

Proactive Water Supply Protection:

The Potomac River Basin Drinking Water Source Protection Partnership



Residents of the Potomac watershed enjoy a high quality of life, with the river and its environs providing jobs, growth, and recreational opportunities. A mainstay of that quality is in the purity of drinking water. Protection of that quality largely depends on protection of the quality of the Potomac River and its tributaries. Water utilities and other agencies responsible for the water supply for about four-million residents have partnered as the Potomac River Basin Drinking Water Source Protection Partnership to cooperatively assess current and potential issues that may affect the quality of these drinking water sources.

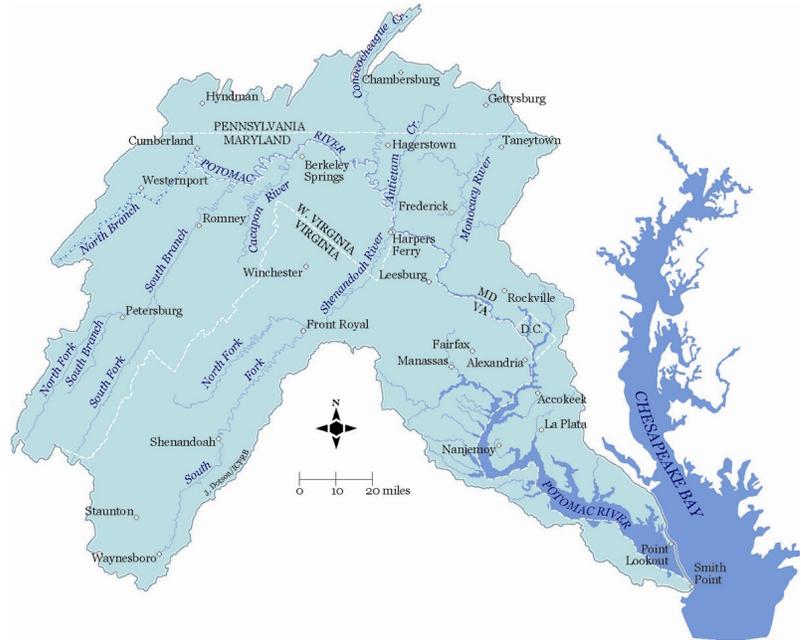
Drinking water treatment plants for public water supply systems meet United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) safe drinking water standards by implementing various treatment technologies. However, activities in upstream areas or in ground-water recharge areas can introduce contaminants to the water source that increase treatment costs, reduce treatment efficiency, or create taste and odor problems. In an extreme case, a contamination event can damage plant facilities, force a temporary plant shutdown, or require residents to boil drinking water. In order to address drinking water quality concerns arising in source water areas, drinking water utilities and their governmental counterparts have banded together to create the Potomac River Basin Drinking Water Source Protection Partnership. By relying not only on the treatment plant, but also on multiple barriers to contamination created by watershed protection efforts, the Partnership seeks to enhance drinking water quality and to minimize risks to public health.

A pristine natural watershed will generally present the fewest potential problems to water supplies. However, even natural forests can contribute organic matter that affects drinking water treatment. Agricultural activities have the potential to threaten water supplies through pesticide or herbicide residue in runoff, sediment production, or the introduction of pathogens from animal operations. Urban areas can also contribute contaminants through storm runoff that is tainted with chemicals that are washed from roads and parking lots. Pathogens from combined sewer overflows or wastewater treatment plant malfunctions are another concern. Rapid development can produce high sediment loads if care is not taken in the construction process, and the increase

in urbanization can exacerbate stormwater runoff issues from urban areas. Additionally, a range of other potential contaminants, such as ingested pharmaceuticals, may not be removed by standard treatment processes. The Potomac River Basin Drinking Water Source Protection Partnership has formed workgroups to research each of these issues and to propose plans that address these concerns.

Membership

The current membership includes community water systems that derive all or part of their drinking water supply from the waters of the Potomac basin as well as state and federal agencies with a role in source water protection.



<p>City of Frederick, Maryland City of Hagerstown, Maryland City of Rockville, Maryland Fairfax Water Frederick County, Maryland Town of Leesburg, Virginia Washington Aqueduct Washington County, Maryland Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission</p>	<p>District of Columbia Department of the Environment Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin Maryland Department of the Environment Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection United States Environmental Protection Agency United States Geological Survey Virginia Department of Environmental Quality Virginia Department of Health West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection</p>
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Objectives

The partnership’s major focus is to give water utilities and relevant government agencies a stronger voice in watershed protection efforts. Cooperatively, the Partnership will implement its source water protection strategy, identify regional protection priorities, enhance coordinated approaches to protection, maintain a dialog on watershed protection and information-sharing, and develop new initiatives to ensure the highest quality drinking water.

The Partnership hopes to build on a productive start. The group has held several meetings and workshops designed to keep all involved up-to-date on issues such as pathogens, emerging contaminants, and other river pollutants that can threaten the reliable delivery of quality drinking water. The group also has formulated an overall strategy for protecting drinking water sources as recommended in the source water assessments developed throughout the basin.

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 Or visit our website at www.potomacriver.org/water_quality/safewater.htm