

PA Clean Water Gathering

CLEAN WATER PROGRESS TEAMS:

Technical and Administrative Assistance

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 fell into three focused challenge areas:

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

A team formed around each of these challenge areas to address issues at greater depth.



Featured Team: Technical and Administrative Assistance Progress Team

Following the Clean Water Gathering, BWRNSM's Chesapeake Bay Watershed Restoration Division team coordinated the formation of a collaborative team made up of volunteers drawing from county and state action leaders as well as other partners. The Technical and Administrative Assistance Progress Team's objective was to address priority challenge areas related to technical assistance and administrative assistance.

Team Members

- Andrew Gavin (SRBC)
- Jay Patel (DEP)
- Alexa Bixel (Clinton County CD)
- Harry Campbell (CBF)
- Kate Bresaw (DEP)
- Matt Kofroth (Lancaster County CD)
- Josh Longmore (Luzerne County CD)
- Mike LaSala (Landstudies/CAP Coordinator)
- Jennifer Fetter (CACAT)
- Chris Canfield (CACAT)
- Tyler Neimond (PA FBC)
- Eric Cromer (SCC)
- Tyler Trostle (DEP)

At their first meeting, the team reviewed the multiple challenges raised at the October 2023 Clean Water Gathering and chose five actions to prioritize:

1. Engineering assistance is needed
2. Streamline and centralize reporting
3. How to provide a more structured approach to private/public partnerships
4. Increase support and resources for project prioritization and timeline management
5. Block permitting applications for watershed or specific project types

Addressing Priority Action Items

Progress Teams worked together to develop recommendations to address their Priority Action Items. These recommendations are known as “Strategies for Success” and are designed to be actionable and focused.

Each recommendation discusses what should be done to address the Priority Action Item including how steps could be taken to move forward, who should be engaged, and when that could occur.



Technical and Administrative Assistance Strategies for Success

Engineering Assistance Needed

- Conduct a gap assessment of engineering providers.
- Conduct outreach to non-ag engineers and engineering grads about ag engineering careers and support existing ag engineering programs.
- Explore exemption to Act 367 for state employees.

Streamline and Centralize Reporting

- Reverify BMPs outside of PracticeKeeper and FieldDoc.
- Encourage Commonwealth programs to review reporting expectations.
- Work towards a same/connected reporting system(s).

Encourage Private/Public Partnerships

- Create a framework of key elements needed to make a successful partnership.
- Conduct a gap assessment of partnerships to better identify hurdles to creating successful partnerships.

Facilitate Project Prioritization and Timeline Management

- Create an information database to facilitate the flow of ideas from county to county.
- Advocate for more stable funding for project installation through the life of the project.

Expand Block Permitting

- Convene a group of practitioners and policymakers to determine if the concept of block permitting or expansion of general permits is feasible.

Next Steps

Once finalized, the Strategies for Success will be shared among a broader audience of partners and leaders at a second Clean Water Gathering in January 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