



Pennsylvania
Department of Environmental Protection



Pennsylvania
Department of Agriculture



Pennsylvania
**Department of Conservation
and Natural Resources**

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Shapiro Administration Celebrates Historic Improvements to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and the Susquehanna River as Commonwealth Leads Effort to Improve Water Quality

Under the Shapiro Administration, Pennsylvania will continue to improve local waterways and water quality

Harrisburg, PA – Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** joined **Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Acting Secretary Jessica Shirley**, **Department of Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding**, and **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn** to celebrate significant improvements to the Susquehanna River and the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science's (UMCES) 17th annual [Chesapeake Bay and Watershed Report Card](#) was issued today at the Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) office in Harrisburg for the 2023/2024 period. The report measures the health of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, considering ecological, societal, and economic indicators. For the first time in the report's history, the Chesapeake Bay showed steady overall improvement, earning a C+ grade – the highest grade ever awarded to the overall health of the Bay since the report was created. The Upper Bay, which is fed by the Susquehanna River from Pennsylvania scored one of the highest grades among any area of the Bay – and posted a significant improvement from last year – showing how efforts in agency collaborations, strong partnerships, and sustained investments led to progress throughout the Susquehanna River watershed and beyond.

“Our Commonwealth’s Constitution states that every Pennsylvanian has a right to clean air and pure water. My Administration takes seriously our responsibility to protect that right, defend the freedom to breathe clean air and drink pure water, and create a better Commonwealth for our children and grandchildren,” said **Governor Josh Shapiro**, “This year, the Chesapeake Bay got its highest grade in 22 years, and the portion of the bay that the Susquehanna River flows into got the second-best grade of the entire watershed. Pennsylvania’s portion of the watershed is significantly improving because we’ve brought people together and invested in Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts. My Administration is proud of this progress – and we’re going to continue to work to restore the Chesapeake Bay for years to come.”

“The improvements we are celebrating today – cleaner water, better habitat, and healthier watersheds – are the returns on the investments made by Pennsylvania over the last several years. That’s why it’s important to continue to invest, so we can continue to make progress,” said **Department of Environmental Protection Acting Secretary Jessica Shirley**. “Pennsylvania will build on the momentum from the last five years, and we are committed to continuing this work for years to come, as we work collaboratively to clean up Pennsylvania’s local waterways, and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay.”

“Pennsylvania is making unprecedented investments to support farmers who are changing the way they operate to create healthier soil and cleaner water,” said **Department of Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding**. “Since 2019, those investments have accelerated our progress toward reducing pollution in the Bay nearly two and half times that of the previous 10 years. Since the Shapiro Administration began, \$154 million to 700-plus projects through the Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program is multiplying the millions invested through PA Farm Bill Conservation Excellence Grants, and Resource Enhancement and Protection tax incentives even further. The data in the Bay Report Card just serve to show that supporting farmers is an effective way to get stuff done for all of us.”

“Pennsylvania has been hard at work increasing funding and technical assistance with new staff, investments, and partnerships in planting streamside forest buffers, leading all Bay states in buffers planted and accounting for 60 percent of the total amount of buffers planted in the watershed since tracking began in 1996,” said **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn**. “This work helps Pennsylvanians who live and recreate in the watershed with cooler waters, less risk of flooding, and better habitat, as well as helping those downstream.”

Since 2021 Pennsylvania has invested more than \$580 million into supporting farm conservation, restoring watersheds, and other on-the-ground projects to improve local water quality. This includes more than \$61 million in Growing Greener grants, more than \$92 million in farmland preservation and conservation projects, and nearly \$9 million to plant forest buffers and restore urban tree canopy.

The Susquehanna River is the largest tributary of the Chesapeake Bay, playing a critical role in the overall health and ecology of the Bay. This significant milestone for the Susquehanna River represents the ongoing work to restore Pennsylvania's watershed through strategic partnerships and funding. Since 2004, DEP has restored approximately 967 miles of streams and more than 28,000 acres of public lakes. The Shapiro Administration will continue to work towards a vibrant and resilient watershed.

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