

The Local Role in Developing a “Countywide Action Plan”

Who can participate in the development of a Countywide Action Plan?

Everyone who cares about their community and their waterways is welcome to participate! We have a special need for:

- Streamside property owners
- Conservation Districts, and environmental or outdoor organizations who know the waterways first hand
- Leaders in any sector that have strong connections to waterways, such as local government, agriculture, forestry, construction, and water and wastewater authorities

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) will guide local leaders in the planning effort. So will our partners at the Pennsylvania Departments of Agriculture and Conservation and Natural Resources, as well as the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

What is the Countywide Action Plan used for?

The Countywide Action Plan is a way for each of the 43 Pennsylvania counties whose waters run to either the Susquehanna or Potomac rivers to plan how they will meet pollution reduction goals set by PA DEP. At this time, counties have a lot of discretion in how they choose to meet their goals.

Countywide Action Plans can help counties identify actions that help them address local issues AND meet PA DEP goals. By creating a Countywide Action Plan, counties can develop a strategy for: cleaning up local waters, lowering flood risks, and improving the quality of life in their community.

What is expected of participants who want to help develop a Countywide Action Plan?

Participants are expected to come prepared to roll up their sleeves and get to work. The planning process provides a forum for local leaders and community members to work together and make decisions about how they will meet the PA DEP pollution reduction goals for their county. Participants can expect to attend meetings and conference calls with local partners, brainstorm around solutions, and offer your opinion on the best way to meet the goal set for your county.

Planning snapshot:

- Timing: It will take up to 6 months for a county to create a Countywide Action Plan.
- Staff Needs: One or two full-time volunteers or staff members to act as Countywide Action Plan Facilitators
- Potential Costs: Staff time, meeting facilities, meeting refreshments

Where are the counties that will develop Countywide Action Plans?

Forty-three of Pennsylvania's counties drain to either the Susquehanna or the Potomac rivers. We have calculated how much pollution is entering these waterways and where it comes from. Each county has its own goal to reduce its fair share. Some counties have more work to do than others!

Pennsylvania's neighbors also have similar responsibilities. New York, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware, and Washington DC are all working together to clean up the Chesapeake Bay, which is our shared downstream resource.

When will my county get started on its Countywide Action Plan? How long will it take?

Four counties have already started — York, Adams, Lancaster, and Franklin. The other 39 counties will start in winter of 2018/2019. It will take up to 6 months for each county to develop their plan. PA DEP will submit the draft complete cleanup plan to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in April 2019. The effort will conclude in August 2019.

Why is it worth my time to help write a Countywide Action Plan?

It's an opportunity for you to make a difference for your community! Cleaner and healthier waterways improve the quality of life and business environment. They flood less often and are safe and appealing for family activities like boating and fishing. Also, studies show that healthy waterways increase property values.

Pennsylvania communities have made a lot of progress in improving local waterways over the last 40 years. Many streams that once ran orange with abandoned mine pollution are now places where residents gather to swim, fish, boat, and play. Countywide Action Plans give you an opportunity to take credit for the environmentally beneficial things you are already doing or planning to do in your community.

This is also an opportunity to ensure that your business interests are considered as your county figures out how it will meet its goals.

How do I get involved?

If you want to be a leader or a part of the solution, provide us with your contact information using this simple online form: <http://bit.ly/wip3-cap>

When your county's action plan process begins, we will provide your contact information to the organizers.

Why is this all happening now?

In 2019, Pennsylvania and neighboring states are beginning the third phase of their work to clean up the Chesapeake Bay, our shared downstream resource. Phase 3 runs through 2025.

The cleanup work first began in 1983 and there is a lot of progress to be proud of! However, there is more to do. Of the nearly 49,000 assessed miles of streams in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, 11,446 still need to be cleaned up. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has mandated goals that Pennsylvania must meet by 2025, but has given lots of flexibility in how to meet the goals. If the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency determines that Pennsylvania is falling short of its cleanup responsibilities, it may step in. If this happens, likely consequences include:

- More livestock operations and municipalities subject to federal regulations
- EPA may withhold or redirect funding
- Require additional reductions from point sources, such as wastewater and industrial facilities
- Impose new water quality standards stream-by-stream in Pennsylvania

Why focus on local involvement and partnerships to develop Countywide Action Plans?

PA DEP believes that path to success starts at the local level. You understand your own community, economy, waterways, and challenges better than anybody. If you choose to get involved in this process, you will have a say in how the goals get met. You can shape the mix of solutions that are chosen within your county. This is also an opportunity to ensure that your business interests are considered.

What's with all this jargon?

Technical words and jargon are minimal in this document, but if you choose to participate in the Countywide Action Plan, you'll be exposed to some. Here's a cheat sheet:

The Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load, or TMDL for short. This is the required 2025 cleanup goals for each state, set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Some call it the "pollution diet." Your county's pollution reduction goals are your fair share of this total.

Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan, or "P3 WIP" for sort. This is how Pennsylvania will figure out how to meet its responsibilities between 2019 and 2025. Pennsylvania's neighbors are doing this, as well. Phase 2 ran from 2012 to 2018. Phase 1 ran from 2010 to 2012.