



Pennsylvania Council of Churches

Chesapeake Clean Water and Ecosystem Restoration Act A Primer

The Pennsylvania Council of Churches is working with the [Choose Clean Water Coalition](#) for clean water—and more specifically, for the passage of [S 1816/HR 3852](#), The **Chesapeake Clean Water and Ecosystem Restoration Act**. This legislation is incredibly important to Pennsylvania, and will have a dramatic affect on reducing nutrient pollution and helping to restore clean water for thousands of miles of rivers and streams, including the Susquehanna, the Juniata, the Potomac, and many, many more.

Please join us by [taking action](#) to ensure the passage of this historic legislation.

The Problem—More than Water is Flowing in Pennsylvania’s Rivers and Streams

Pennsylvania has many small waterways – known as tributaries – that flow into the Susquehanna and Potomac Rivers. These tributaries contribute over 50 percent of the freshwater to the Chesapeake Bay.

These tributaries also collect nutrient and sediment pollution from [agriculture](#), [sewage treatment plants](#), [stormwater runoff](#) and [poor planned development](#). Although nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment occur naturally, when other sources pour them into tributaries in high concentrations they become pollutants and threaten to the health and water quality of the Chesapeake Bay.

Excess nutrient pollution causes massive algae blooms in rivers and water bodies. When the algae die and decompose, they consume oxygen in the water, creating dead zones that cannot support aquatic life. Excess sediment also prohibits sunlight from reaching underwater vegetation and chokes out other bottom-dwelling organisms when settling. Bay grasses die off due to blocked sunlight and crabs and oysters die due to a lack of oxygen.

Air pollution from vehicles and power plants, toxics from industrial facilities, and forest and wetland loss are also threats to the Bay. It’s no wonder the Chesapeake Bay and many of its rivers and streams are listed as dirty or “impaired” under the federal Clean Water Act.

The Bay states of Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania, along with the District of Columbia and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), have known about the serious decline of the Chesapeake Bay for 25 years. Since 1983, they have participated in the regional Chesapeake Executive Council whose mission is to guide policy for the restoration of the Bay. Members have worked in concert to reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment pollution flowing to the Chesapeake Bay in hopes of restoring water quality and the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. With pollution causing everything from oxygen-starved dead zones to economic hardship in industries dependent upon clean water, it is clear that the current effort has fallen well short of the goal of a restored Chesapeake Bay by 2010.

What the Act Will Do

The **Chesapeake Bay Clean Water and Ecosystem Restoration Act** would work in conjunction with the 1972 Clean Water Act by having states develop Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) designed to meet the pollution targets while providing the funding and autonomy necessary for allowing state and local governments to best achieve those targets.

The bill also includes:

- Caps on the amount of pollution that can be sent downstream;
- Strict timelines for implementing practices to reduce polluted runoff;
- The authorization of \$2.12 billion dollars to assist state and local governments, the agriculture community and others in reaching the targets;
- An interstate nutrient trading program; and

- Accountability and evaluation measures to ensure states are meeting cleanup goals.

The **Chesapeake Bay Clean Water and Ecosystem Restoration Act** will improve water quality throughout the watershed—a huge benefit to Pennsylvania, where much of the watershed lies with the Susquehanna River and its tributaries—while providing necessary technical and financial assistance, and autonomy for state and local governments to decide how to best reduce pollution.

Learn more about the Chesapeake Bay watershed efforts to ensure clean water at PennFuture's "Clean Water Starts Here" page at http://www.pennfuture.org/campaigns_detail.aspx?CampaignID=45&Home=Y.

Why is Pennsylvania So Important?

Pennsylvania is home to the Susquehanna River, as well as many smaller rivers and streams. These waters provide countless ecological and cultural benefits, as well as providing a significant amount of economic support to our local communities in recreation and tourism, real estate value, and agriculture operations to name a few. The Chesapeake Clean Water Act will benefit our communities greatly because the Susquehanna is an important part of a larger Chesapeake system. For instance, the Susquehanna:

- Drains 27,510 square miles, covering half the land area of Pennsylvania and portions of New York and Maryland;
- Comprises 43 percent of the Chesapeake Bay's drainage area;
- Has more than 49,000 miles of waterways – rivers, streams, creeks, brooks, runs, etc.; and
- Is the largest tributary of the Chesapeake Bay, providing 50 percent of its fresh water flows.

All of this means that efforts to help clean water in the Chesapeake translate to clean water in our own communities, with numerous benefits to all of us.

Why is Clean Water an Issue for the Pennsylvania Council of Churches?

