



PHASE 3 WIP NEWS

Pennsylvania. Partnership. Progress



TOM WOLF, GOVERNOR • PATRICK MCDONNELL, SECRETARY

February 2021

Hello partners for water quality!

We have much news on the state Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) and Countywide Action Plans for Pennsylvania's share of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Please consider how you might help support and get the word out on this great work to improve water quality by reducing nutrient and sediment runoff pollution. And share this newsletter (or the [subscribe page](#)) with your networks to help spread the word on the progress we're making in Pennsylvania. Thank you for your dedicated work for healthy waters and healthy communities!

For more information on plan development and implementation, visit the [Phase 3 WIP website](#). For a broader look at reducing runoff pollution in Pennsylvania's share of the watershed, visit [Healthy Waters, Healthy Communities](#). — [DEP Chesapeake Bay Office](#)

2020 Phase 3 WIP Milestone Update

The DEP Chesapeake Bay Office, along with our many partners, are proud to report that an overwhelming majority (86%) of the Pennsylvania's Phase 3 WIP milestones are on track. Progress to date for each milestone is reported in detail in the [Pennsylvania Phase 3 WIP Planning and Progress Report](#) spreadsheet.

At the state level, staff have been working across state agencies and with state action leaders to first devise strategic paths for reaching nutrient reduction goals using existing funding, staff, and resources. Reviews of state regulations, funding, staff, and agency-level organization has led to some changes that will increase the state's ability to more effectively accomplish state-level work and support county-led efforts. When gaps are identified in areas where the state has the power to address them, steps are being taken to do so.

Much of the early effort has focused on working with local stakeholders at the county level to create and implement Countywide Action Plans (CAPs). Participation in the creation and implementation of a CAP is completely voluntary, but it comes with technical and financial support to encourage stakeholders at the county and local level to get involved, and it focuses on cleaning up local waterways.

Here's a recap on 2020 WIP progress from the DEP Communications Office:

State and Local Partners Made Record Progress in Second Year of Chesapeake Bay Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan

Harrisburg, PA—The Pennsylvania Departments of Environmental Protection (DEP), Agriculture, and Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) announced today that state and local partners made record progress in 2020 on the Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan (Phase 3 WIP) to improve the health of Pennsylvania's share of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

"In a year of significant challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, when any partnership with as many moving parts as the Phase 3 WIP could've fallen apart, we achieved a record level of progress," said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell. "We ended the second year of Phase 3 WIP implementation with every county now signed on to help and people reaching out to get involved, as well as notable progress by the wastewater, farming, and other sectors."

Nutrient (nitrogen and phosphorus) pollution and sediment build up in streams, rivers, and lakes as a result of human activity, such as using too much fertilizer, plowing and tilling agricultural fields, and stripping away trees and vegetation, increasing streambank erosion.

The [Phase 3 WIP](#) is the state-coordinated initiative to reduce these pollutants and improve water quality to benefit Pennsylvania's local communities, economy, and quality of life, while meeting U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements for the bay. All six states in the watershed and the District of Columbia began working in 2010 to meet these federal targets. The Phase 3 WIP follows two earlier plans. Year-end reports for 2020 demonstrate that Pennsylvania attained a number of milestones.

While EPA is still reviewing 2019-2020 numeric data, its initial assessment credits Pennsylvania with its third largest annual nitrogen reduction in 2019-2020. Wastewater treatment plants contributed 73 percent, their largest annual nitrogen reduction in 35 years. This was due primarily to more accurate reporting of actual versus estimated pollutant levels.

EPA credits Pennsylvania with its sixth largest annual phosphorus reduction in 2019-2020. Wastewater treatment plants contributed 61 percent, their second largest annual phosphorus reduction in 35 years.

Farmers contributed 25 percent of the nitrogen reduction and 32 percent of the phosphorus reduction, which is their largest annual phosphorus reduction since 2010. Better accounting of implementation of nutrient and sediment reducing practices, such as the state-required agricultural erosion and sediment control and nutrient and manure management plans, was one contributing factor.

Increasingly efficient application of fertilizers was another contributing factor. EPA research shows that of all states in the watershed, Pennsylvania has had the largest historical decline in "agricultural surplus," or excess nitrogen and phosphorus that isn't absorbed by crops.

