

# CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRESS REPORT DELAWARE

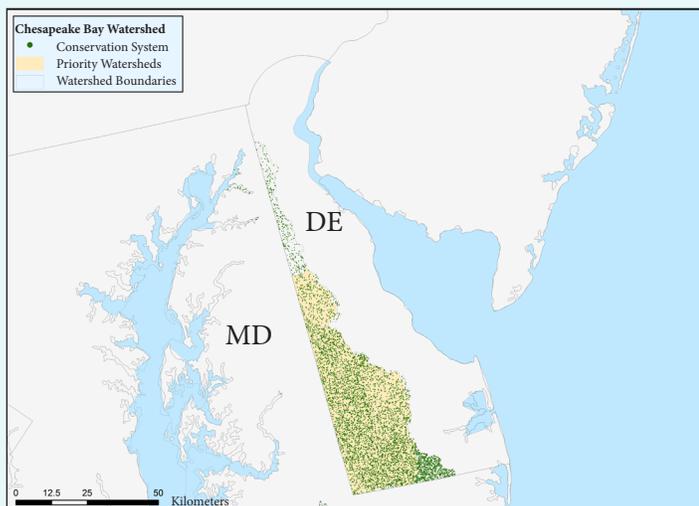
## Agricultural Lands in Delaware Key to Healthy Bay

The saying, “everything flows downstream,” is especially important in a place like Delaware where the land management decisions of farmers and forest landowners are helping send cleaner water downstream to the Chesapeake Bay and other waterways. The headwaters of the Chester, Choptank and Nanticoke rivers – all major tributaries to the Bay – are in western Delaware.

Farmers and forest landowners are using conservation systems that are reducing nutrient and sediment runoff by keeping soil in place and making agricultural lands more efficient and productive.



*NRCS works closely with farmers to implement conservation systems to decrease nutrient and sediment runoff.*



*Each dot represents a farm where “Avoid-Control-Trap” conservation systems were implemented. Dots are randomly placed within priority watersheds to protect landowner privacy.*

## Targeted Approach in Delaware

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has developed a systems approach for designing and installing conservation activities on farms and forests to protect and improve water quality. The core parts of this approach are conservation activities that avoid, control and trap potential nutrient and sediment losses from farm fields.

Most of the conservation work in Delaware focuses on controlling nutrients on livestock operations and on croplands where farmers use manure as fertilizer. Almost half of Delaware drains to the Chesapeake Bay, requiring NRCS to target investments in high-priority watersheds where nutrient and sediment pollution is highest. Since 2009, NRCS and conservation partners have worked with Delaware farmers and forest landowners to install conservation systems on more than 130,000 acres in the Chesapeake Bay basin.

## CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRESS REPORT: DELAWARE



*Irrigation water management is one of many conservation practices used by Delaware farmers to conserve and clean water.*

### INVESTMENTS IN DELAWARE

YEAR	INVESTMENT	ACRES
2009	\$4.7 million	21,000
2010	\$5.9 million	25,000
2011	\$7 million	24,000
2012	\$4.6 million	20,000
2013	\$3.7 million	18,000
2014	\$3.6 million	20,000
2015	\$2.5 million	2,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$32 million</b>	<b>130,000</b>

*Source: NRCS Resources Economics, Analysis and Policy Division.*

### Leveraging the Help of Partners

NRCS investments are often matched two- and three-fold by conservation partners in Delaware. Through the Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), NRCS is building the next generation of conservation science and innovation and bringing together partners at the grassroots level to address natural resource challenges.

Through CIG, NRCS has invested about \$4.4 million since 2009 in innovation efforts of universities, conservation districts, companies and other groups in Virginia. One of these grants is with the University of Delaware, which is

funding innovative approaches to capture nitrogen and air pollutant emissions from poultry operations.

Through RCPP, NRCS is bringing conservation partners together across the state and basin, investing \$4.6 million to get conservation practices on the ground. USDA designated the Chesapeake Bay as one of the eight critical conservation areas for RCPP funding. Right now, three projects are ongoing in the basin, bringing together an array of partners like the Sussex Conservation District, The Nature Conservancy and the Delaware Maryland Agribusiness Association.

### Positive Outcomes in Delaware

Independent reports show positive trends for water quality, habitat and key aquatic species, and modeled results and monitoring stations show declines in nutrient and sediment loads to the Bay. The Midshore Riverkeeper Conservancy tracks 16 waterways, and 15 of them improved or maintained the same grade from the previous year. Increased water clarity — in part caused by decreased precipitation — helped the Choptank maintain its “B” grade from 2014. Eastern Bay and the surrounding creeks showed some of the best water quality recorded, all scoring “B” grades or higher. The Choptank is also less turbid, according to the conservancy.

Meanwhile, the Chester River Association measured improvement in the health in 2015, giving the waterway a “C+” on its latest report card, a step up from a “C” in 2014.



*Rotational grazing leads to healthier pastures and cleaner water downstream.*

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