Susquehanna River Basin Commission releases Sediment and Nutrient Assessment Program (SNAP) annual report in first ever StoryMap format

The Susquehanna River Basin Commission created its first-ever [Stories in Water Data StoryMap](#) to provide information about its Sediment and Nutrient Assessment Program (SNAP). The StoryMap was developed with Pennsylvania's Countywide Action Plan (CAP) audience in mind. *Stories in Water Data* describes the methods used by Chesapeake Bay Program partner agencies to measure streamflow and pollutant concentrations with scientific consistency – such measurements are a basic part of how pollution reduction targets for the Bay States are set. A key point in this StoryMap is demonstrating the fact that pollutant loads are mostly driven by streamflow. Every CAP team plays a crucial role to help implement the management actions that reduce nutrient pollutants to their local watersheds and it's well understood that the stakeholder community deserves to see evidence of their efforts and progress in terms of measurement data. Yet, in order to discern trends, water quality measurements need to account for streamflow and pollutant concentration variations over a long period of time. This StoryMap explains the complexity in interpreting water data and shows the audience where to explore their questions about water quality trends, waterway conditions, and how to get involved.



Pennsylvania Focusing on leased farmland could provide increased conservation opportunities

Conservation practices are less common on leased farmland than on owner-operated farms, which is important to note, since an estimated 42% of the nation's farmland and 46% of Pennsylvania's farmland is leased. To date, efforts to encourage implementation of conservation and soil health practices have been aimed at the farmers who own the land. Efforts to address this concern are underway to encourage owners and tenant farmers in the Pennsylvania's Chesapeake Bay region to place more nutrient reducing best management practices (BMPs) on leased farmland. The website, [landownerhelp.com](#), which launched in June, is a joint project of the Pennsylvania Soil Health Coalition, Stroud Water Research Center, and other organizations that focuses on encouraging landowners to supporting BMPs on their leased farmland. Additionally, a coalition of organizations, that include members such as the American Farmland Trust, The Nature Conservancy, and the Farm Journal's Trust in Food partnership, is working to provide information and resources to both landowners and tenant farmers.

For a deeper dive about the challenges facing leased farmlands, [read the full article by Ad Crable with The Bay Journal.](#)

The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay hosts 2021 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Forum

The annual Chesapeake Bay Watershed Forum is a watershed-wide event reaching over 400 restoration and protection practitioners to inspire and empower local action towards clean water. The forum shares successful tools and techniques, offers lessons and learnings from on-the-ground work, builds capacities of local organizations, fosters partnerships and networking, educates on new initiatives and emerging practices, and celebrates successes. [View the 2021 Forum Agenda and Registration here.](#)

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) is working to increase riparian buffer establishment statewide

DCNR is leading a broad initiative to increase riparian forest buffer establishment statewide, including providing grants to install riparian forest buffers. Between 2016 and 2020, DCNR awarded over \$6.8 million through nearly 60 grants to local partners, resulting in approximately 1,270 acres of forest buffers planted.

DCNR is now evaluating the program and looking for feedback. All are encouraged to take a few minutes to complete a survey that will help DCNR improve its grant program and make it even more successful at getting buffers installed across the landscape.

Please share and complete [this survey related to streamlining riparian buffer implementation by September 30](#).