"Despite the challenges of 2020 to the agriculture industry, farmers stepped up to meet their commitments to reducing nutrient and sediment loads to the bay by developing and implementing conservation plans, using fertilizers more efficiently, increasing the use of no-till technology, and planting cover crops," said Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding. "We know that we need to cultivate tomorrow to feed the future, and that requires stewardship of our resources today."

Many types of best management practices and projects help reduce nutrient and sediment water pollution, including applying fertilizer efficiently, planting trees on streambanks, installing fencing to keep livestock out of water, practicing no-till farming, managing manure correctly, and restoring streams and floodplains to more natural conditions.

Also, according to EPA's initial assessment, Pennsylvania carried out nutrient and manure management, cover crop, soil and water conservation planning, and non-agriculture erosion and sediment control best management practices at twice the rate in 2019-20 as its long-term annual rate.

Although the pandemic made it difficult to get boots on the ground in 2020, state and county partners persevered in engaging landowners for upcoming projects and launching or completing current projects.

Building on several years of leading the collaborative movement of many partners to plant trees along streams, DCNR launched the [Buffer My Stream](#) outreach campaign, resulting in contacts with more than 180 landowners, with plantings ongoing last fall and into this year. The department also implemented a new [Lawn Conversion Program](#) in 2020, resulting in approximately 20 acres of installations.

"Streamside buffers and converting grass to trees or meadows are natural ways for agricultural and residential landowners to create cleaner water and improve the stewardship of their land," said DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn. "Not all eligible landowners are aware of their value, so our efforts last year focused on making it easy for landowners to understand the benefits of these practices and connect them with funding and experts available to guide them."

The Phase 3 WIP takes a [Healthy Waters, Healthy Communities](#) approach, inviting county teams to take control of local water quality improvement, with state and other partners providing as much data, technical assistance, funding, and other support as possible. It encourages and equips counties to develop strategies and determine project sites and types that will benefit their communities and farmers, municipalities, businesses, and other landowners, while restoring the environment.

State government and sector partners have responded as much as possible to county leaders' requests for specific types of assistance. In 2020 this included developing a new [guide that clarifies the permitting process on watershed projects](#) and holding web-based trainings and weekly coordination calls with the eight Tier 1 and 2 counties. In addition, DEP, the Department of Agriculture, and DCNR continued efforts to find and provide as much funding as possible to support water quality improvement projects by counties, farmers, and other landowners.

In 2020, four counties—Bedford, Centre, Cumberland and Lebanon—completed Countywide Action Plans (CAPs), identifying priority initiatives and best management practices to reduce nutrient and sediment pollution. [Twenty-six more counties](#) agreed to develop their plans in 2021. These 30 counties join four that completed CAPs in 2019: Lancaster, York, Franklin, and Adams counties.

All 34 counties that were asked to develop and carry out plans to reduce their share of nutrient and sediment pollution have signed on to do so.

Lancaster County, which is pursuing the largest nutrient reduction goal in Pennsylvania's share of the watershed, began or completed projects at many municipal, farm, or other sites in 2020, including the City of Lancaster, Culliton Park, Murry Ridge Park, Paradise and Rapho Townships, Woerth It Hollow Farm, and other locations.

"We've definitely had success with on-the-ground project implementation. The funding that DEP gave us for CAP implementation, and the flexibility of those dollars, has been extremely helpful," said Allyson Gibson, Lancaster Countywide Action Plan coordinator. "We appreciate being able to get that to projects on the ground quickly and be responsive to the local decision making."

Luzerne, Lackawanna, and Susquehanna counties are among the northern counties developing CAPs in 2021. The three counties will share a plan coordinator but create individual CAPs.

"By working together with local stakeholders to develop clean water action plans for each county, we'll identify opportunities for improving water quality that align with unique local needs and interests," said Josh Longmore, Executive Director of the Luzerne Conservation District. "Through our regional partnership on a planning grant from DEP, we'll also be able to develop plans that take into account our shared challenges to reducing pollutants in the Susquehanna River, its local tributaries, and eventually the Chesapeake Bay."

