



**INTERSTATE COMMISSION
ON THE
POTOMAC RIVER BASIN
STRATEGIC PLAN**

June 2, 2015

ICPRB STRATEGIC PLAN

The Potomac River Basin stretches across parts of four states (Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia) and the District of Columbia, covering an area of 14,670 square miles. "The Nation's River" -- including the 383-mile mainstem, numerous tributaries and associated land area -- constitutes a vital resource for more than 6 million basin residents, providing essential ecosystem services such as water supply, sanitation, energy production, agriculture, forestry, industry, transportation, recreation, tourism and wildlife. The Potomac River itself provides drinking water to more than 4.6 million people in the Washington metropolitan area.

Authorized by an Act of Congress in 1940, the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin is an advisory, non-regulatory interstate agency created by a Compact among the Potomac basin states of Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The Federal government also is a member. The ICPRB was formed in response to extreme pollution levels that required a regional, cooperative response by all the jurisdictions. In the Compact, as amended in 1970, the signatories agreed to cooperate "in the abatement of existing pollution and the prevention of future pollution" and "in planning for the utilization, conservation and development of the water and associated land resources" of the basin. They also agreed on "the enactment of adequate and, insofar as is practical, uniform legislation for the abatement and control of pollution and control and use of [the basin's] streams." Additionally, they agreed to provide "the moneys necessary to finance the Commission in the administration of its business."

MISSION

Protect and enhance the waters and related resources of the Potomac River basin through science, regional cooperation, and education.

VISION

The Potomac River basin is a showcase for our great nation fulfilling both human and ecological needs.

VALUES

- Commitment to the welfare of the basin
- Integrity in our work
- Rigorous and unbiased analysis
- Open communication in all our relationships

GOALS

- To be recognized as a leader in the coordination of interstate and regional efforts by governments and other partners
- To be a provider of services to better meet the needs of our stakeholders
- A more informed and active public
- Decision making and actions supported by science

ICPRB'S ROLE IN THE BASIN

The ICPRB complements the ongoing work of the states and Federal government in the Potomac River Basin, in areas where the Commission has the mandate, expertise, comparative advantage and financial resources. The Compact specifically gives the ICPRB powers with regard to water and associated land resources in several areas, including:

- collecting, analyzing and distributing technical and other data; and conducting studies and sponsoring research ;
- cooperating with state, Federal, local governmental and nongovernmental agencies to promote uniform laws rules or regulations;
- disseminating information and recommendations to the public ;
- cooperating with, assisting and providing liaison among public and nonpublic agencies and organizations in formulating and coordinating plans, programs and cooperative action ;
- reviewing and commenting on the plans and programs of public or private agencies and organizations ; and
- revising and recommending reasonable minimum standards for treatment of sewage and other wastes and for water quality in streams ;

Under the Compact, the ICPRB may establish Sections of the Commission focusing on specific issues affecting a subset of the signatories. This made possible the creation in 1979 of a Section for Cooperative Water Supply Operations on the Potomac (the CO-OP) that includes the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia and Federal government. The CO-OP played a key role in the development of the unique cooperative system of water supply management for the Washington metropolitan area.

SUCSESSES AND REMAINING CHALLENGES

The river's water quality has in many ways vastly improved, thanks to the determined efforts of local, state and Federal governments, and initiatives such as the Clean Water Act, the Safe Water Drinking Act, and the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership. Yet, despite much progress, ongoing and emerging threats to the river continue to require sustained regional attention. Among the challenges to the health of the watershed are:

- significant population increases resulting in increased demand for water,
- land use changes and the expansion of impervious surfaces,
- nutrient and sediment enrichment,
- emerging contaminants,
- alien invasive species,
- some agricultural practices and energy technologies.

Responding to these challenges is complicated by changing climatic conditions, which, most scientists have concluded, are likely to have significant consequences for temperature and precipitation patterns, the frequency and severity of storm events, rising sea level and associated impacts, and for the dynamics of the hydrological cycle.

These challenges require a response that includes the following elements:

- a watershed-based, integrated approach that treats the basin as an interconnected ecosystem, paying attention to the environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainability;
- broadly inclusive and participatory processes that include all stakeholders;
- a comprehensive stance that anticipates future threats and builds resilience in a changing environment, recognizing that policies and management actions need to be continually adapted and improved as knowledge, technology and conditions evolve; and
- an approach that is mindful of the broader regional and national context: the Potomac River basin, as a major part of the larger Chesapeake Bay watershed and as home to our Nation's Capital, can serve as a model and inspiration for integrated water resources management efforts regionally, nationally and internationally.

This Strategic Plan sets out our mission, vision, values and goals. It serves as the basis for operational planning for the Commission and will be reviewed annually and updated at periodic intervals, not to exceed five years, to guide ICPRB operations.

KEY AREAS OF EMPHASIS

To accomplish these Goals, ICPRB will focus on four key areas:

- Communications and Education
- Water Quality Improvement
- Water Resources
- Aquatic Life

Work plans linked to the strategic plan and how these key areas can contribute to the Chesapeake Bay restoration are linked in the previous page.