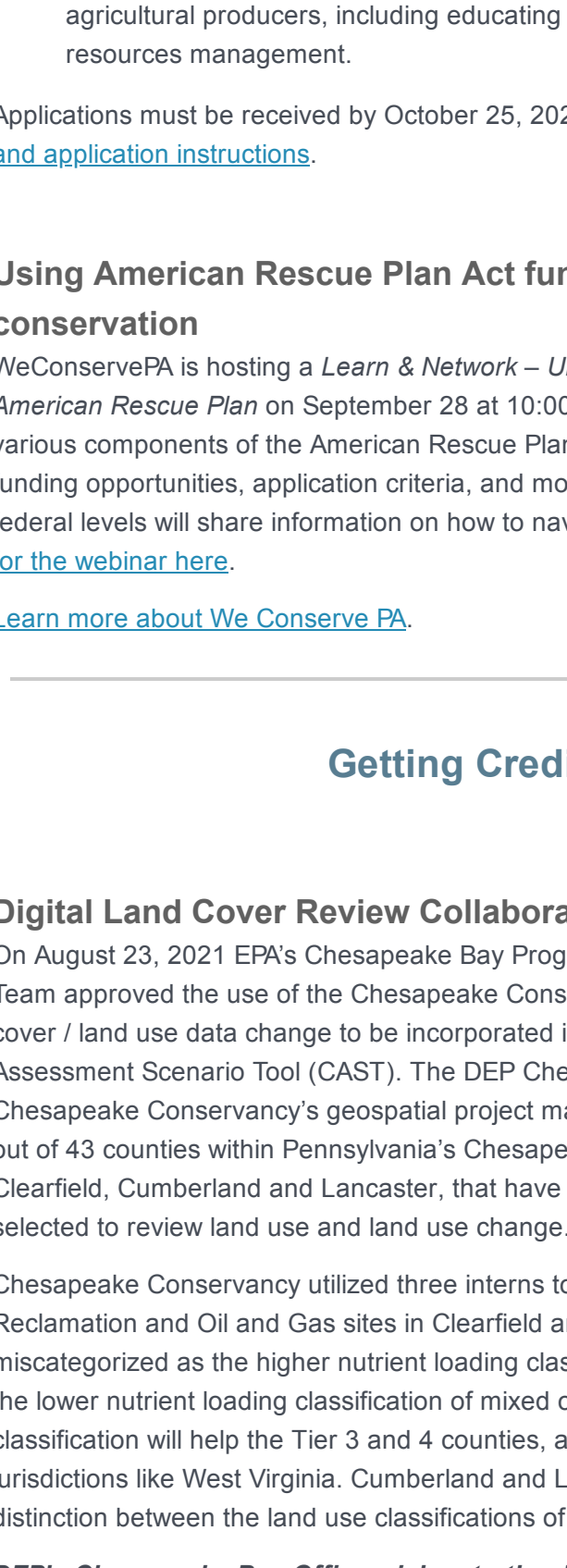


The benefits of streamside buffers

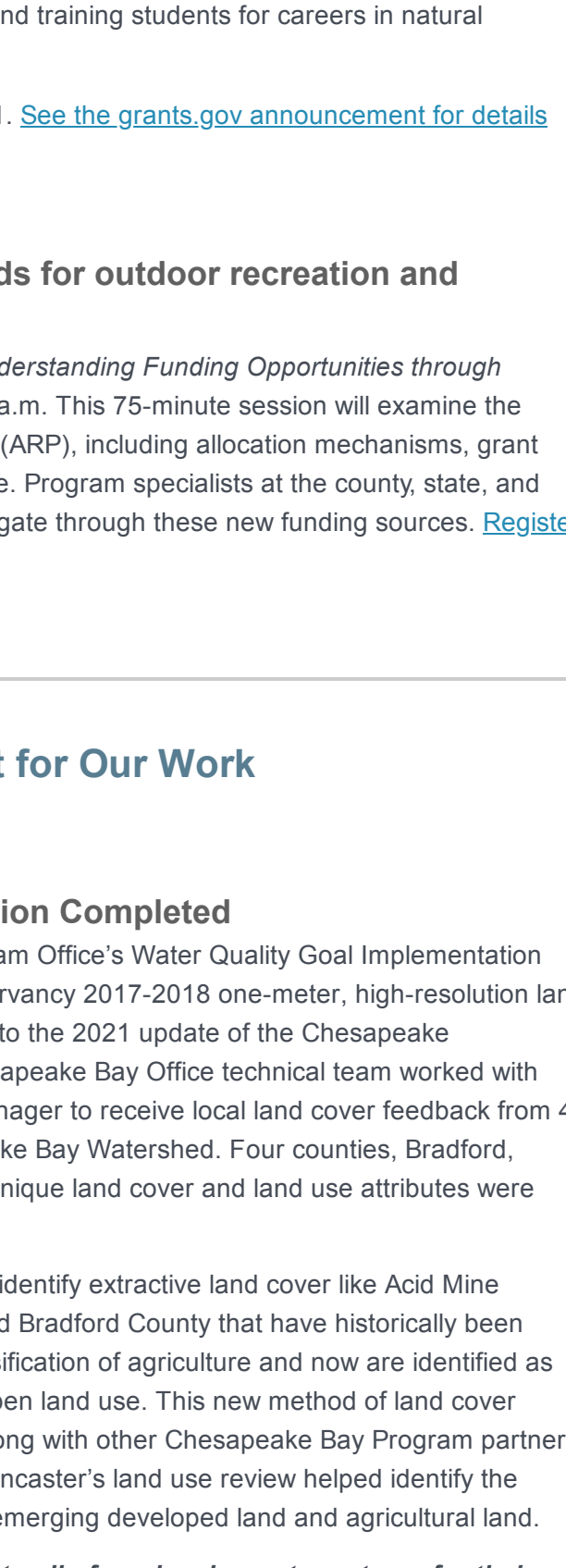
Stream restoration project tested during Hurricane Ida

