

Spring 2021

# Hourglass Quarterly



CHESAPEAKE BAY HEALTH

HOLD HARMLESS DOING HARM

CITY NEEDS FLEXIBILITY

FIRST FRIDAY FORUMS

Thank you to the sponsor of this edition of the Hourglass Quarterly:



(717) 397-8282  
777 East Ross Street  
Lancaster, PA 17602

Wickersham Construction and  
Engineering, Inc. is a Proud  
Sponsor of the Hourglass

# CHESAPEAKE BAY HEALTH

## Plans to Save the Bay Come With Cost

The Chesapeake Bay is the region's largest economic asset. The Chesapeake Bay's watershed encompasses 64,299 square miles, six states, and more than 150 major rivers and streams. Pennsylvania's role in the health of the bay cannot be overstated. The Susquehanna River is the primary source of freshwater to the bay, representing 90 percent of all flowing freshwater into the upper half of the bay. This reality places a disproportionate burden of responsibility on Pennsylvania to ensure the water leaving our boundaries is contributing to the health of the bay.



Unfortunately to date, Pennsylvania has significantly lagged in meeting milestones established in the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) limits by 2025—the bay's so-called "pollution diet" set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). *PennFuture*, a nonpartisan environ-

mental advocacy group in Pennsylvania, released a study on the policies and funding needed to meet the federally required TMDL set for the state. The report, "Underfunded and Polluted: Solutions to Fund Clean Water in Pennsylvania and the Chesapeake Bay Watershed," identifies a \$521 million gap between current funding levels and the resources required to meet these goals.

While this number might seem large, the regional economic benefit to meeting these goals is profound. A study from the *Chesapeake Bay Foundation*, "Economic Benefits of Cleaning up the Chesapeake", found that if these TMDLs were met, the economic benefits to Pennsylvania alone would be over \$6.2 billion and the benefits to the region would be \$22.5 billion. In addition to the financial implications of cleaning our water, these benefits also take the form of: increased profitability of food production and agriculture; increased property values; increased recreational activities and associated revenues; improvements to our drinking water supply; reduction of pollution entering our waterways; and climate resiliency.

Not meeting these TMDLs also have consequences. Because these limits



are set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of the federal government, it can choose to redirect funds away from states and to third parties if it thinks Pennsylvania is not making adequate progress in addressing pollution and sediment. The EPA can also initiate federal enforcement (fines) and legal action against municipalities responsible for not maintaining the health of their waterways. The EPA can also decrease the allowed TMDL numbers, making it even more challenging for Pennsylvania to meet the goals.

Of the counties in Pennsylvania, Lancaster County has the most work to do. This is because of our close geographic location to the bay and the large number of farms in the County. In fact, Lancaster and York Counties account for 25% of the total amount of nutrients and sediment that Pennsylvania is required to reduce. Thankfully we already have a blueprint for environmental success. Each county in the state is required to create a Watershed Implementation Plan with specific projects that will reduce the county's TMDLs. The \$521 million funding need for Pennsylvania was estimated using these plans. Some examples of pollution and sediment reduction projects are: manure stor-

age facilities; precision feeding for livestock; increased riparian buffers; control measures for pool and car wash discharges; and implementation of no-till agricultural practices. The "Underfunded and Polluted" report from *PennFuture* also lays out a specific legislative agenda to empower Pennsylvania to meet these TMDL goals. To view the report, visit <https://www.pennfuture.org/>.

The health of the Chesapeake Bay affects all of us. Cleaning our waterways will have long-lasting positive effects on our communities and the health of future generations.

*Summarized from "Underfunded and Polluted: Solutions to Fund Clean Water in Pennsylvania and the Chesapeake Bay Watershed". PennFuture. Written by Renee Reber. April 2021.*



*At the December 2020 First Friday Forum the Lancaster Countywide Action Plan Coordinator Team gave a presentation on the plan to clean Lancaster County's waterways. You can find the video of the forum on our website: <https://hourglasslancaster.org/resources/first-friday-forums/>*