



## ADAMS COUNTY Countywide Action Plan (CAP) Overview

### Plan Highlights

Adams County benefits from abundant natural resources, a conservation-minded agricultural community, a thriving tourism industry, and an active stakeholder base with a demonstrated commitment to land and water resource stewardship. The CAP includes recommendations for activities that achieve local goals including environmental health and economic development as well as Chesapeake Bay water quality goals. The plan's recommendations were developed with input from diverse county stakeholders. County staff would like to thank all the stakeholders who volunteered their time and expertise as part of this planning process and for their continued participation to maintain a successful pollutant reduction strategy in the future.

The Adams County CAP focuses on four key areas:

- 1) programmatic recommendations needed to achieve successful goal implementation
- 2) reporting and tracking improvements
- 3) achieving pollutant reductions and
- 4) research, education, and training initiatives

First, programmatic changes are a priority that recommend statewide activities that are needed to facilitate the implementation of this plan's recommendations. Reporting and tracking are essential to understanding what is already on the ground (establishing an accurate baseline) and tracking Best Management Practices (BMPs) implementation and water quality conditions



*Cover crops are essential to Adams County soil and water quality and are strongly supported by the ag community in Adams County. Pictured above are educational signs placed on local farms that cover cropped.*

during implementation to ensure accuracy. The pollutant reduction section includes a series of agricultural and urban BMPs. Finally, research, education, and training are essential to understanding the effectiveness and practicality of various BMPs, communicating with, and educating stakeholders, and developing needed technology and skills.

### Key Findings

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There are many opportunities for expanding existing efforts and developing new programs and practices in the county, as described in detail in the planning template. These opportunities can be associated with numerous benefits and challenges. Some of these opportunities and/or challenges are unique to Adams County. Full implementation of the recommendations described in the CAP will not be possible without considerable additional resources or the state's assistance in better utilizing existing resources. Identifying and securing the needed resources will be no small task.





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### Opportunities for Success

Implementation of the county's CAP can help achieve multiple local, state, and bay-wide objectives. It may also have numerous positive outcomes like encouraging and enhancing communication with stakeholders, promoting a think-outside-the-box mindset, implementing pilot studies that promote ingenuity and enhance understanding of the practicality of various practices, streamlining requirements across multiple programs, and removing barriers to on-the-ground implementation.



*The annual Adams County Soil Quality Meeting is always well attended by the conservation-minded ag community.*

Overcoming the challenges will enable the CAP's implementation and facilitate the associated improvements in water and land conditions throughout the county.

### Challenges to Implementation

While Adams County is committed to implementing the CAP, there are very real challenges to its implementation. Existing regulations, programs, and funding need to be streamlined so existing resources can be better utilized. Recommendations should be implemented in a voluntary approach that supports and encourages stakeholders to make environmentally conscious decisions. Funding to achieve these goals should continue to become more flexible and uncomplicated, particularly for projects correcting existing resource concerns. Technical and staffing resources will be crucial to implement the programs and practices necessary to achieve the desired goals. Additional baseline information should be obtained, that maintains confidentiality as needed, for both BMPs and water quality to evaluate progress over time. Improved data collection and tracking methods are vital to ensure accuracy and will require tremendous staffing and financial resources to achieve. Finally, and possibly most important, there are many variables out of our control that can severely limit the ability to implement BMPs like riparian buffers, cover crops, and advanced nutrient management such as weather, soil conditions contractor availability, or a pandemic.

### Issues Unique to Adams County

There are additional issues and challenges that are unique to Adams County, including its unique fruit growing industry. Long known for being the number one producer of apples in the state; Adams County also produces peaches, grapes, berries and other fruits. According to Penn State Extension surveys, there are over 31,000 acres of tree fruit in the Commonwealth with more than 22,000 of those acres found in the Historic South Mountain Fruit Belt of Adams County. The fruit growing industry has many distinctive challenges and unique practices that should be evaluated to allow for use in the bay model. The fact that Penn State University has a research and education facility located in the county to assist with this particular industry does

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provide some necessary technical resources for the evaluation, but additional technical and financial resources may be necessary to adequately provide for this.

### Plan Summary

The Adams County plan focuses on essential programmatic recommendations necessary for the achievement of any of the pollutant reduction goals in this plan as well as planning and progress activities that focus on three priority initiatives 1) reporting and tracking; 2) pollutant reductions; and 3) research, education, and training. Each of these is associated with several recommended actions, listed below.

More details on each of these actions are provided in the attached templates and technical appendix.



*Adams County is home to the Historic South Mountain Fruit Belt produces more apples than any county in the Commonwealth.*

### Programmatic Recommendations

Programmatic changes are recommended for statewide activities necessary for achieving the CAP objectives.

- Action 1 Improve statewide tracking
- Action 2: Enhance local water quality monitoring
- Action 3: Maintain funding program requirements and enhance funding resources
- Action 4: Allow for work outside of current MS4 designated jurisdiction to increase nitrogen reductions
- Action 5: Improve permitting processes at the state level
- Action 6: Evaluate current practices in the fruit growing industry for inclusion in the CAST model
- Action 7: Expand staffing resources to conduct additional activities described in this plan

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### Planning and Progress Activities

#### 1) Reporting and Tracking

Reporting and tracking are important to establishing an accurate baseline and evaluating implementation progress for both BMP installments and water quality conditions.

- Action 1: Initiate additional water quality monitoring sites that promote long-term trend evaluation at key locations in Adams County
- Action 2: Improve data collection on urban non-structural practices
- Action 3: Implement a documentation program for commercial and homeowner nutrient applications in developed lands
- Action 4: Establish baseline of current practices

#### 2) Achieve Pollutant Reductions

Agricultural and urban BMP initiatives are described below. A list of specific BMP types and amounts are provided in the CAP's technical appendix.

#### *General*

- Action 1: Establish a set of BMPs that will achieve desired pollutant reductions in an efficient and cost-effective manner
- Action 2: Identify key areas for installation of BMPs with greatest net effect on nutrients
- Action 3: Evaluate new technologies to enhance nutrient reductions
- Action 4: Conduct pilot studies to identify and/or confirm efficiency of practice
- Action 5: Provide support for necessary legislation and regulatory changes

#### *Agricultural Sector*

- Action 6: Reduce challenges with BMP implementation
- Action 7: Improve Soil Health
- Action 8: Enhance nutrient management
- Action 9: Install riparian buffers
- Action 10: Provide for other Ag BMPs



*Local volunteers planting riparian buffers.*



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### *Urban Sector*

- Action 11: Seek creative solutions to focus on the problem (pollution) within the contributing area (not just close vicinity to MS4/urban areas)
- Action 12: Create a documentation program for urban nutrient management
- Action 13: Install riparian buffers on public lands
- Action 14: Create additional natural areas
- Action 15: Establish more Shade Tree Commissions
- Action 16: Implement other urban initiatives, i.e. stream restorations, etc.
- Action 17: Promote creation of additional sewage management districts at the municipal level
- Action 18: Evaluate the formation of a Countywide Stormwater Management Authority

### 3) Research, Education, and Training

Outreach is essential to understanding the effectiveness and practicality of BMPs, educating stakeholders, and developing needed technical skills.

- Action 1: Develop a strategy to communicate parallel goals of the CAP and local goals such as public and environmental health, economic development, and provide necessary education and training
- Action 2: Conduct education of commercial landscape industry, golf courses, school districts, and homeowners regarding urban nutrient management.



*Ultimately, while planning is vital for progress; it is the community, whether it be agricultural or urban, that recognizes and addresses resource concerns as they arise that is essential for this or any project to succeed.*