

Conowingo WIP Update

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Agenda

- ▶ High Level Overview of Conowingo WIP Progress
- ▶ EPA's Draft Conowingo WIP Expectations and State Responses
- ▶ Action Items and Next Steps Summary

Progress Summary

- Milestone progress submitted to EPA in response to EPA's evaluation
- Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York continue to work together with SRBC and other federal, state, and local partners to implement the CWIP
- Financing strategy is in place with funds forthcoming through Maryland's and Pennsylvania's Pay-for-Performance programs
- Expert Panel process in action to advance innovative practices
- Targeted watersheds have been identified for pilot project implementation

EPA's Draft CWIP Expectations

- EPA provided their draft CWIP Expectations to the PSC on February 16, 2023 and sought partnership comment.
- EPA's expectations included numeric milestone commitment metrics, reporting deadlines, and expectations to meet 25% and 100% of the nitrogen and phosphorus targets, respectively, by 2025
- Pennsylvania and Maryland submitted comments to EPA on March 24, 2023, and New York will be providing their comments as well.

Action Items and Next Steps - Funding

- Center for Watershed Protection published CWIP Funding Handouts:
 - [CWIP Funding Handout for Project Implementors](#)
 - [CWIP Funding Handout for Owners, Farmers, Producers](#)
- Pennsylvania's new \$22 million Clean Water Procurement Program draft guidelines were published in February for a 30 day comment period and will be rolled out later this spring
 - This is a new program administered by PENNVEST in partnership with PA DEP and State Conservation Commission. This program was initiated as part of the Clean Streams Fund in the FY2022-2023 Pennsylvania budget.
- MDE is working with the Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) to roll out the new \$25 million Conservation Finance Program.
- SRBC is working with PA DEP through an existing Scope of Work to assist with grant writing for targeted areas such as the Octoraro Watershed in Chester and Lancaster counties.
- NYDEC and PA DEP are evaluating new federal funding allocations and funding delivery mechanisms to invest in Conowingo WIP priority areas

Action Items and Next Steps - Freshwater Mussels

- SRBC is working with PA DEP through an existing Scope of Work to lead the “Mussels as Natural Filters” and the “Mussels Biodiversity Conservation” Committees
- Mussels as Natural Filters –
 - ▶ Identify science gaps related to the use of mussels to improve water quality
 - ▶ Establish framework for the use of mussels to improve water quality
 - ▶ Connect subject experts and practitioners
 - ▶ Increase public awareness of water quality benefits of freshwater mussels
- Mussels Biodiversity Conservation –
 - ▶ Advance mussel conservation for the purpose of maintaining mussel biodiversity.
 - ▶ Connect subject experts and practitioners.
 - ▶ Build capacity to conduct mussel work (propagation, restoration, education, etc.)

Action Items and Next Steps - Dredging

- The Corps is responding to the Expert Panel Exploratory Group (EPEG) comments on modeling scope/budget
- Once a revised/budget is received (next few weeks), work with the EPEG and Corps to finalize scope
- Proceed to review/finalize interagency agreements and cost-share commitments
- Initiate model development effort and close coordination with EPEG/Expert Panel

Action Items and Next Steps - Reporting

- All implemented best management practices (BMPs) must be reported to EPA through the same mechanism as the states' numeric progress.
- States have raised concerns regarding the reporting framework and how the data will be validated / verified by EPA alongside our state WIP progress.
- Chesapeake Conservancy is coordinating a meeting with EPA and New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland to further discuss and resolve concerns.

Near-Term Next Steps Summary

- Continue to engage with federal and state partners as well as local stakeholders in targeted watersheds
- Finalize and release Pennsylvania's and Maryland's Pay-for-Performance programs
- Meet with EPA to discuss reporting, expectations, and milestone progress
- Expert Panels
 - Finalize EPEG and USACE modeling and budget scopes for Conowingo dredging
 - Formalize/Convene Freshwater Mussels Workgroups and Acid Mine Drainage efforts
- Recommend Pay For Performance primer with PSC members at June quarterly meeting