Actions to help foster a healthy watershed benefit all aspects of Pennsylvanians' lives, from providing safe drinking water to protecting soil quality for better crop yield, reducing flooding, and providing outdoor recreation enjoyment and employment.

"We forged a new level of state, local, and sector partnership in 2018 to develop a truly viable watershed plan from the ground up," said Secretary McDonnell. "Today we're seeing just how strong that partnership is. Real commitment to improve water quality has taken root."

For more details on Phase 3 WIP work and outcomes last year, find the 2020 Pennsylvania Programmatic Milestone Status Report at [Tracking Pennsylvania's Progress](#) and see the [first eight Countywide Action Plans](#).

State Action Leaders and Partners

[State action leaders](#) guide Phase 3 WIP implementation, review and revise milestones as needed, and support countywide implementation efforts. They're champions for clean water choices and best management practice (BMP) education and installation in their areas of influence. The Phase 3 WIP has many partnerships who are helping move implementation forward.

Phase 3 WIP State Team Meeting

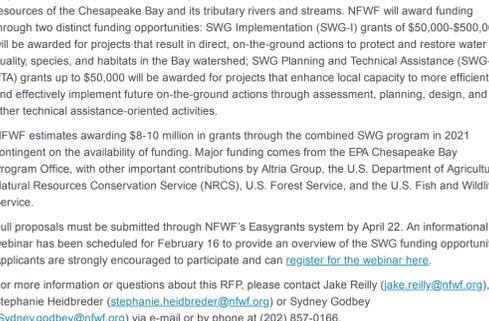
The Phase 3 WIP State Team met on January 26 to discuss 2020 WIP and Countywide Action Plan (CAP) progress at the state and local level. Chesapeake Bay Office director Jill Whitcomb provided an overview of the WIP progress made across all of the sectors and areas of the WIP. For 2020, Pennsylvania was on track and meeting the goals of 86% of its WIP priority initiatives. Following the state level presentation, each of the eight Tier 1 and 2 CAP coordinators and county action leaders presented their 2020 progress updates and 2021 Action Plans to the more than 130 meeting participants. The full meeting recording and materials can be found on the [Chesapeake Bay Office website](#).

The Phase 3 WIP State Team, co-chaired by the Secretaries of Environmental Protection, Agriculture, and Conservation and Natural Resources, provides leadership to guide Pennsylvania's WIP implementation, support countywide implementation efforts, and review and revise Pennsylvania's milestones and programmatic initiatives as needed.

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

DCNR has submitted two Letter of Intent to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's (NFWF) Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction (INSR) grant program - one for riparian forest buffer work, and another for lawn conversion work. If funded, these projects would make funding available for several watershed forestry best management practices (BMPs), including riparian forest buffers, conservation landscaping, and urban forest planting.

DCNR is partnering with Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC) once again to host the 2021 Riparian Forest Buffer Summit virtually on March 10-11, 2021. All riparian buffer professionals, decision-makers, and volunteers are encouraged to join! Attendees will enjoy sessions on the latest forest buffer science, outreach and implementation strategies, funding options, and more. Registration will be \$15 for the virtual event. [Visit DCNR's webpage to register and learn more.](#)



DCNR Grants Support Water, Wildlife, and People of the Chesapeake Bay

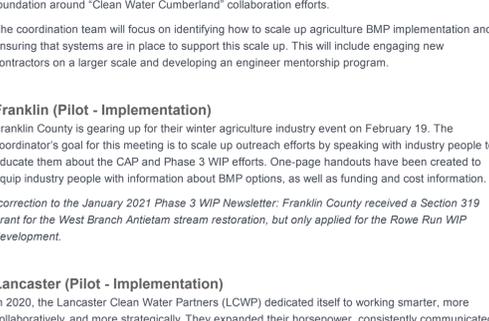
The Chesapeake Bay is a big deal in Pennsylvania. Even though the bay is outside the state, about half of Pennsylvania sits within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

The Susquehanna River and its many streams ultimately flow into the bay. That connection means what happens in Pennsylvania affects the water, wildlife, and people of the Bay Region.

DCNR takes that connection seriously. Our grant programs help local governments and non-profits complete recreation and conservation projects. Many of those projects directly benefit the Chesapeake Bay.

