Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) Planning Targets

* In 2010, the Environmental Protection Agency established the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load, or Bay TMDL, which identifies the necessary pollution reductions from major sources of nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment from across the Bay jurisdictions (Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia) and sets pollution limits necessary to meet water quality standards.
* This meant that in order to meet the limits specified by the Bay TMDL in 2010, jurisdictions needed to reduce 25 percent of nitrogen, 24 percent of phosphorus and 20 percent of sediment from pollution loads entering the Chesapeake Bay.
* The pollution limits were further divided by each jurisdiction and major river basin based on state-of-the-art modeling tools, extensive monitoring data and peer-reviewed science.
* To meet these limits to reduce pollution flowing into the Chesapeake Bay, the seven watershed jurisdictions develop Watershed Implementation Plans, or WIPs.
* WIPs include detailed, specific steps each of the Bay jurisdictions will take to reduce pollution loads in order to meet their planning targets.
* The jurisdictions are currently developing their third WIPs since the Bay TMDL was set in 2010.
* As part of the Phase III WIP development process, the jurisdictions have received draft planning targets that reflect refinements to the model using the most up-to-date science and monitoring data available.
* Although different from the pollution limits specified in the 2010 Bay TMDL, these draft planning targets establish new goals that the jurisdictions would need to achieve jurisdictions to meet water quality standards.
* These draft planning targets are currently under review by each of the jurisdictions.
* Final planning targets will be available on May 25, 2018.

*How are the target pollution loads determined?*

* These target numbers are determined by the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership using a sophisticated process involving the best available science, Chesapeake Bay modeling tools and estimates of future conditions.
* The targets were set using the updated Phase 6 suite of modeling tools, using the same type of calculations that were used to establish the original reductions under the Bay TMDL.
* The updated suite of modeling tools contains a significant amount more data and information than the previous version. This calibration gives the partnership more confidence in how much pollution the Bay can receive while still meeting standards for water quality.
* The Phase III WIPs will take into account future population growth based on estimates of how the land in the Chesapeake Bay watershed will be used in 2025.
* The targets are determined on a state-basin scale. For example, they are not set just for Pennsylvania as a whole state, but rather for the Susquehanna River basin within Pennsylvania.
* The water quality impacts of conservation practices varies by watershed, so implementing the same controls in different watersheds has different level of effectiveness. For example, a pound of nitrogen in the James River might not have the same level of impact as a pound of nitrogen in the Potomac River.
* Planning targets are set depending upon the overall level of impact on reducing pollutant loads within each watershed.

*Why isn’t sediment specifically given a target?*

* Sediment reductions are not included in the WIP planning targets for a variety of reasons, but primarily because the conservation practices implemented to reduce pollution from agricultural sources, as well as actions taken to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus from other watershed areas, will also cause corresponding reductions in sediment.
* Dissolved oxygen levels in the Bay are more dependent on nitrogen and phosphorus reductions than sediment, as nutrients can cause algal blooms that die off and decompose, leading to “dead zones”.

*How does water quality trading fit in?*

* Water quality trading is a market-based approach that provides economic incentives for voluntary pollutant reductions.
* Trading can allow one pollution source to meet its regulatory obligations by using pollutant reductions created by another pollution source that has lower-cost pollution controls.

*Can jurisdictions “exchange” pollution loads?*

* Jurisdictions may exchange nitrogen loads for phosphorus loads, nitrogen loads for nitrogen loads, and phosphorus loads for phosphorus loads within the same state-basin, as well as with other state-basins within the same jurisdiction.
* Exchange ratios are set based on extensive modeling; these vary from basin to basin and jurisdiction to jurisdiction.
* Jurisdictions may only exchange pollution loads within the same state.

*What happens if the pollution loads are not reduced by 2025?*

* The Chesapeake Bay Program partnership will provide as many resources as possible to help the jurisdictions meet their WIP planning targets.
* Potential federal actions may occur if jurisdictions do not meet their planning targets.
* Any federal actions will be guided by common sense, the best available information and a shared goal to restore the Chesapeake Bay.