The Middle Spring Watershed Association (MSWA) recently installed a streambank restoration project along Middle Spring Creek next to a Shippensburg area youth baseball field in Franklin County. The project is funded by a \$58,000 EPA Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management grant from DEP. Middle Spring Creek is a tributary to the Conodogunt Creek, which drains to the Susquehanna River and ultimately, the Chesapeake Bay. The project is estimated to reduce 5.5 tons of sediment a year to improve water quality.

Based on a Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission design plan, construction included installing four log vane deflectors and three stretches of mudsill cribbing to reduce streambank erosion and sedimentation. Construction was completed on August 30, the next day, remnants of Hurricane Ida brought central Pennsylvania heavy, flood-producing rains totaling between 4 – 7 inches. Ida left behind significant flooding across the Susquehanna Valley. Back at the baseball field, the restoration project performed well during the storm. MSWA will finish the project later this year by planting a riparian forest buffer and installing educational signage.



Shippensburg area stream restoration project on Middle Spring Creek.



The stream restoration project working well after Ida brought flood-producing rains to area.

DEP announces updates to the Water Quality Exchange

The Water Quality Exchange node is the primary means by which DEP sends chemistry water quality data to the federal Water Quality Portal. This exchange system allows DEP to fulfill several major requirements for federal grants. Until recently, DEP has only transferred data from the Water Quality Network (WQN), where recurring sampling takes place at approximately 178 locations across Pennsylvania. Recent enhancements increased the amount of data being sent through the exchange to mirror more closely what is publicly available in eMapPA. DEP Water Quality Division and Information Technology staff have successfully submitted additional chemistry data from 2010 to 2020. The exchange enhancement updated/added a total of 2,021,291 records from 64,907 sampling events and has greatly improved the accessibility and transparency of DEP's data on a national platform. It will also greatly facilitate DEP's data request workload moving forward. This would not have been possible without support from the federal NEIEN and 106 Supplemental grants. For questions, contact Dustin Shull at 717-787-9639.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) releases new Watershed Index Online

The EPA Healthy Watersheds Team recently announced Version 2.2 of the Watershed Index Online (WSIO), a national library of watershed attributes used for comparing watershed characteristics. This version incorporates 14 updated and 68 new HUC12 indicators, containing 431 HUC12 indicators in total. The full library, including select improvements can be accessed by visiting the [WSIO website](#). Data are available for use and download in the following formats: Excel, file geodatabase, and web service.

New indicators processed as part of this release focus on climate change (e.g., changes to biological and sea level), environmental justice (e.g., population and demographics, exposure to hazardous pollutants), and water quality assessments, impairments, and Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs).

Many of these WSIO indicators can be readily applied using the Recovery Potential Screening (RPS) Tool, a systematic method and tool for comparing watersheds based on characteristics relevant to successful restoration or protection. RPS tools, [downloadable from the RPS website](#), have been updated to incorporate indicator values from the RPS 2021 and include a total of 264 watershed indicators at HUC12 scale (custom Tools may have more indicators and/or scales). The updated RPS Tools also contain a new indicator sub-category classification feature.

WSIO indicators can be applied in useful ways such as prioritization under the 303(d) Program, nutrient management plans, and nonpoint source program planning. Please reach out to EPA's Healthy Watersheds Team at hw-learn@epa.gov or to the contacts listed below, with any questions.