"The role of land conservation, forest cover, and public engagement easily gets lost in the challenges of nutrient reductions and program agreements," DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn said. "Yet when we look at solutions for our conservation challenges, this work emerges as critical. Conserved forest land, riparian buffers, and green infrastructure will play a big role in addressing the bay ecosystem's resiliency and pollution absorbing capacity. DCNR provides leadership, expertise, and funding toward these efforts."

[Read more on DCNR's blog.](#)



NFWF All-Bay Agriculture Network Forum Aims to Space Still available!

NFWF's All-Bay Agriculture Network Forum aims to bring together nonprofit, local, state, and federal ag conservation leaders and partners to share best practices, network together, discuss collaborative implementation strategies and opportunities for accelerating and scaling up sustainable agriculture and watershed restoration in the region.

The 2021 all-virtual Forum will be organized around sessions focused on critical needs and opportunities in enhancing conservation delivery for the region, as informed by NFWF's program partners, stakeholders, and the region's agricultural community. Each session will be delivered through a roughly 3-hour virtual program featuring a variety of informational presentations, panels, and case studies. The remaining Forum sessions are:

- Session 4: Supply Chain Sustainability: Insights, Trends, and Operating Models (Monday, February 22, 2021 1pm-4pm)
- Session 5: It Starts with a Plan: Making Nutrient and Manure Management Work (Wednesday, February 24, 2021 1pm-4pm)
- Session 6: Why and What For: Stream and Riparian Restoration in Agricultural Landscapes (Wednesday, March 3, 2021 1pm-4pm)

[You can find more information and register for one or more of the Forum sessions here.](#) Registration is free but space is limited and you must register for each session separately to attend. Please feel free to share with interested parties.

DEP Chesapeake Bay Office

Tier 1-2 Counties

DEP has awarded \$800,000 in state grant funds to continue supporting the eight Tier 1 and 2 county coordinators in the implementation of their CAPs to improve local water quality. The grants are funded through the Environmental Stewardship Fund to support and coordinate local CAP implementation to reduce nutrient pollution.

CAP Implementation Workshop

Following January's CAP Implementation Workshop with the eight Tier 1 and 2 CAP county partners -- Adams, Bedford, Centre, Cumberland, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon and York County -- DEP's Chesapeake Bay Office is meeting individually with county coordinators and lead team members on a regular basis to continue expanding partnership efforts and support CAP implementation for 2021 "The Year of Action."

Tier 3-4 Counties

DEP has awarded approximately \$1 million in state grant funds to support the 26 Tier 3 and 4 counties in the development of their countywide action plans to improve local water quality. The grants are funded through the Environmental Stewardship Fund to support local development of planning teams and coordination of CAPs. Several counties have begun stakeholder meetings to develop partnerships to develop their countywide action plans.

"This is an exciting first in Pennsylvania's longtime work to improve the health of the watershed," said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell. "Having all counties on board demonstrates a new level of community commitment to improving local waters and protecting the benefits they bring to our lives. It also reflects the effectiveness of new partnerships by state agencies and the agriculture, forestry, wastewater, and business sectors to support this local work. DEP will do everything we can to sustain this action for healthy waters."

Reporting and Data

DEP's Chesapeake Bay Office (CBO), along with other state jurisdictions, requested the formation of the Chesapeake Bay Program's (CBP) BMP Ad Hoc Committee to re-evaluate Best Management Practice (BMP) credit durations. CBP defines BMP credit duration as, "the length of time (in years) a CBP BMP is counted towards the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) water quality goals before it must be re-verified to ensure proper function and continuing model credit." DEP's CBO technical staff is working with the BMP Ad Hoc Committee to define credit durations for the following priority BMPs: Animal Waste Management Systems, Barnyard Runoff Control, Loading Lot Management, Forest and Grass Buffers. The priority BMPs credit durations are being re-evaluated based on supporting justification, science, NRCSS practice standards, permit/contract duration, and professional judgment that will be incorporated into the Bay Model/CAST 2021. If your local jurisdiction has supporting information to update credit duration of the above listed BMPs, please reach out to Lisa Beatty at elbeatty@pa.gov.

