

PA Department of Environmental Protection
CHESAPEAKE BAY COUNTYWIDE ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION BLOCK GRANTS
October 2021

PROGRAM GOAL

The purpose of this program is to provide a mechanism to fund the implementation of Countywide Action Plans (CAPs) developed at the county level to maximize specified nutrient and sediment reduction goals established as part of Pennsylvania's Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP). Through this program, multiple state and federal funding sources can be focused through one agreement to a lead county agency to implement the CAP.

BACKGROUND

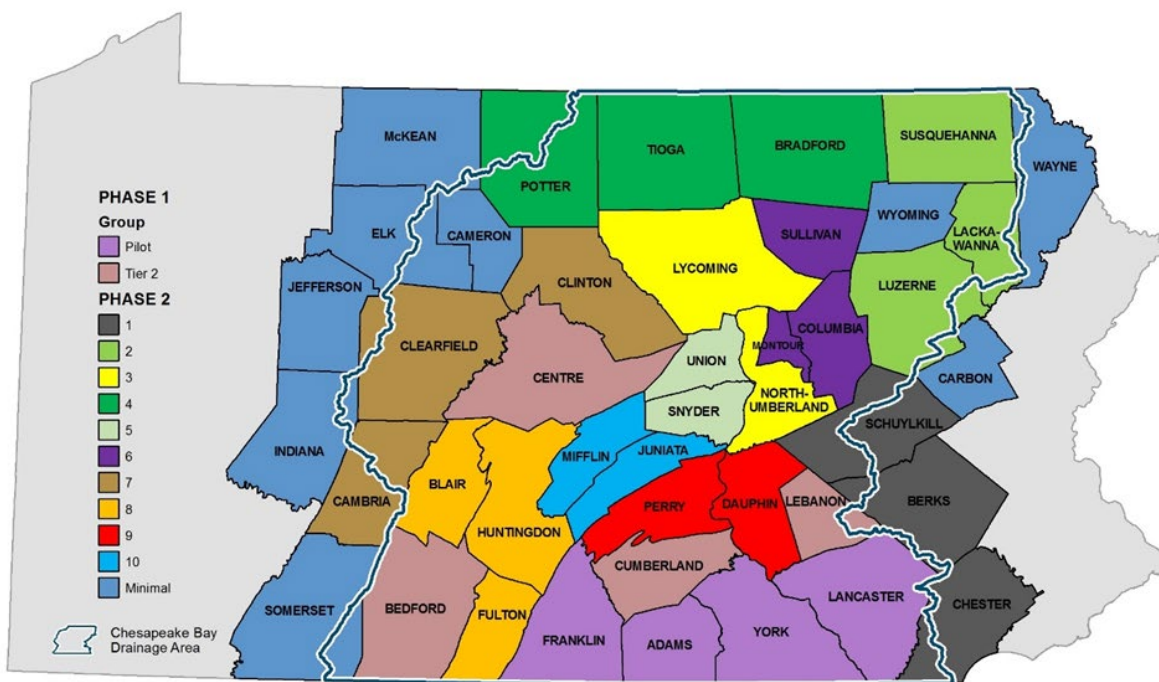
Since April 2017, a collaborative effort has been underway to develop CAPs. The initiative has included representatives from government agencies, the state legislature, county and local governments, industry associations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and citizens. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) expressed support for jurisdiction-specific plans tailored to the unique considerations of each state and the District of Columbia. To that end, Pennsylvania created a Local Area Goals Workgroup to investigate options and make recommendations for local planning in the Commonwealth.

In fall 2017, the workgroup looked at several geographic options for assigning local planning goals for nitrogen and phosphorus (from land-river segments (505) to sub-basins (6)). Based upon their recommendation, the Phase 3 WIP Steering Committee decided that county-based goals would be the most feasible in terms of size, number, existing data levels, and ability to organize resources.

Pennsylvania's nitrogen and phosphorus reduction targets are broken down into local planning goals for each of these counties. As a group, these local pollution reductions will help Pennsylvania reach its clean water goals. To calculate the local planning goal for each county, it was further decided that each county would achieve an equal percentage of the total level of effort possible, (or "Everybody does Everything, Everywhere.") Through this methodology, Pennsylvania's nitrogen and phosphorus reduction targets are broken down into local planning goals for each of these 43 counties. These goals are a way for Pennsylvania to engage with local partners on shared issues and focus resources on efforts that help Pennsylvania reach its Chesapeake Bay goals.

The 43 counties in Pennsylvania's Chesapeake Bay watershed were further divided into four tiers, based on the relative opportunity to improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay through nutrient reductions in each county. Each tier is assigned 25% of the total planning targets for Pennsylvania. Figure 1 is a listing of each county in the watershed and the tier to which they were assigned.

Figure 1 – Phased Schedule for Completion of CAPs



OVERVIEW OF COUNTYWIDE ACTION PLANNING PROCESS

The key goal in the planning process is to develop a CAP that achieves the assigned nutrient and sediment reduction planning goals; but, more importantly also achieves local water quality improvements through the identification of local priorities. This is an opportunity for other local goals of importance to be identified and implemented as part of this planning partnership and may include items such as economic development, improving flood protection, enhancing habitat for brook trout, increasing public access to local waters, and more. By utilizing this collaborative approach to meet the restoration and water quality goals, the Commonwealth works with each county in Pennsylvania's Chesapeake Bay watershed to develop a CAP for clean water that is realistic and able to be accomplished by local communities.

