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Wolf Administration Announces How Pennsylvania Will Meet Its 2025 Pollution Reduction Goals in Chesapeake Bay Watershed, Calls for Funding Support to Make It Happen

Harrisburg, PA – Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Chesapeake Bay Program Director Jill Whitcomb and State Conservation Commission Executive Secretary Karl Brown joined local officials at Stoney Lawn Farms in Middletown to announce how the state will fully meet its nutrient and sediment pollution reduction goals in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed by 2025. Stoney Lawn, owned by Ron and Adam Kopp, is a 175-cow dairy operation that is completely no till and has put in place many other best practices to protect water quality.

Updates to the [Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan \(WIP\)](#), first announced in 2019, outline how Pennsylvania will meet 100 percent of its 2025 targets, provided funding support is in place for state, county-level, and sector initiatives and EPA modeling is updated to accurately reflect pollution reduction measures already on the ground. The Phase 3 WIP Amendment submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on December 31, 2021, quantifies how nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment pollution will be reduced to meet the targets.

“We’ve built up an incredible momentum over the course of the past few years. It has been truly remarkable to see the engagement and buy-in from our local communities and counties,” said Whitcomb. “Now, more than ever, we need to sustain this momentum and drive forward. Our updated plan shows exactly how, with the necessary funding and resources provided, we’ll have practices and programs in place by 2025 to meet our nutrient and sediment pollution reduction goals.”

Like the other jurisdictions in the watershed—New York, Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia—Pennsylvania is mandated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to lower its nutrient and sediment pollution levels by 2025. Pennsylvania is required to reduce nitrogen by 32.5 million pounds and phosphorus by 0.85 million pounds.

Under the Wolf Administration, Pennsylvania has made unprecedented progress, with nitrogen reduced by 6.77 million pounds and phosphorus by 0.3 million pounds as of 2020.

[Countywide Action Plans](#) are a key component of Pennsylvania’s pollutant reduction strategy. All 34 Pennsylvania counties in the Chesapeake Bay watershed that were asked to complete plans have now done so, and county teams and partners have begun carrying out the best management practices (BMPs) specified in their plans. Continuing this work will achieve the largest nitrogen reduction, 16.8 million pounds.

The Phase 3 WIP Amendment counts a further 7.8 million pound reduction in nitrogen and a 366.7 million pound reduction in sediment being achieved by multi-year and structural BMPs that were

put in place in locations across Pennsylvania's section of the watershed 10 to 15 years ago. Due to the Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership's BMP Verification Framework Guidance, the EPA model automatically excludes BMPs that reach the end of their credit duration if not reinspected. This results in thousands of functioning BMPs in Pennsylvania – many of them having been federally cost-shared with tax-payer dollars – are considered expired. However, data from Pennsylvania, New York, and Maryland show many structural BMPs continue to function beyond the end of their assigned credit duration.

Further significant nitrogen reduction (6.1 million pounds) will come from state initiatives in agricultural nutrient management, forestry, stormwater management, and wastewater treatment that were recommended by the Phase 3 WIP work groups.

The Phase 3 WIP Amendment has also quantified Pennsylvania's reported and uncredited BMPs due to cutoff, which would result in additional nitrogen reductions (784,272 pounds). Cutoff or "excess" BMPs are those that do not get incorporated into EPA modeled progress because the implementation level of these real-world BMPs artificially exceeds a 100% implementation level in certain areas due to model processes. Some Pennsylvania BMPs that are affected by cutoff include agricultural nutrient management, livestock and poultry waste management systems, barnyard runoff control, and stormwater management.

The Phase 3 WIP Amendment also includes pollution reductions from a number of state programs that are helping to lower nutrient and sediment pollution but haven't to date been counted to the fullest extent. These programs include the [DEP Nutrient Credit Trading Program, Chapter 105](#) compensatory mitigation banking, [industrial stormwater](#), the DEP [Act 537 Sewage Facilities Program](#), [municipal waste landfills](#), [land recycling](#), [environmental cleanup and brownfields](#).

The \$324.2 million annual funding need identified in the original Phase 3 WIP remains. The proposed USDA Chesapeake Resilient Farms Initiative (CRFI), supported by the Wolf Administration, would provide a new investment of \$737 million across the Chesapeake Bay watershed for clean water and climate resiliency. State investments are being proposed in the Pennsylvania legislature, with proposed Clean Streams Fund and Growing Greener III funding that would provide \$750 million statewide, with a focus in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and Susquehanna River Basin, for watershed restoration and water quality improvements.

Nutrient pollution and eroded sediment enter streams, rivers, and lakes from widely dispersed human activities on the land, such as using too much fertilizer, plowing and tilling farm fields, stripping away trees and vegetation, and expanding concrete and paved surfaces. In 2019, Pennsylvania's Phase 3 WIP noted more than 15,000 miles of impaired streams in Pennsylvania's share of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. With new water quality assessments being conducted and documented through the draft 2022 Integrated Water Quality Report, Pennsylvania's share of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed now shows a reduction of known impairments to less than 13,000 miles of polluted streams and rivers.

Pennsylvania takes a [Healthy Waters, Healthy Communities](#) approach to improving the health of the watershed, inviting county teams to take control of local water quality improvement, with state and other partners providing as much data, technical assistance, funding, and other support as possible. It encourages and equips counties to develop strategies and determine project sites and types that will benefit their communities and farmers, municipalities, businesses, and other landowners, while restoring the environment.

To follow Pennsylvania's progress in the watershed, see the [DEP Chesapeake Bay 2020 Annual Report, which highlights numeric and county successes](#), and subscribe to the [Healthy Waters monthly newsletter](#).

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