

“JURISDICTION” CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAMMATIC TWO-YEAR MILESTONES COMMITMENTS
JANUARY 1, 2026-DECEMBER 31, 2027

Narrative Summary: *Concise summary of overall objectives for a milestone period.*

The Delaware Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) serves as the State’s strategic roadmap for achieving its nutrient and sediment load reduction goals under the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). The WIP outlines the priority practices, policies, and programs needed to reduce pollution and improve water quality across Delaware’s portion of the watershed. To ensure steady progress, the State establishes two-year Milestone commitments that translate the long-term WIP strategies into actionable, near-term programmatic initiatives. These Milestones prioritize the implementation of key practices identified in the WIP, allowing agencies and partners to track progress, adaptively manage efforts, and remain on course toward meeting Delaware’s restoration and water quality targets.

SECTOR/CATEGORY/OBJECTIVE

Narrative Summary: *Concise summary of sector objectives for a milestone period.*

Delaware will prioritize core sector activities that implement the Best Management Practices (BMPs) identified in its Phase III Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan to achieve nutrient load reduction goals. Additional emphasis will be placed on sector initiatives that expand engagement, training, and understanding of issues affecting key species and public health within Delaware’s Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Delaware’s WIP identifies six cost-effective priority BMPs: (1) forest buffers, (2) water control structures, (3) tree plantings, (4) grass buffers, (5) cover crops, and (6) floodplain wetland restoration. For the 2026–2027 Programmatic Milestones, Delaware will focus on five of these BMPs, as water control structures will no longer be modeled as a standalone BMP in the next Chesapeake Bay model update. Priority BMPs are expected to be re-evaluated in 2027.

Agricultural lands make up roughly half of Delaware’s Chesapeake Bay Watershed, compared to about 10% identified as developed land, with the remainder land use classified as natural lands. As a result, Delaware’s nutrient reduction strategy emphasizes BMP implementation on agricultural lands while continuing to support impactful practices in developed areas as growth continues. MS4s were not addressed during this Milestone period because we have no MS4’s that are expected to be completed in the Chesapeake Bay watershed portion of the state during the 2026-2027 period.

To advance these goals, the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) will continue coordinating with state partners, including the Conservation Districts and the Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA), which oversees Delaware’s Cover Crop Cost-Share Program, and explore increased opportunities for floodplain wetland restoration alongside programs such as the DNREC Drainage and Tax Ditch Programs. DNREC will also continue implementing practices such as grass buffers, tree plantings, and forest buffers through programs including the Delaware Community Conservation Assistance Program (DeCAP), the Tree for Every Delawarean Initiative (TEDI), and the DDA Forest Service. Partners

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will also evaluate opportunities to expand outreach, increase participation, strengthen incentives and cost-share support for landowners, and leverage newly available state match funding resources.

CORE SECTOR ACTIVITIES

Milestone Number	Lead Agency	Actions & Deliverables	Target Date	Outcomes (e.g., lbs of pollutants reduced, # of people engaged)	Funding Source
1	DNREC, Conservation Districts, Department of Agriculture (DDA)	Continue to increase adoption of cover crop implementation in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Prioritize early planting of cover crops that will increase nutrient load reductions annually.	December 2027	Increase total acres of cover crops implemented from 2025 reported totals, up to the allowable maximum. Increase incentives for early cover crop plantings of priority seed blends that lead to more nutrient load reductions. Agencies will discuss and attempt to implement increased cost-share funding for landowners who adopt these priority cover crop practices.	Federal grants, State funding
2	DNREC, Conservation Districts	Increase and prioritize the implementation of all wetland BMPs.	December 2027	Increase implementation of agricultural wetland restoration from 2025 totals by 1,000 acres reported, wetland creation to 80 acres reported, and wetland rehabilitation by 2,000 acres through new implementation and verification. To be achieved by identifying priority wetland BMP locations in key nutrient-reduction areas of the watershed, while coordinating local and federal funding to support and prioritize implementation.	Federal grants, State Funding
3	DNREC, Conservation Districts	Increase the implementation of grass buffer acres throughout Delaware's Chesapeake Bay watershed	December 2027	Increase grass buffer acres by 250 acres above the 2025 totals through new implementation or verification of existing practices. To be achieved by leveraging DNREC incentive programs, strengthening partnerships with conservation	Federal grants, State Funding

