



Backgrounder

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In June 2014, the Chesapeake Executive Council, which includes leaders from six states and the District of Columbia, and representatives of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Chesapeake Bay Commission, signed the landmark *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*. This restoration, conservation and stewardship accord contains ten interconnected goals and thirty-one measurable, time-bound outcomes that will help create a healthy ecosystem. The Chesapeake Bay Program's Goal Implementation Teams have developed draft management strategies that outline our plans to meet those thirty-one outcomes. The twenty-five strategies are grouped into five themes that align with Bay Program partners' vision, described in the Watershed Agreement: **Clean Water, Abundant Life, Climate Change, Conserved Lands** and **Engaged Communities**.

About Clean Water



The hundreds of thousands of streams, creeks and rivers winding through the 64,000 miles of the Chesapeake Bay watershed provide a vital resource and critical habitat for the millions of people and thousands of species that depend on them. Each person in the six-state region lives within a few miles of one of these waterways—which make up nearly half the volume of water filling the Bay. As they flow through forests, farmland and cities, these tributaries act like pipelines from our communities to the Bay, carrying the nutrients, sediment and chemical contaminants that are washed off the surrounding lands. How we care for the natural world in our local communities influences the health of not only nearby waters and lands, but the Bay ecosystem as a whole.

To restore the health of waters across the region, our partners continue to work toward the goals of the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load, or “pollution diet,” which sets a limit on nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment pollution. In addition to nutrients and sediment, emerging pollutants—mercury, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and other chemical contaminants—threaten the health of fish, wildlife and the people that depend on them. Monitoring and assessing the quantities, sources and impacts of these pollutants allows federal, state and local leaders to implement effective tools to improve the quality of our waterways.

Not all of our waterways are in need of restoration. Throughout the region, pristine healthy watersheds provide clean water, critical habitat and resilience to our ecosystem—benefits that are often difficult to rebuild once lost. Increased demand for land and resources are putting many of these areas at risk for degradation. By identifying and protecting healthy watersheds, we can conserve their ecological and cultural importance. Combining the recovery of degraded waterways with the protection of the pristine areas we already have will help restore clean water throughout the entire Bay region.

Associated Management Strategies

Water Quality

As part of the Watershed Agreement, Bay Program partners recommitted to meeting the goals of the Chesapeake Bay Maximum Daily Load (Bay TMDL). Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) provide a roadmap for how each of the seven Bay watershed jurisdictions will meet these nutrient and sediment limits. For the 2017 and 2025 WIP Outcomes, practices and controls to achieve 60 percent of nutrient and sediment pollution reductions will be in place by 2017, and all practices and controls to meet applicable water quality standards in the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal waters will be in place by 2025. For the Water Quality Standards Attainment and Monitoring Outcome, partners will continually improve the capacity to monitor and assess the effects of management actions being undertaken to implement the Bay TMDL and use the monitoring results to report on progress made in attaining water quality standards and trends in reducing nutrients and sediment in the watershed.

Toxic Contaminants Research

Almost three-quarters of the Chesapeake Bay’s tidal waters are impaired by chemical contaminants. These contaminants—including mercury, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and other emerging contaminants—are widespread throughout the watershed and have impacts on the health of humans, fish and wildlife. As part of the Watershed Agreement, Bay Program partners committed to researching and further characterizing the occurrence, concentration, sources and effects of mercury, PCBs and other contaminants, as well as identifying which practices might provide multiple benefits of reducing sediment and nutrient pollution along with the occurrence of these contaminants. This research aims to supply information to help make fish and shellfish safe for human consumption, understand the influence of contaminants on the health of fish and wildlife, document the occurrence and sources of these contaminants, inform management approaches for mitigating toxic contaminants, and identify issues of emerging concern, including microplastics and toxicity to pollinators.

Toxic Contaminants Policy and Prevention

Although the presence and associated risks of some of chemical contaminants are well understood, current efforts to reduce their impacts are producing limited results. To reduce the impacts of toxic contaminants on fish and wildlife and their threat to human health, Bay Program partners committed to improving practices and controls that reduce and prevent the effects of toxic contaminants below levels that harm aquatic systems and humans; building from existing programs to reduce the amount and effects of PCBs in the watershed; and

using research findings to evaluate the implementation of additional policies, programs and practices for other contaminants. Our plan for reaching this outcome includes developing a management approach that adds to the ongoing work of federal, state and local leaders to reduce and control contaminants, which contain research, policy and programmatic approaches related to stormwater, wastewater, atmospheric sources, in-stream sediment and contaminated sites.

Healthy Watersheds

Healthy watersheds provide clean water, critical habitat, are capable of storing large amounts of carbon and are more resilient to the effects of invasive species and changing conditions. The ecological, social and economic benefits they provide are often difficult and expensive to replicate when restoring degraded watersheds. As demand for local lands and resources increases, many healthy watersheds in the region are at risk of degradation. To protect waters and watersheds recognized for their high quality and high ecological value, Bay Program partners committed to 100 percent of state-identified currently healthy waters and watersheds remaining healthy. Our strategy includes tracking the health of watersheds and our effectiveness in protecting them, strengthening local commitment and capacity to protect healthy watersheds, improving the protection of state-identified healthy watersheds and supporting state-based efforts to improve assessment and protection of these healthy areas.