- Miranda Chien-Hale (EPA, Watershed Branch): oversees the WSIO and RPS Contractor support chien-hale.miranda@epa.gov
- Emily Cira (EPA, Watershed Branch): supports RPS and data integration needs cira.emily@epa.gov
- Steve Epling (EPA, Nonpoint Source Management Branch): oversees the Healthy Watersheds Protection programmatic integration epling.steve@epa.gov
- Andy Somor (The Cadmus Group): as the RPS Tool expert, provides contractor support for state-specific and general projects as tasked by EPA andrew.somor@cadmusgroup.com

Funding Available Now!

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is soliciting proposals to restore water quality and habitats of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed

NFWF, in partnership with EPA and the federal-state Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) partnership, is soliciting proposals to restore water quality and habitats of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributary rivers and streams.

NFWF is soliciting proposals under the 2022 Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grants (INSR) program to accelerate the rate of scale of water quality improvements specifically through the coordinated and collaborative efforts of sustainable, regional-scale partnerships in implementing proven water quality improvement practices more cost-effectively. Projects proposing to implement water quality improvement projects or practices at the plot or demonstration scale, through ad-hoc project-scale partnerships, or via small-scale applications of new or innovative technologies are encouraged to apply for funding through the separate Small Watersheds (SWG) program Request for Proposals anticipated for release in early 2022.

NFWF estimates awarding \$7-10 million in grants through the INSR program in 2022, contingent on the availability of funding. Major funding comes from the Natural Resources Bay Program Office, with other important contributions by Altria Group, the USDA National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

All prospective applicants are required to consult with NFWF prior to submitting an application and no later than November 15, 2021, with final proposals due by 11:59 PM on Monday, November 29, 2021. The NFWF program staff will confirm the applicant's eligibility and provide initial feedback on the proposed project's alignment with the INSR program priorities. Prospective applicants should contact Jake Reilly at jake.reilly@nwfwf.org to schedule project consultations. NFWF is also scheduling informational webinars for interested applicants. More information can be found here: [NFWF Now Accepting Proposals for the 2022 Chesapeake Bay Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grants Program - Chesapeake Network](#)

DEP's 2022 Environmental Education grant round opens

The 2022 DEP Environmental Education (EE) Grants Program is open and applications are due December 10, 2021. The [Environmental Education Grants program](#) provides funds for student a wide range of environmental education projects including meaningful, hands-on programs for supports, teacher training workshops, and community conservation projects for adults.

Award Types

- Mini-Grants up to \$3,000 for local (school, county, municipality, or other defined area) environmental education projects.
- General Grants (Level I): up to \$20,000 for large-scale, regional, and/or statewide environmental education projects.
- General Grants (Level II): up to \$85,000 for non-formal environmental education programs designed to widely* engage teachers and youth at the county, state, and national levels. (*Teachers and students from at least 60 Pennsylvania counties must directly participate in the project). Projects must demonstrate that at least 30% of the EE program participants live and/or work within an Environmental Justice Area.

There will be a webinar on the grant program on October 5th from 12:30 p.m.–2:00 p.m. The webinar will be recorded and posted afterward. [Register here for the webinar.](#)

DCNR 2022 Community Conservation Partnership Program save the date announcement

The 2022 grant application period for the [Community Conservation Partnerships Program](#) has been announced. Applications will be accepted starting January 18, 2022. The deadline to apply is 4:00 PM on Wednesday, April 6, 2022. All applications should be submitted through the [DCNR Grants Customer Service Portal](#).

Even though the application period is a few months away, it's never too early to [contact your regional advisor](#) to discuss your project idea and ways to make it more competitive for state grants.

Anyone interested in applying for [Community Conservation Partnerships Program grants](#) in 2022 is strongly encouraged to attend the three virtual workshops that are available. Use the links below to register for a workshop based on the county where your project will take place:

- Eastern counties – [Thursday, Nov. 4](#)
- Central counties – [Wednesday, Nov. 10](#)
- Western counties – [Tuesday, Nov. 16](#)

Breakout sessions will provide time for project-specific Q&A with professional grant managers. New this year, statewide and regional partnership grants will be a breakout session at the workshop. Although the virtual workshops are free, pre-registration is required as space in each workshop is limited.

Note: For those planning to attend the Statewide & Regional Partnerships breakout session, please note your interest in that breakout in the "Additional Info We Should Know" box during registration.

