

2014-2015

BAY BAROMETER

Health and Restoration in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed

The Chesapeake Bay Program is guided by the goals and outcomes of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*. This agreement commits our partners to protecting and restoring the Bay, its tributaries and the lands that surround them.

Tracking changes in watershed health over time allows scientists to understand the effects of our management actions and our progress toward meeting our health and restoration goals.

At a glance:

In 2015,

101 million

adult female crabs in the Bay.



Blue Crabs

Progress: 47% of outcome achieved

Blue crabs support commercial and recreational fisheries across the region. But poor water quality, habitat loss, harvest pressure and predation affect their continued health.

In 2014,

rise in spawning shad

in Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers.



American Shad

Progress: 44% of goal achieved

American shad form an important link in the Bay's food web: the return of the fish to freshwater rivers each spring brings food in the form of protein-rich eggs and forage for striped bass, bluefish and other species.

Between 2011 and 2014,

two billion

oysters planted on Harris Creek reefs.



Oysters

Progress: Six tributaries selected for restoration

Over-harvesting, disease and habitat loss have led to a severe drop in oyster populations, but the filter-feeder continues to clean our waters and offer food and habitat to other animals.

Between 2012 and 2015,

817 stream miles

opened to fish passage.



Fish Passage

Progress: 82% of outcome achieved

Removing the barriers that block migratory fish from reaching their spawning grounds can reduce sediment build-up in streams and allow shad, herring and other species to move between fresh- and saltwater habitats.

Between July 2013 and June 2014,

114 miles

of forest buffers planted.



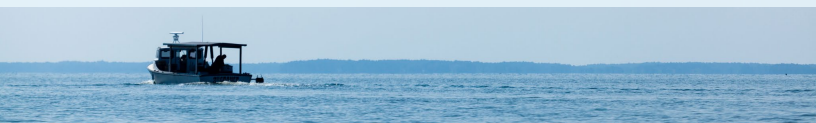
Forest Buffers

Progress: 13% of annual outcome achieved

Forest buffers stabilize stream banks, prevent pollution from entering waterways, provide food and habitat to wildlife, and keep streams cool during hot weather.

The Chesapeake Bay Program is a regional partnership that works to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Learn more at www.chesapeakebay.net



In 2014,

75,385 acres

of underwater grasses in the Bay.

Underwater Grasses

Progress: 41% of outcome achieved

Underwater grass beds provide food and shelter to fish and wildlife, add oxygen to the water, absorb nutrient pollution, reduce shoreline erosion and help suspended particles of sediment settle to the bottom.

Between 2010 and 2014,

6,191 acres

of wetlands created or reestablished on agricultural lands.



Wetlands

Progress: 7% of outcome achieved

Healthy wetlands trap polluted runoff; slow the flow of nutrients, sediment and chemical contaminants into rivers and streams; slow the erosion of shorelines; protect properties from floods; provide habitat; and support recreational fishing and hunting.

Between 2010 and 2014,

86 sites

for public access established.



Public Access

Progress: 29% of outcome achieved

Public access to open space and waterways can improve public health and quality of life. Access to the water can also build personal connections with places that have shaped life in the region, boosting tourism economies and creating citizen stewards.

From October 2013 to September 2014, about

285 million pounds of nitrogen, **17.5 million pounds** of phosphorus and **3.62 million tons** of sediment entered the Chesapeake Bay.



Nutrient and Sediment Pollution

Progress: Practices in place to achieve 21% of nitrogen reductions, 71% of phosphorus reductions and 25% of sediment reductions

Nitrogen and phosphorus can fuel the growth of algae blooms that lead to low- or no-oxygen conditions harmful to aquatic life. Sediment can suffocate shellfish and block sunlight from reaching underwater plants.

During the 2012 to 2014 assessment period,

34 percent

of water quality standards achieved.



Water Quality

Progress: 34% of standards achieved

The Bay is home to five aquatic habitats, each with its own standards for dissolved oxygen, water clarity/underwater grasses and chlorophyll *a* (which measures algae). If the Bay is to function as a healthy ecosystem, all of its aquatic habitats must meet all of their clean water criteria.

Between 2010 and 2013,

572,000 acres

of land protected from development.



Protected Lands

Progress: 29% of outcome achieved

Protecting land from development protects water quality, sustains fish and wildlife, maintains working farms and forests, preserves our history and provides opportunities for outdoor recreation.