Funding

EPA, NFWF Fund Actions to Improve Water Quality in Bay-Linked Rivers and Streams in Pennsylvania

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), recently [announced the award of approximately \\$1.2 million for eight projects in Pennsylvania](#) to improve rivers and streams that connect to the Chesapeake Bay.

The funds are part of nearly \$5 million provided by EPA as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 to the six Bay watershed states and the District of Columbia for the implementation of restoration projects by local governments.

The Pennsylvania funds, administered by NFWF, will generate more than \$2.2 million in matching contributions for a total impact of nearly \$3.5 million.

Conservation Innovation Grants

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Pennsylvania is now accepting proposals for its Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program. It is anticipated that a total of up to \$225,000 will be available to fund multiple one- to three-year projects. Single projects may be eligible to receive \$5,000 to \$75,000 in funding. Proposals are due by March 15, 2021.

CIG is a voluntary program to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies in conjunction with agricultural production. Proposed projects should augment existing NRCS technical tools (planning, assessment/delivery) to better facilitate conservation on farms.

Funds will be awarded through a statewide competitive grants process. Eligible applicants include state and local government, nongovernment organizations, eligible private business, and individuals. Contact Ashley Lenig at Ashleylenig@usda.gov, or 717-237-2204, for additional information or to apply.

NFWF -- 2021 Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the federal-state Chesapeake Bay Watershed Partnership, is now soliciting Full Proposals for the 2021 Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants program.

The Small Watershed Grants (SWG) program provides funding for projects within the Chesapeake Bay watershed that promote community-based efforts to protect and restore the diverse natural resources of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributary rivers and streams. NFWF will award funding through two distinct funding opportunities: SWG Implementation (SWG-I) grants of \$50,000-\$500,000 will be awarded for projects that result in direct, on-the-ground actions to protect and restore water quality, species, and habitats in the Bay watershed; SWG Technical Assistance (SWG-PTA) grants up to \$50,000 will be awarded for projects that enhance local capacity to more efficiently and effectively implement future on-the-ground actions through assessment, planning, design, and other technical assistance-oriented activities.

NFWF estimates available \$8-10 million in grants through the combined SWG program in 2021 contingent on the availability of funding. Major funding comes from the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program Office, with other important contributions by Altria Group, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Full proposals must be submitted through NFWF's Easygrants system by April 22. An informational webinar has been scheduled for February 16 to provide an overview of the SWG funding opportunity. Applicants are strongly encouraged to participate and can [register for the webinar here](#).

For more information or questions about this RFP, please contact Jake Reilly (jake.reilly@nfwf.org), Stephanie Heidbreder (stephanie.heidbreder@nfwf.org) or Sydney Godbey (Sydneygodbey@nfwf.org) via e-mail or by phone at (202) 857-0166.

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

The 2021 DCNR Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2) grant round is open until April 14. C2P2 grants are awarded to municipalities and nonprofit organizations for recreation, park and conservation projects that include the rehabilitation and new development of parks and recreation facilities; land acquisition for these purposes; and planning for parks and recreation facilities. [More information is available here.](#)

The PA Association of Conservation Districts has funding available for County Conservation Districts to implement multifunctional riparian forest buffers, which was made available via a grant from DCNR and PENNVEST. [Information and application materials are available here.](#)

County Progress

Adams (Pilot - Implementation)

Adams County is forming and building up advisory teams to guide and support the implementation of their CAP. The CAP coordinator is reaching out to their partners by reaching out to Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission for assistance on projects, and meeting with USGS to discuss adding a nutrient monitoring station.

Bedford (Tier 2 - Implementation)

Bedford County is in the early stages of implementation. The CAP team has elevated action items, with several individuals expressing interest in leading these areas from planning to implementation. The CAP team is working on abandoned farmland as a focus area.

Centre (Tier 2 - Implementation)

The Centre County CAP team hosted an informative and productive CAP Open House Zoom call in January. After this open house and a meeting with local MS4 municipalities, the CAP team finalized their state programmatic priorities, plan, and narrative. The CAP team is working on a website update to better share CAP information and engage the community and interested stakeholders on the CAP. An initial 10 farm visits have been completed, and the data are now being consolidated to help guide next steps. Additional farm visits will focus on farms that were identified as high priority areas in an analysis conducted by the Chesapeake Conservancy.