USDA investing \$50 million in new cooperative agreements for racial justice and equity

USDA is investing up to \$50 million in cooperative agreements to support historically underserved farmers and ranchers with climate-smart agriculture and forestry. The Racial Justice and Equity Conservation Cooperative Agreements are available to entities for two-year projects that expand the delivery of conservation assistance to farmers who are beginning, limited resources, socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers. The projects should help historically underserved farmers and ranchers in implementing natural resources conservation practices that:

- Improve soil health;
- Improve water quality;
- Provide habitat for local wildlife species of concern;
- Improve the environmental and economic performance of working agricultural land; and
- Build and strengthen local food projects that provide healthy food and economic opportunities.

Projects should remove barriers to access and reach historically underserved groups through a combination of program outreach and technical assistance in managing natural resources that address one or more of the following four NRCs priority areas:

- Addressing local natural resource issues;
- Using climate-smart agriculture practices and principles;
- Encouraging existing and new partnerships; and
- Developing state and community-led conservation leadership for historically underserved agricultural producers, including educating and training students for careers in natural resources management.

Applications must be received by October 25, 2021. [See the grants.gov announcement for details and application instructions.](#)

Using American Rescue Plan Act funds for outdoor recreation and conservation

WeConservePA is hosting a *Learn & Network – Understanding Funding Opportunities through American Rescue Plan* on September 28 at 10:00 a.m. This 75-minute session will examine the various components of the American Rescue Plan (ARP), including allocation mechanisms, grant funding opportunities, application criteria, and more. Program specialists at the county, state, and federal levels will share information on how to navigate through these new funding sources. [Register for the webinar here.](#)

[Learn more about We Conserve PA.](#)

Getting Credit for Our Work

Digital Land Cover Review Collaboration Completed

On August 23, 2021 EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program Office's Water Quality Goal Implementation Team approved the use of the Chesapeake Conservancy 2017-2018 one-meter, high-resolution land cover 1 land use data change to be incorporated into the 2021 update of the Chesapeake Assessment Scenario Tool (CAST). The DEP Chesapeake Bay Office technical team worked with EPA and the Chesapeake Conservancy's geospatial project manager to receive local land cover feedback from 40 out of 43 counties within Pennsylvania's Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Four counties, Bradford, Clearfield, Cumberland and Lancaster, that have unique land cover and land use attributes were selected to review land use and land use change.

Chesapeake Conservancy utilized three interns to identify extractive land cover like Acid Mine Reclamation and Oil and Gas sites in Clearfield and Bradford County that have historically been miscategorized as the higher nitrogen loading classification of agriculture and now are identified as the lower nutrient loading classification of mixed open land use. This new method of land cover classification will help the Tier 3 and 4 counties, along with other Chesapeake Bay Program partner jurisdictions like West Virginia, Cumberland and Lancaster's land use review helped identify the distinction between the land use classifications of emerging developed land and agricultural land.

DEP's Chesapeake Bay Office wishes to thank to all of our local county partners for their hard work and for taking time to provide important feedback on the 2017-2018 datasets that will be used to establish land use and land cover changes that affect counties' baseline conditions and loading estimates toward meeting the 2025 Phase 3 WIP goals. The CBO technical team will advise our local partners as soon as these data sets are publicly available so they may incorporate this mapping into their local GIS programs for planning.

DEP Chesapeake Bay Office

Pennsylvania counties take the lead in Chesapeake cleanup plans

[The Bay Journal published an article this month detailing Pennsylvania's county-focused strategy](#) in addressing nutrient pollution in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and highlighted the great work that our county partners are doing to develop and implement their CAPs. Please share with all of your local partners!

Pilot and Tier 2 CAP counties prepare milestone and annual reports

During the month of September, Adams, Franklin, Lancaster, and York Counties submitted their draft Two-Year Milestone and Annual Progress Report documents to the Chesapeake Bay Office (CBO) for review. The CBO met with each county individually to share feedback on these documents and discuss future steps and potential hurdles. Each county will submit their final documents to the CBO by September 30.

The Tier 2 counties - Bedford, Centre, Cumberland, and Lebanon - have been assembling their first annual CAP Progress Reports. CBO met with each county to discuss their drafts in August, and their final documents will be submitted to the CBO by September 30.

