

Health and Restoration in West Virginia

More than 3,500 square miles of West Virginia sit within the Chesapeake Bay watershed, and one of the state's major rivers—the Potomac—flows into the Chesapeake Bay. West Virginia has committed to achieving 18 of the outcomes in the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*. Its progress toward seven of these outcomes is highlighted below.

Forest Buffers

Outcome: Increase the capacity of forest buffers to provide water quality and habitat benefits throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Restore 900 miles of riparian forest buffers per year and conserve existing buffers until at least 70 percent of the watershed's riparian areas are forested.

Progress in West Virginia: Between 2010 and 2019, 70 miles of forest buffers were planted along rivers and streams in West Virginia: during this time a total of 9,190 miles of forest buffers were planted across all watershed jurisdictions.

2025 Watershed Implementation Plans

Outcome: By 2025, have all practices and controls in place to achieve applicable water quality (i.e., dissolved oxygen, water clarity/submerged aquatic vegetation and chlorophyll a) standards as articulated in the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load.

Progress in West Virginia: According to the Chesapeake Bay Program's Watershed Model, pollution controls put into place across the Chesapeake Bay watershed between 2009 and 2019 have lowered nitrogen loads 11%, phosphorus loads 10% and sediment loads 4%. In West Virginia, pollution controls have lowered nitrogen loads 4%, phosphorus loads 31% and sediment loads 8%.

Protected Lands

Outcome: By 2025, protect an additional two million acres of lands throughout the watershed—currently identified as high-conservation priorities at the federal, state or local level—including 225,000 acres of wetlands and 695,000 acres of forestland of highest value for maintaining water quality.

Progress in West Virginia: According to data collected from 2011—2018, almost 1.4 million acres of land in the Chesapeake Bay watershed have been permanently protected from development. This brings the total amount of protected land in the watershed portion of West Virginia to 401,312 acres, 18% of West Virginia land in the watershed.

West Virginia's Progress Towards Achieving its 2025 Targets

4%

Nitrogen

31%

Phosphorus

8%

Sediment

Public Access

Outcome: By 2025, add 300 new public access sites to the Chesapeake Bay watershed, with a strong emphasis on providing opportunities for boating, swimming and fishing, where feasible.

Progress in West Virginia: Between 2010 and 2019, 194 boat ramps, fishing piers and other public access sites were opened on and around the Chesapeake Bay. The state of West Virginia is home to 46 public access sites in all.

Environmental Literacy Planning

Outcome: Each participating Chesapeake Bay jurisdiction should develop a comprehensive and systemic approach to environmental literacy for all students in the region that includes policies, practices and voluntary metrics that support the environmental literacy goals and outcomes of the Watershed Agreement.

Progress in West Virginia: In 2019, the Chesapeake Bay Program issued its third survey to measure environmental literacy preparedness in public schools. Of the 290 responding school districts, 58 identified as well-prepared and 155 identified as somewhat prepared to deliver high-quality environmental literacy programming to their students. Two percent of the 55 public school districts in West Virginia's portion of the watershed identified as somewhat prepared and 5% identified as not prepared to put environmental literacy programs in place.

Student

Outcome: Increase students' age-appropriate understanding of the watershed through participation in teacher-supported Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) and rigorous, inquiry-based instruction, with a target of at least one MWEE in elementary, middle and high school depending on available resources.

Progress in West Virginia: In 2019, the Chesapeake Bay Program issued its third survey to measure the extent of Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) in public schools. Of the school districts that responded to this survey, 35% reported providing system-wide MWEEs to their elementary school students, 39% reported providing system-wide MWEEs to their middle school students and 35% reported providing system-wide MWEEs to their high school students. The eight public school districts in West Virginia's portion of the watershed reported providing some system-wide MWEE availability to 5% of its elementary school students, 5% of its middle school students and 2% of its high school students.

Diversity

Outcome: Identify stakeholder groups not currently represented in the leadership, decision-making or implementation of current conservation and restoration activities and create meaningful opportunities and programs to recruit and engage these groups in the partnership's efforts.

Progress in West Virginia: In 2019, the Chesapeake Bay Program's diversity survey indicated a slight increase in the number of respondents that self-identified as people of color from 13.7% in 2016 to 14.6% in 2019. West Virginia remained the same with 6.7% of respondents who self-identified as being a person of color.