				districts, and coordinating with tax ditch organizations, with priority given to lands adjacent to tax ditches.	
4	DNREC, DDA – Forest Service	Increase the number of tree plantings, afforestation, and forested buffer implementation while protecting existing forest canopy cover.	December 2027	Increase agricultural tree plantings by 40 acres, and urban tree plantings by 20 acres above the 2025 totals through new implementation or verification of existing practices. To be achieved through identifying priority planting locations, coordinating funding sources, providing outreach, and providing support for installation and long-term maintenance.	Federal grants, State funding, non-profit funding
5	DNREC	Increase implementation of BMPs that fall under the Delaware Community Conservation Assistance Program (DeCAP) and specifically look to implement additional projects at a community level.	December 2027	Implement at least 3 new conservation landscaping plantings, 1 runoff reduction performance practice, 1 and stormwater treatment practice. Implement at least 2 community-level projects through this program.	Federal grants, State funding
6	DNREC	Prioritize Stream Restoration projects in the watershed. Specifically, the removal of legacy sediments, floodplain reconnections, and in-stream enhancements.	December 2027	Increase non-urban stream restoration by 1,000 feet, and urban stream restoration by 900 feet above 2025 totals through new implementation or verification of existing practices.	Federal grants, State funding
7	DNREC, DDA	Increase the number of reported urban nutrient management plans in the watershed by aligning with updated state fertilizer regulations.	December 2027	Increase the number to 2,000 acres enrolled in urban nutrient management plans above 2025 reported totals through either new implementation or verification of existing practices. The revised rules for urban nutrient management will increase the number of acres that will fall under nutrient application restrictions. Delaware will coordinate with state agencies and initiatives such as Livable Lawns to boost participation and outreach.	State funding, Federal grants
8	DNREC	Conduct BMP maintenance verification at state and federal facilities across Delaware, along with geolocating and	June 2026	The Sediment and Stormwater Program (SSP) has contracted a third-party consultant to carry out these activities.	State funding

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		review all BMPs at state facilities, providing a full report on the status and functionality of each system, and updating operations and maintenance plans.		The consultant is expected to complete the review in early 2026 with an anticipated final count of 1,086 BMPs. Final reports will be compiled and sent to facility owners with suggested maintenance actions. The SSP will meet with facility owners to go over these reports and identify maintenance schedules.	
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SECTOR INITIATIVES (I.E., INNOVATIVE ACTIONS)

Milestone Number	Lead Agency	Actions & Deliverables	Target Date	Outcomes (e.g., lbs of pollutants reduced, # of people engaged)	Funding Source
1	DNREC	Migrate the Certified Construction Reviewer (CCR) Recertification Course to an online format to add accessibility and increase participation.	December 2027	Fully transition the CCR training into an online, on-demand format. Making it more accessible for participants who need to complete this training and increasing participation of necessary Sediment and Stormwater training.	State funding
2	DNREC	Gain a better understanding of historic and existing freshwater mussel and/or submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) populations throughout Delaware's Chesapeake Bay Watershed.	December 2027	Gain baseline knowledge of freshwater mussel and/or SAV populations in Delaware's Chesapeake Bay Watershed. This information will help identify locations to target implementation practices to support these populations and improve water quality. This will be accomplished using different techniques, including, but not limited to, physical surveys, benthic habitat suitability modeling, eDNA, etc.	State funding, Federal grants
3	DNREC	Compile existing PFAS fish tissue data from Chesapeake Bay drainages for sharing with the public. DNREC is currently evaluating its methods to incorporate certain PFAS compounds into cumulative human health	December 2027	Generate a report with the findings from the PFAS fish tissue data that can be shared with the public and incorporate into Delaware's human health risk assessments.	State funding, Federal grants

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		risk assessments, including fish consumption advisories.			
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