

# **PA Clean Water Gathering** Clean Water Progress Teams: Strategies for Success

## Background

In October 2023, DEP's Bureau of Watershed Restoration and Nonpoint Source Management (BWRNSM) hosted the first Clean Water Gathering of State Program Action Leaders and Countywide Action Planning (CAP) leaders. Over 80 partners, representing county, state, and federal organizations, came together to celebrate successes and discuss high level needs, issues, and challenges to continued progress on Pennsylvania's Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) and Countywide Action Plan (CAP) clean water nutrient reduction goals.

The issues and challenges discussed in the meeting were combined into three focused challenge areas that the partners agreed upon. These priority challenge areas hinder or prevent partners from being more successful and need collective leadership and effort at many levels to be addressed.









### Clean Water Progress Teams: Action Through Partnerships

Following the Clean Water Gathering, BWRNSM's Chesapeake Bay Watershed Restoration Division team immediately took action by seeking county and state partner volunteers to come together in 2024 to address the priority challenge areas raised at the Clean Water Gathering and to build on the success from Phase 3 WIP and CAP efforts.

Three collaborative Clean Water Progress Teams were created and have been meeting throughout 2024 to develop robust recommendations around the priority action items generated at the Clean Water Gathering. Team members bring a wealth of knowledge and a strong, diverse, and extensive network of partners and resources. Each team is developing recommended "Strategies for Success" around priority action items.

- Technical and Administrative Assistance Progress Team
- Staff Building/Staff Retention Progress Team
- Funding and Multi-Grant Coordination Progress Team

## Partners - Projects - Progress



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# **Priority Action Items Being Addressed**

- 1. Technical and Administrative Assistance Progress Team focus areas: increase engineering assistance; streamline and centralize reporting; enhance private/public partnerships; prioritize projects and timeline management; and consider the feasibility of block permitting applications.
- 2. Staff Building / Staff Retention Progress Team focus areas: make management and leadership training available; diversify staff hires: hire staff with different backgrounds, not all science and technical degrees; regionalize staff, especially for smaller conservation districts and planning commissions; cross-train to build on employee knowledge to keep districts running when turnover happens; and allocate dedicated annual funding to counties to stabilize and assure steady workload for staff, including more funding for administrative/program staffing to help manage increased grant workload.
- 3. Funding/Multi-Grant Coordination Progress Team focus areas: create a central funding tool; develop a common application/letter of intent concept; connect projects and partners with funding sources; leverage available funding sources more efficiently; and provide outreach and education about financing.



#### **Next Steps**

Recommendations are being drafted by focused small groups within each Progress Team and are shared at regular meetings with the full Progress Team. Each recommendation will discuss what should be done to address the action item, who should be engaged, how steps could be taken to move forward, and when that could occur. Common themes will also be identified in order to further focus efforts on key priority challenges.

Once finalized, the recommended strategies for success will be shared among a broader audience of partners and leaders at a second Clean Water Gathering in winter 2025.

*"I think the key to success is learning to be okay with change...this is our opportunity to be more open to different suggestions, possibilities and ideas. " - Erica Tomlinson, Tioga County Conservation District Manager* 

#### Partners - Projects - Progress