For more information: www.dep.pa.gov/chesapeakebay/phase3.

SCHEDULE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

As part of the development of Pennsylvania's Phase 3 WIP, four counties participated in a pilot project to develop their CAPs -- Lancaster and York completed theirs in January 2019; Adams and Franklin in March 2019. The CAPs for these four counties were submitted as part of Pennsylvania's Phase 3 WIP to EPA and the Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership in April 2019, and can be found on DEP's website at www.dep.pa.gov/chesapeakebay/phase3. The four Tier 2 counties -- Bedford, Centre, Cumberland, and Lebanon -- finalized their CAPs in winter 2020. The 26 counties in Tier 3 and 4 finalized their plans in fall 2021 and joined the Pilot and Tier 2 counties in the implementation phase.

PLANNING TEAM SUPPORT

As part of this planning process, each county's planning team receives a county-specific pollution reduction goal, planning and implementation tools, and a customized technical toolbox. County leaders use the toolbox to develop a mix of approaches that best fits the local needs and desires for local waterways. Some of the options are: environmental education, regulation and permitting, public works investments, restoration projects, and assistance to streamside property owners.

A support team for each county is also provided. This team is comprised of the following:

- **DEP Internal Coordinator:** This coordinator is a member of the DEP Chesapeake Bay Office. The internal coordinator serves as the point of contact for the technical support team and the county planning team.
- **DEP Technical Coordinator:** The technical coordinator(s) is a member of the DEP Chesapeake Bay or contracted by DEP to provide technical support to the county planning team.
- **DEP Facilitation Coordinator:** This coordinator is contracted by DEP to provide facilitation services and organizational support.
- **County Community Clean Water Action Plan Coordinator:** These external coordinators serve as the point of contact to their assigned county(s) and are funded through an agreement between DEP and the lead agency of the county planning team. These coordinators provide regular progress updates to the DEP internal coordinator. They support county efforts to develop and implement their CAP. *These agreements serve as the foundation for these block grants for development and implementation of the CAPs.*

GRANT PROGRAM PROCESS

There are two components to this program:

1. Staffing and Coordination
2. CAP Implementation

The funding for the Staffing and Coordination component will be the EPA Chesapeake Bay Implementation Grant. Funding for CAP Implementation can come from multiple state and federal agencies. The selection process and allocation formulas for these two components are described in more detail below.

STAFFING AND COORDINATION

The selection process for these grant funds will follow the Schedule for Implementation process described for the finalization of the CAPs. The first step will be to identify a county agency lead for the effort and the creation of a planning team. The county agency will also be the grantee. The agency will use these funds to hire the County Community Clean Water Action Plan Coordinator described above to implement the CAP.

The agreements will be multi-year agreements, with annual scopes of work describing what the county intends to do in the next state fiscal year relative to either the finalization of the CAP or further implementation of the CAP. Each CAP is to be updated on a two-year basis.

The proposed job description for the Community Clean Water Action Plan Coordinator and template for the Scope of Work to be completed by the lead county agency is attached for reference.

CAP IMPLEMENTATION

Eligibility criteria for these funds is the completion of a CAP. The CAP identifies priority initiatives with individual practices that will be installed to achieve specific nutrient and sediment reductions. To the extent possible, specific projects may also be identified in the CAP. The funds provided under this component are limited to practice implementation.

During the development of the Phase 3 WIP, one of the main barriers or challenges the counties identified was the multiple application processes that had to be followed to receive state or federal funds. The goal with this component of the program is to minimize or streamline that process where once the CAP is completed, monies for its implementation could be awarded on an annual basis based on a defined set of criteria and progress made. The lead county agencies would have a minimum known amount of funding they could work with at any one time and could spend their time on getting work on the ground, rather than completing grant application paperwork.

Utilizing their CAPs, county planning team leads/entities will list, in order of priority, the projects that they intend to fund with this implementation block grant for the following year. If the county is unable to accomplish the first CAP Priority Initiative project listed over the course of the year, they may move onto the second project, etc.

Available funding will be allocated among the counties each year based on defined criteria below and added to the existing multi-year agreement that will be put in place to fund the Community Clean Water Action Plan Coordinator.

The following criteria for the allocation of available state and federal funds set-aside for this purpose on an annual basis are:

1. The Tier the County is in, as designated by Pennsylvania's Phase 3 WIP, and the county's relative nutrient pollution reduction impact to the Chesapeake Bay.
2. The number of stream miles in the county that do not meet water quality standards due to nutrient or sediment impairment.
3. The percent of the nutrient and sediment local planning goal assigned to the county in the Phase 3 WIP that their CAP addresses.
4. Amount of funding awarded to the county in the past year and their progress in getting that money spent. Future funding will be based on the county's ability to spend the money allocated the previous year.
5. The level of detail provided regarding specific projects to be implemented within the next year as part of the scope of work submitted for their Community Clean Water Action Plan Coordinator.