

# III. Comprehensive Local, Regional, and Federal Engagement Strategies and Commitments

## Engagement During WIP Implementation

Due to their central implementation roles, county, municipal, federal, and soil conservation district (SCD) staff who conduct restoration are the primary stakeholders involved in Maryland's Phase III WIP implementation. Approaches to engagement vary by the pollution source sector. Appendix A lists specific engagement activities during WIP development.

**Agriculture:** Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) held a meeting in each county, facilitated by the local SCD, to develop revised county-level plans and incorporate them into Maryland's Phase III WIP.

**Stormwater:** Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) held meetings with each county's public works staff to discuss county goals and Maryland's Phase III WIP. Maryland engages with Phase I MS4s during permit renewal and review of mandatory biennial financial assurance plans and annual progress reports. MDE engage Phase II jurisdictions and facilities one-on-one and in small groups to discuss permit requirements and financial assistance. MDE, Maryland Sea Grant Extension, and NGOs work with and engage non-MS4 communities.

**Wastewater & Septic:** MDE met with environmental health directors from Maryland's counties to discuss local onsite disposal goals and the State's Phase III WIP. MDE and the Maryland Association of Municipal Wastewater agencies continue engagement through the permitting process.

**Federal Facilities:** MDE engages federal facilities through participation in the Federal Facilities Workgroup. Appendix E summarizes U.S. Department of Defense implementation.

## Engagement and Communication Goals

To facilitate successful local engagement in the Phase III WIP process, EPA expected<sup>10</sup> Bay jurisdictions to devise strategies to engage local, regional, and federal partners. It is critical that governments, agricultural communities, and other local partners are involved in WIP development to ensure plans are realistic, reflect local priorities, benefit communities, and identify needed resources, such as funding and technical support.

Expected products from Maryland's local engagement vary by sector, permit status, and local needs. To

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<sup>10</sup> [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Expectations for the Phase III Watershed Implementation Plans](#), June 2018.

best assist local partners, the State customizes its engagement to local needs and capacities. Engagement targets Maryland's partners most directly involved in implementation, such as soil conservation districts and local governments.

Discussion of implementation funding is essential to engagement activities. State and local partners continue to refine funding strategies to achieve Bay restoration goals and make reductions beyond 2025.

## Strategies

### Target Audiences

**Local Leaders:** Maryland's Phase III WIP will succeed only by coordinating policymaking and restoration commitments with local leaders. Local elected officials and agricultural community leaders, including district managers and Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts boards, have particularly important roles. Moving forward, the governor's Bay Cabinet continues to correspond with and engage local leaders. MDE also engages local government leaders through the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) and Maryland Municipal League conferences.

**Technical Partners:** MDE maintains technical contacts that share their experiences and identify successful model programs. These technical partners are knowledgeable in disciplines that inform WIP implementation, including tree planting, climate change, and urban source sector management.

**Practitioners:** Practitioners are the primary stakeholders involved in Maryland's Phase III WIP implementation. In general, practitioners are county, and municipal governments, federal land owners, such as the Department of Defense, SCDs, the Watershed Assistance Collaborative, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation staff who conduct implementation activities.

### Approaches to practitioner engagement vary by the pollution source sector:

**Agriculture:** MDA leads agriculture sector engagement, primarily through listening sessions and meetings, to identify barriers and opportunities in implementation and track progress towards WIP goals.

**Stormwater:** MDE discuss local progress on stormwater with each county's public works staff. To best address individual needs, Maryland engages sub-sectors:

- **Phase I MS4:** Phase I permits in Maryland require the restoration of a percentage of a jurisdiction's impervious surface area. Maryland's Phase III WIP incorporates Phase I MS4 nutrient reductions from restoration and other permit requirements. MDE engages Phase I MS4s during permit renewal, review of required biennial financial assurance plans, and annual progress reports. In addition to regular phone calls and emails with stormwater managers, MDE also participates in stormwater meetings organized by MACo to discuss Bay restoration and local water quality improvement.
- **Phase II MS4:** MDE engages Phase II jurisdictions and facilities one-on-one and in small groups to discuss permit requirements and financial assistance. Maryland's Phase III WIP incorporates Phase II MS4 nutrient reductions from permit requirements. MDE regularly engages permittees during their annual report reviews, which include

constructive feedback.