Tier 3-4 CAP counties are finalizing their CAPs

All 26 Tier 3 and 4 counties will be submitting their final CAPs by September 30. The counties have been working hard to finalize their CAPs with assistance from the CBO and the DEP Region CAP Support Teams. The counties will begin the transition to implementation this fall.

Environmental Finance Center Webinar

CBO hosted a "Financing County Action Plans" webinar on September 22 for CAP Coordinators and county lead entities. Jennifer Cotting and Ellen Kohler from the Environmental Finance Center presented county partners with information and an opportunity for financial technical assistance available to communities in Pennsylvania's Chesapeake Bay watershed. This assistance is designed to support the development of a community of practice among Pennsylvania municipalities in addressing their water quality challenges, with specific focus on funding and financing programs and projects, all at no cost to the communities served.

Counties in Action

Tier 1-2

Adams County identifying projects for the 2022 CAP Implementation Grant round

The contracts for the Culp's Run Stream Restoration project in Gettysburg have been approved by the necessary boards and the project is slated to begin construction in the summer of 2022. Adams County is working closely with Cumberland Township on a large project that will involve the creation and updates to several best management practices, including detention basins, stormwater retrofits, stream restorations, and rain garden projects.

The Adams County CAP Coordinator is preparing materials for an application to the CAP Implementation Grant and is finalizing the CAP annual progress report and 2-year milestone update. Through cooperation with county staff, DEP, and local partners, Adams County has made adjustments to their plan and their goals for implementation.

Centre County is offering a community-based conservation workshop

Centre County Conservation District is hosting the free workshop, "We All Live Downstream". This workshop seeks to educate Centre County homeowners on local water quality issues and conservation practices to support clean water goals. In this training, the conservation district will discuss popular conservation practices used in agricultural and urban settings. Participants will learn how to develop a stormwater management plan as well as learn how to incorporate conservation practices into their yard. Participants will receive soil test kits, seed mixes, and will be entered in a raffle for free rain barrels. It will be held October 6th from 8-9 PM at the Willow Bank building in Bellefonte PA. [Register here](#) or email akulsh@centrecounypa.gov.

Lancaster County is getting projects on the ground

East Cocalico Township recently stabilized 265 feet of streambanks and planted 75 feet of riparian buffer along a section of Stony Run, a small stream adjacent to the township building. With lack of adequate vegetation along the stream, the streambanks became severely eroded. In most areas, the vertical bank height ranged from three to four feet. It is estimated the project will prevent 30,475 pounds of sediment from entering the stream each year.

With the project so close to the township building, countless residents can see, enjoy, and learn about the work. When the trees planted are sufficiently established, they will be used to cut live stakes suitable for other streambank stabilization projects elsewhere in the township.

The project was partially funded by the Clean Water Fund in 2019 and will continue towards Lancaster's efforts to accomplish Lancaster's Countywide Action Plan (CAP). [More information about projects funded by the Clean Water Fund can be found here.](#)

Tier 3-4

Blair County Conservation District receives GIANT Company grant

The Blair County Conservation District (BCDD) is a large supporter of community gardens, environmental restoration and connecting community members with nature. It uses its 15-acre environmental educational park, NatureWorksPark, to host hands-on workshops and install demonstration projects to promote environmental practices, gardening, and other farm/food related topics.

To continue this work, Blair County used a Giant Company - Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful grant it received to host a DIY house construction workshop to train urban and local farmers on how to build this apparatus to extend the growing season. The county will also install a demonstration system to show catch and re-use of stormwater runoff and host rain barrel workshops as an outreach for better stormwater awareness. Finally, the county will assist local schools, churches, and other non-profit organizations with the installation gardens and educational support on growing food in an urban setting.

The watershed restoration that will be achieved with this grant will be the stormwater-collecting cistern that will be installed on the barn located in NatureWorksPark, which will become a good example of how to reduce and re-use stormwater. The county also will host its popular rain barrel painting workshops at the park. The rain barrels will show workshop participants and their families ways to slow stormwater runoff. The county expects 60 participants and will distribute 60 rain barrels throughout the Upper Juniata River and Chesapeake Bay watersheds.

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, 400 Market Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101

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