In Christian traditions, we use the term **stewardship** to describe our responsibility as humans to protect and preserve the environment for now and future generations. The Council holds up the following principles that support good stewardship of our creation:

- That policymakers weigh the impact of economic progress on natural resources. This includes use of raw material resources that are scarce and/or finite, as well as preservation of forests, wildlife habitats, waterways, and other environmentally sensitive, vulnerable, and irreplaceable natural assets.
- That policymakers give priority to considering options that promote energy efficiency, wiser use of natural resources, development and use of renewable and alternative energy sources, and that set appropriate controls for pollution emissions from vehicles, machinery, and businesses.
- That all persons engage in a simplified lifestyle—living, to the extent possible, in harmony with nature.
- That all persons engage in activities that avoid over-consumption and waste.

Read the Council's policy statement on the [Environment](#).

We must make sure that we clean up our water and keep it clean in order to protect the health and safety of all that lives, works, and plays in and around our waters. This is not only good for the environment, but good for the economy—protecting Pennsylvania's fishing and tourism industries and Pennsylvanians who depend on clean, safe water for their livelihoods.

Download Chesapeake Bay resources for congregations at <http://nccecojustice.org/resources/index.php#chesapeakebayresources>.



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Chesapeake Clean Water and Ecosystem Restoration Act Talking Points¹

On the Chesapeake Clean Water and Ecosystem Restoration Act – [S 1816/HR 3852](#)

- The goal is clear – clean water. To achieve it we need get our local communities, counties and states the power and enforcement tools they need to stop the pollution of their waters.
- There have been many programs and promises of the past 25 years, yet our rivers and the Chesapeake Bay are more polluted than ever. It's time to get results.
- For twenty-five years, we have been attempting to restore our local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay. We have had some success, but all too often, pollution has continued to run off our city streets and farm fields only to wash downstream and degrade our water.
- Pollution comes from everyone. We have a shared responsibility to keep our water clean. It is unfair for anyone to use and degrade our water at everyone else's expense.
- The role of the federal government is to make sure individuals, communities, and states have the resources they need to reduce pollution, and to maintain consistency and fairness throughout the region.
- Water pollution costs us money. Cleaning up our rivers and streams that flow to and through the Chesapeake Bay will strengthen our local economies and secure the future of productive, profitable farms and communities. The estimated value of the health of the Chesapeake to our economy is well over \$1 trillion. We need to restore clean water to the Chesapeake for our economic recovery.
- There is predictable and reflexive opposition from some interests. Their position is that they should be able to continue to degrade our rivers and streams. This is unacceptable.
- Here in central Pennsylvania, we are blessed with ample freshwater streams and rivers. Unfortunately, 7,000 miles of them are impaired due to pollution from our city streets, sewage treatment plants, and farm fields running untreated into our waterways.

What does the legislation do?

- Expands and Enhances Monitoring Grants (authorizes \$5 million per year) and Implementation Grants (authorizes \$80 million per year) for Chesapeake Bay states. Directs that not less than 10% of implementation grant funds go to headwater states (DE, NY, and WV) and not less than 20% be used for technical assistance to agricultural producers and foresters.
- Creates two new grants programs for local governments related to reducing stormwater pollution. 1) \$10 million for local governments to develop guidance, ordinances and guidelines to reduce stormwater pollution; and 2) \$1.5 billion for local governments to implement projects to reduce stormwater pollution.
- Re-Names and expands the Small Watershed Grant program to the “Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Grants”, authorizing \$15 million annually.
- Encourages States to develop Watershed² Implementation Plans. Plans must include enforceable or otherwise binding load allocations for all nonpoint sources of nutrient and sediment pollution loadings. Also requires

¹ Talking points provided by the Choose Clean Water campaign.

² A **watershed** is an area of land that drains to a particular river, lake, bay or other body of water. We all live in a watershed: some are large (like the Chesapeake), while others are small (like your local stream or creek). Watersheds are sometimes called "basins" or "drainage basins."

states to provide assurances that the owner of any development or redevelopment project with an impervious footprint of a certain size (to be determined by rulemaking) will use site planning and design to restore predevelopment hydrology to the property.

- Requires all pollution reduction activities necessary to restore the Bay to be in place by May 12, 2025 and assurances that 60% of the practices will be in place by May 31, 2017.
- If a Bay state chooses not to submit a watershed implementation plan (WIP), they forfeit eligibility for funding under the legislation.
- Establishes an inter-state nitrogen and phosphorus trading program by May 12, 2012. The Trading Program defines and standardizes nitrogen and phosphorus credits and establishes procedures for ensuring equivalent water quality benefits for all credits.