- **Non-MS4:** Maryland Sea Grant Extension's watershed restoration specialists are trusted messengers for WIP implementation, especially for non-MS4 stormwater. Extension specialists assist communities with identifying funding, implementing restoration projects, BMP tracking, engaging community leaders, and more. Also, several NGOs facilitate Phase III WIP communication with local partners. MDE collaborates with these messengers to coordinate local engagement.

**Septic:** MDE engaged with environmental health directors identifies barriers and opportunities in implementation and to track progress toward meeting WIP goals for onsite wastewater systems.

**Wastewater:** MDE engages permitted wastewater facilities through the permitting process. Maryland Association of Municipal Wastewater Agencies also facilitates communication with the wastewater sector.

## Local Challenges and Opportunities

### Maintenance and Verification

Local governments provide much of the on-the-ground implementation needed to achieve Maryland's Bay restoration targets. These local government partners are installing physical infrastructure, including larger capital projects, like upgrading wastewater plants, and smaller scale stormwater retrofits that are designed to reduce pollution at its source. Like all infrastructure projects, proper installation and maintenance of pollution reduction practices are necessary to achieve their intended function. Maryland approved verification protocols to ensure pollution reduction practices are working correctly and count towards credit.<sup>11</sup> Local jurisdictions, soil conservation districts, and other partners who are implementing these projects identified maintenance, verification, funding, programs, and accounting as resource challenges that impact restoration progress.

### Restoration Capacity

Local partners need continued resources to build restoration capacity. These resources can be in the form of permitting assistance, technical assistance, knowledge transfer, more dedicated staff, and financial incentives. Needs vary regionally, by sector, and within individual jurisdictions. Because there is no one-size-fits-all solution to local challenges, ongoing local engagement and capacity building are necessary throughout the implementation process.

## Key Messages

Maryland continuously re-evaluates key messages based on new information on barriers, opportunities,

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<sup>11</sup> Maryland BMP verification protocols are available at [https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Water/TMDL/TMDLImplementation/Documents/BMP%20Verification/MD\\_Verification%20Protocols\\_Master\\_Doc.pdf](https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Water/TMDL/TMDLImplementation/Documents/BMP%20Verification/MD_Verification%20Protocols_Master_Doc.pdf)

and progress. These general messages will likely remain prominent throughout WIP implementation:

- Work with upwind states through key programs and partnerships, like the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), and through appropriate legal actions;
- Work with upstream states and ensure EPA is holding all jurisdictions accountable;
- Ensure all watershed states do their part and are held accountable;
- Maintain a strong commitment to restoration and resiliency;
- Invest in restoration practices that reduce increased pollution resulting from climate change and consider their placement on the landscape for future maintenance;
- Support full funding at the federal, State and local levels for Bay and local waterway restoration and prevention of degradation;
- Stretch funding by using market-based and other innovative finance approaches to create a restoration economy;
- Implement the Clean Water Commerce Act and other mechanisms to fund cost-effective nutrient reduction practices;
- Support reduction of pollution loads from Conowingo Dam through the CWIP and other strategies, including water quality certification;
- Maintain steady restoration progress in the stormwater sector through ongoing MS4 restoration requirements over current and future permit cycles; and
- Plan for continued implementation beyond 2025.

## Key Messengers

Key messengers are entities on which the State relies to help deliver communications and engage local governments on the Phase III WIP. In addition to the Departments of Environment and Agriculture, other important messengers include Maryland Department of Planning, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and numerous NGOs.

*Table 7: Target audiences and associated outreach activities.*

Target Audience	Activities
Local leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Letters</li> <li>● Workshops</li> <li>● Conferences</li> <li>● Meetings</li> </ul>
Practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Workshops</li> <li>● Webinars</li> <li>● Surveys</li> <li>● Meetings</li> <li>● Emails</li> </ul>
Technical partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Phone calls</li> </ul>
Other stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meetings</li> <li>● Emails</li> </ul>

## Tools and Resources

Engagement takes place in the form of webinars, meetings, fact sheets, phone calls, written correspondence, and training. Table 7 lists the target audiences along with example activities for each. For more examples of engagement activities, see the section on WIP development engagement and communication. In addition, MDE continues to update its Chesapeake Bay webpages<sup>12</sup> to ensure that WIP information is readily available to a broad audience.

<sup>12</sup> MDE’s Chesapeake Cleanup Center:  
[https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/water/TMDL/TMDLImplementation/Pages/cb\\_tmdl.aspx](https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/water/TMDL/TMDLImplementation/Pages/cb_tmdl.aspx)