# 2019-20 BAY BAROMETER

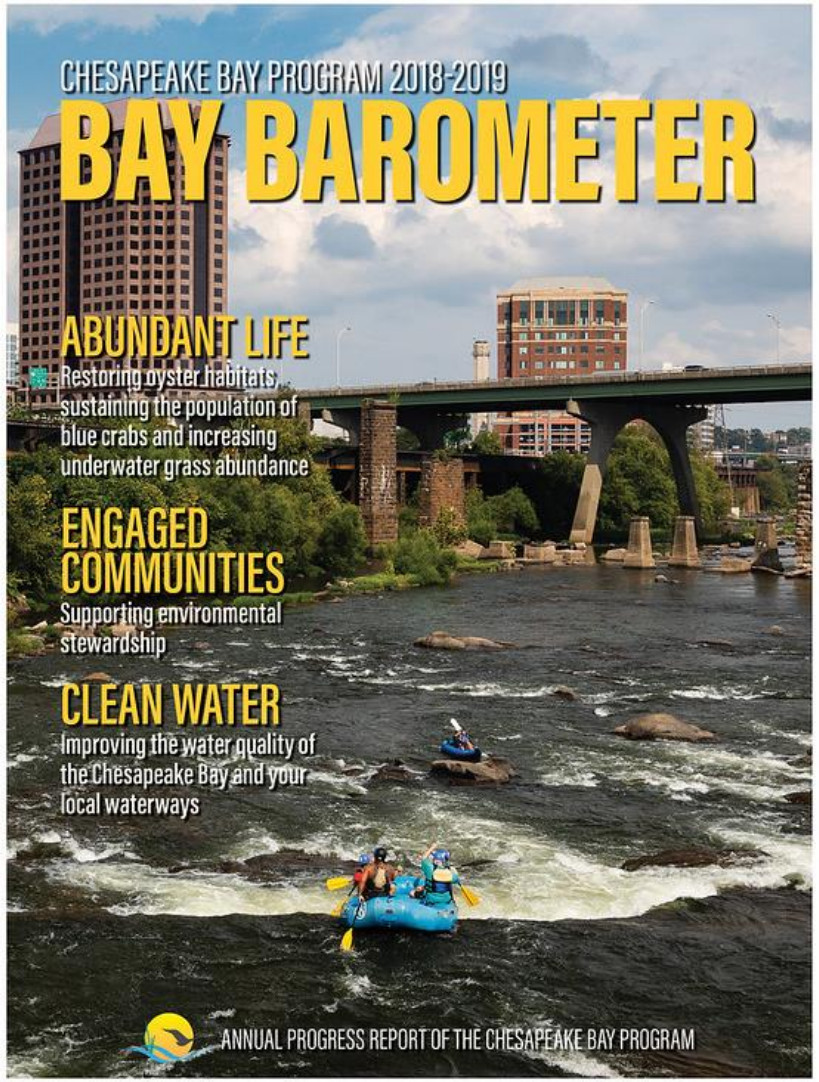
Management Board
January 21, 2021

# WHAT IS IT?

Annual report on watershed health.

Retrospective summary of previously published indicators.

Update on progress toward each one of the 31 outcomes in the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.



# WHAT DOES THIS YEAR'S BAROMETER TELL US?

# Abundant Life: Sustainable Fisheries

**Blue Crab Abundance**: Between 2019 and 2020, the abundance of adult (age 1+) female blue crabs in the Chesapeake Bay decreased 26% from 191 million to 141 million.

**Blue Crab Management**: In 2019, an estimated 17% of female blue crabs were harvested from the Chesapeake Bay. For the twelfth consecutive year, this number is below the 25.5% target and the 34% overfishing threshold.

**Oysters**: Each of the ten tributaries that have been selected for oyster restoration is at a different level of progress in a process that involves developing a tributary restoration plan, constructing and seeding reefs, and monitoring and evaluating restored reefs. In Maryland tributaries, 788 acres of oyster reefs are considered complete. In Virginia tributaries, 539 acres of oyster reefs are considered complete.

