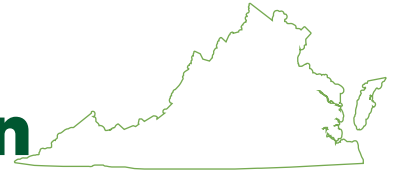


Chesapeake Bay Preservation



WILL PARSON/CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM

The Chesapeake Bay supports more than 17 million people across six states. Its massive watershed spreads across more than 64,000 miles.

Restoration efforts started in the 1980s and continue to this day. But with the multitude of rivers and streams that feed it carrying pollutants, the Bay is still on EPA's "dirty waters" list.

The first Chesapeake Bay Agreement was signed in 1983 between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, the District of Columbia, and the Chesapeake Bay Commission. It called for cooperative action but did not include specific requirements or a timeline. Over the following decades there were several lawsuits and subsequent agreements. In 2014, Virginia, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, West Virginia, the Chesapeake Bay Commission, and the EPA signed the [Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement](#). Representatives from each of the states, officials from other federal agencies, local governments, and citizens meet regularly to carry out the Agreement's policies which include clear goals, outcomes, and a timeline to restore the health of the Bay, its tributaries, and surrounding lands.

Virginia Programs Description

The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement guides broader restoration efforts across the entire watershed, including Virginia. To address Virginia's own impacts on the Bay, the Virginia Assembly enacted the [Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act \(Bay Act\)](#) in 1988 to manage nonpoint source pollution. It comprehensively addresses the effects of land use planning and development on water quality in the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Area (CBPA). Recognizing that local governments have primary responsibility for land use decisions, it creates a direct relationship between local land use and protecting water quality and expands local authority to manage water quality within CBPAs.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Bay Act program is to protect and improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay by requiring the implementation of effective land use management practices.

HOW IT WORKS

In Virginia, more than 80 counties, cities, and towns border the tidal waters of the Chesapeake Bay. The

Bay Act requires them to adopt an individually tailored program to ensure land use and development in CBPAs protect state water quality. Local governments determine and map CBPA boundaries within their jurisdictions, develop Bay protection measures, and incorporate those measures into their comprehensive plans, zoning, and subdivision ordinances. They are involved in developing and carrying out Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) to reduce pollution and participate in various Chesapeake Bay Program workgroups and in regional water quality monitoring to assess progress towards Bay restoration goals.

Local governments work with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and other partners to reduce loads of nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment flowing into the Bay. DEQ provides policy guidance and local program oversight. Each Bay Act locality has a DEQ program liaison who provides one-on-one technical assistance as needed and who assists with program compliance reviews. State agencies are required to be consistent with local comprehensive plans and ordinances adopted to comply with local Bay Act requirements.

CONSIDERATIONS

Program compliance can be expensive, and local governments often struggle to support restoration efforts. This can lead to significant delays in program adoption. To address this, they can apply for grants from federal sources including [EPA Chesapeake Bay Program](#), [NFWF Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund](#), and state sources including [Virginia's Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund](#).



WILL PARSONS/CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM

Environmental law is complicated and there have been several large lawsuits concerning the Bay. Communities benefit from legal representation by an environmental attorney who has sufficient local knowledge to develop successful compliance strategies and to defend local ordinances in the event of an alleged violation.

To Learn More

- › [Virginia DEQ: Chesapeake Bay](#)
- › [Chesapeake Bay Foundation](#)
- › [Chesapeake Bay Program: Funding and Financing](#)
- › [Chesapeake Bay Commission](#)
- › [VASWCD Chesapeake Bay District Services](#)