

Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) are developed by the seven Chesapeake Bay watershed jurisdictions to help guide their actions as they work to meet the pollution reduction goals outlined in the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (Bay TMDL) by 2025. These plans consider such things as ecological restoration and sustainability while allowing for greater transparency and accountability for improved performance. Each Bay jurisdiction is currently developing its third WIP (Phase III) since the Bay TMDL was set in 2010. Phase III WIPs will include the specific steps that each of the seven Bay jurisdictions intends to implement between 2018 and 2025 to meet the Bay restoration goals.

Why are Watershed Implementation Plans developed?

Established in 2010, the Bay TMDL set limits for major sources of nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment pollution entering the Chesapeake Bay. This represents the maximum amount of pollution that can enter the Bay while still allowing the Bay to meet water quality standards. To meet the limits specified by the Bay TMDL, jurisdictions needed an overall reduction of 25 percent of nitrogen, 24 percent of phosphorus and 20 percent of sediment from pollution loads entering the Chesapeake Bay.

These pollution limits, or allocations, were divided across the six Chesapeake Bay watershed states – Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia – as well as the District of Columbia. These allocations were set using state-of-the-art modeling tools, extensive monitoring data and peer-reviewed science, and are referred to as planning targets.

To meet these allocations by 2025, the seven watershed jurisdictions prepare WIPs that outline detailed, specific steps they will take to reduce pollution loads. The jurisdictions have prepared two other WIPs since the establishment of the Bay TMDL 2010 (Phase I and II, which covered 2010–2012 and 2012–2017, respectively), and are now developing their third WIP.

What are Phase III WIPs?

In 2018, the seven Bay watershed jurisdictions will develop Phase III WIPs that provide more information on what actions the jurisdictions and their local partners and stakeholders intend to implement between 2018 and 2025 to meet their pollution reduction goals. The Phase III WIPs will take into account the results of the 2017 midpoint assessment as well as future population growth based on estimates of how the land in the Chesapeake Bay watershed will be used in 2025. It is reasonable to assume that jurisdictions may need to update their commitments in the 2018–2025 timeframe; if so, jurisdictions may update their programmatic and/or numeric commitments through their two-year milestones.



Keeping WIP Progress on Track

Under the Bay TMDL, Bay jurisdictions and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) agreed to develop short-term goals, called two-year milestones, to check in on the progress being made to reduce pollution.

A 2017 midpoint assessment was conducted to review progress toward meeting pollutant load reductions identified in the Bay TMDL, Phase I and Phase II WIPs, and two-year milestones. The midpoint assessment will look at each jurisdiction's final 2016–2017 milestones and 2017 progress data to determine if the jurisdictions have the necessary practices in place to achieve 60 percent of the pollution reductions. The data and feedback gathered during the midpoint assessment will help jurisdictions prepare their Phase III WIPs.

What elements must be included in the Phase III WIPs?

EPA provided expectations for the jurisdictions' Phase III WIPs to maintain accountability, encourage continued adaptive management to the new information generated during the Bay TMDL midpoint assessment, and lay the groundwork for implementation of the next generation of innovative practices. These expectations are directed towards ensuring EPA and the public has reasonable assurance that the seven jurisdictions, and their local and federal partners, have in place, or are committed to put in place, the funding, financing, cost-share, technical assistance, voluntary, incentive, policy, programmatic, legislative, and regulatory infrastructures necessary to achieve their 2025 target goals.

EPA expects each of the seven jurisdictions to describe in their respective Phase III WIPs how they, in collaboration with local and federal partners, will:

1. Specify the programmatic and numeric implementation commitments between 2018 and 2025 needed to achieve their 2025 goals.
2. Commit to comprehensive strategies for engagement of the full array of their local, regional, and federal partners in WIP implementation.
3. Account for changing conditions due to climate change, Conowingo Dam infill, all population growth, and changes in land uses—and offset all resultant new or increased nutrient and sediment pollutant loads.
4. Make adjustments to the jurisdictions' state-basin, Bay segment watershed, and source sector Phase III WIP planning targets to factor in the new information developed through the Bay TMDL's midpoint assessment.
5. Develop and implement local area targets at the scales and in the form best suited for directly engaging local and federal partners in WIP implementation.

Ensure local engagement during Phase III WIP process

Jurisdictions are expected to carry out WIP development and implementation in partnership with federal agencies, regional and local governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, including businesses, farmers and individual citizens. The Phase III WIP should clearly document how local, regional and federal partners will be engaged in implementation.



Photo: Will Parson/Chesapeake Bay Program

View Phase III WIP information at

<https://www.epa.gov/chesapeake-bay-tmdl/chesapeake-bay-watershed-implementation-plans-wips>

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