# Abundant Life: Vital Habitats

**Forest buffers**:, As of 2019, states reported a cumulative total of 38,255 acres of forest buffers. This reflects a gap of 152,245 acres or 12,448 miles, assuming an average 100.9 ft buffer width.

**Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV):** According to preliminary data from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS), 66,387 acres of underwater grasses were mapped in the Chesapeake Bay in 2019. This is 51% of the Chesapeake Bay Program's 2025 restoration target of 130,000 acres and 36% of the partnership's 185,000-acre goal. Many factors prevented complete mapping of SAV acres in 2018 which resulted in an estimate calculated by combining mapped acreage (99,511 acres) with 2017 data (8,567 acres) for the region that was not mapped to estimate the acreage in the Bay.

# Clean Water

**2025 Watershed Implementation Plans**: Pollution controls put in place in the Chesapeake Bay watershed between 2009 and 2019 lowered nitrogen loads 11%, phosphorus loads 10% and sediment loads 4%.

**Water Quality Standards Attainment & Monitoring**: An estimated 38% of the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries met water quality standards between 2016 and 2018. Approximately 423 million pounds of nitrogen, 42.1 million pounds of phosphorus and 15,689 million pounds of sediment reached the Bay in 2018.

# Conserved Lands

**Protected Lands**: According to data collected through early 2019, nearly 1.36 million acres of land in the Chesapeake Bay watershed have been permanently protected since 2010. This marks an achievement of 68% of the outcome achieved and brings the total amount of protected land in the watershed to 9.16 million acres.

# Engaged Communities

**Diversity:** In 2019, the Chesapeake Bay Program's diversity survey indicated a slight increase in the percentage of respondents who self-identified as people of color from 13.7% in 2016 to 14.6% in 2019. The partnership has set a target to increase the percentage of people of color in the Chesapeake Bay Program to 25% by 2025. The Chesapeake Bay Program has also set a target to increase the percentage of people of color in leadership positions to 15% by 2025. The 2019 survey results showed an increase in the percentage of people of color in leadership positions from 9.1% to 10.3%.

**Environmental literacy:** 27% of respondents to a Chesapeake Bay Program survey self-identified as well-prepared to put a comprehensive and systemic approach to environmental literacy in place.

**Public access:** Between 2010 and 2019, 194 boat ramps, fishing piers and other public access sites were opened on and around the Chesapeake Bay. This marks a 65% achievement of the goal to add 300 new access sites to the watershed by 2025 and brings the total number of access sites in the region to 1,333.

**Student:** 35% of responding local education agencies reported providing system-wide MWEEs in at least one grade level in elementary school, 39% reported providing system-wide MWEEs in at least one grade level in middle school and 35% reported providing system-wide MWEEs in at least one course in high school.

# Other Highlights from 2020

In September 2020, the Local Government Advisory Committee, in coordination with the **Climate Resiliency** Workgroup held a virtual forum to bring together local elected officials and subject matter experts to identify recommendations in addressing climate-related flooding.

In collaboration with the Communications Workgroup, the **Wetlands** Workgroup is creating a series of fact sheets that highlight how wetland restoration benefits other jurisdiction-specific programs, plans and initiatives.

To help build a broader base of knowledge about the newer opportunities available to advance **tree canopy** efforts, the second Chesapeake Tree Canopy Summit was held in January 2020.

# Other Highlights from 2020

- The **Forage** Action Team developed a Forage Indicator Development Plan in September 2020.
- The **Fish Habitat** Workgroup completed a metadata inventory of stressor and biological data for tidal and nontidal waters that may be used in regional fish habitat assessments.
- The U.S. Geological Survey published *Effects of Introduced Species on **Native Brook Trout**: A Guide to the Scientific Literature.*
- The **Stream Health** Workgroup, in coordination with the U.S. Geological Survey is investigated what stressors impact the health of a stream.

# Timeline

Jan. 15-29 - Subject Matter Expert and CBP Management Review

Jan. 21 - Present to Management Board

Jan. 29- Feb. 12- Send out to Management Board and Communications Workgroup for Review

Public release tentatively scheduled for Wed. March 10.

# Questions?

Rachel Felver

CBP Communications Director

Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

(410) 387-1914

rfelver@chesapeakebay.net