Cumberland (Tier 2 - Implementation)

The Cumberland County coordinator presented at the county's winter farmer meeting in January with good success. Additionally, the CAP team hosted a CAP Open House Zoom call to provide opportunities for public discussion around the CAP. This meeting was productive and full of idea sharing. While there was plenty of discussion, no major changes to the CAP were recommended. The coordination team is considering NFWF INSR grant opportunities. They are looking to build a foundation around "Clean Water Cumberland" collaboration efforts.

The coordination team will focus on identifying how to scale up agriculture BMP implementation and ensuring that systems are in place to support this scale up. This will include engaging new contractors on a larger scale and developing an engineer mentorship program.

Franklin (Pilot - Implementation)

Franklin County is gearing up for their winter agriculture industry event on February 19. The coordinator's goal for this meeting is to scale up outreach efforts by speaking with industry people to educate them about the CAP and Phase 3 WIP efforts. One-page handouts have been created to equip industry people with information about BMP options, as well as funding and cost information. *Correction to the January 2021 Phase 3 WIP Newsletter: Franklin County received a Section 319 grant for the West Branch Antietam stream restoration, but only applied for the Rowe Run WIP development.*

Lancaster (Pilot - Implementation)

In 2020, the Lancaster Clean Water Partners (LCWP) dedicated itself to working smarter, more collaboratively, and more strategically. They expanded their network, consistently communicated with partner organizations and stakeholders, educated new watershed leaders, collaboratively worked to secure sustainable funding, and granted implementation dollars to get projects in the ground. [Read through their Year in Review for the full picture of LCWP's accomplishments in 2020.](#)

Looking ahead to 2021, the LCWP aim to:

- Accelerate CAP implementation
- Identify and secure sustainable, dedicated funding for both agriculture and stormwater BMP implementation and the necessary capacity to do and maintain that work
- Mobilize watershed-scale project collaborations for increased sediment and nutrient reductions
- Expand the backbone organization to ensure partner organizations' capacity to ramp up countywide efforts
- Implement an effective, equitable communications plan to ensure knowledge sharing among key stakeholders, and to educate and empower partner organizations and all county residents to take action.

Interest has been sparked by Lancaster's delisting strategy, its CAP, and its Action Teams. The Partners were given the opportunity to share Lancaster's unique work for clean water through several presentations recently. The Partners presented to the [Chesapeake Bay Commission, State Watershed Implementation Plan Team](#), U.S. EPA and DEP, Lancaster County's Ag Council, and County CAP Coordinators across the tier one and two counties.

To learn more about Lancaster's delisting strategy and other news and information, [go to the LCWP website](#).

Lebanon (Tier 2 - Implementation)

The Lebanon County coordinator has been focused on one-on-one engagement with stakeholders to get up to speed with the existing partners, plans and projects. The technical coordination team is working on updating the Lebanon catchment management database and analyzing water quality data throughout the county. The coordination team is working with Action Leader Matt Royer to discuss replicating Lancaster County's Conewago initiative on the Swatara, utilizing a NFWF grant. The coordinator has worked with Water Words that Work to leverage existing communication tools, tailor them to Lebanon County, and has started using its new social media and website for outreach and engagement.

York (Pilot - Implementation)

York County has continued work with LUMI Marketing and Creative on the development of a marketing strategy for the CAP. The Data Management Action Team is working on a template for collecting unreported BMPs. The plan is to utilize two pilot municipalities to navigate the first round of data entry together. Both municipalities are partners on the Education and Outreach Action Team and, at the conclusion of the pilot, will move to assist other municipalities in getting their unreported BMP data collected.

"In a year of significant challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, when any partnership with as many moving parts as the Phase 3 WIP could've fallen apart, we achieved a record level of progress. We ended the second year of Phase 3 WIP implementation with every county now signed on to help and people reaching out to get involved, as well as notable progress by the wastewater, farming, and other sectors."

- [DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell on the record progress made in 2020 on the Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan.](#)

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