



# ***Partners Protecting the Potomac: Pennsylvania and the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin***

The Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB) was created in 1940 by an Act of Congress and by individual jurisdiction statutes to address pollution and other water problems within the basin. It was directed to conduct studies and issue reports; to assist and provide liaison for other agencies; and to inform the public. The commission is the only entity for coordinating the activities of the signatory bodies and their respective agencies with respect to matters relating to the waters of the Potomac River Basin. Pennsylvania shares the watershed with the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia.

This report provides short descriptions of ICPRB's activities that have benefited Pennsylvania. ICPRB's efforts focus on four topic areas: Water Resources, Water Quality Improvement, Aquatic Life, and Education. More information about these activities can be obtained by contacting us by phone, e-mail, and by visiting our website.

ICPRB is supported by a base level of funding from its member jurisdictions that is supplemented with project specific grants and contracts that together enable ICPRB to carry out its mission.

## **WATER RESOURCES**

**Water Resources Planning.** The ICPRB continues to provide support for the Adams County Water Resources Advisory Committee, which is implementing elements of its draft Critical Area Resource Plan. Most recently, a tool was developed that allows municipalities in the county to assess their water supplies to help guide development decisions. The critical area plan was produced with the help of ICPRB under Pennsylvania's water resources plan (Act 220) passed in 2002. The Rock and Marsh creeks watershed in Adams County was studied for inclusion in the Act as a Critical Area because of limited water supply. The study resulted in the watershed being one of five critical area watersheds in the state. Parts of the plan are being implemented while the state finishes its review.

In early 2015, ICPRB assisted the Franklin County Conservation District by producing maps that helped the agency to visualize the county's impaired streams.

**Drinking Source Water Protection.** The Potomac Basin Drinking Water Source Protection Partnership, coordinated by ICPRB, includes metropolitan area water suppliers and water supply agencies focused on protecting of the raw sources of drinking water from contamination. The project exemplifies the interstate, collaborative leadership that provides value to Potomac jurisdictions and water utilities. The emphasis on headwaters protection brings greater attention to the Potomac's freshwater tributaries, including several major Pennsylvania creeks. The group, which includes representatives from the state's Department of Environmental Protection, helps to address emerging contaminants, agricultural impacts, disinfection by-products

precursors, and other challenges that impact both raw water quality and the cost of production. Partnership members recently worked on increasing protection against accidental spills and in practicing emergency response when spills occur. The group worked with a pipeline company with major river crossings, discussing integrity management, emergency response, and tactical response plans for pipeline ruptures that could contaminate the river. This information can carry over to concerns about the growing amount of pipelines in the region that are an outcome of increased gas and oil drilling in the watershed.

In the event of a hazardous spill, ICPRB maintains a model to estimate the time it would take material to travel from a spill to downstream water intakes. Each year, contact information is verified and communication procedures are tested.

ICPRB provides administrative and technical support to partnership efforts, such as compiling results from unregulated contaminant monitoring, evaluating alkalinity and pH trends in Occoquan and Potomac source waters, mapping locations of pharmaceutical and endocrine disrupting compounds in point source discharges, and organizing a workshop on harmful algal blooms. In the initial planning stages are efforts to update the utilities' source water assessments and to evaluate the role of forest cover in improving water quality and lowering treatment costs.

**Basinwide Comprehensive Water Resources Plan.** Sustainability of the basin's water resources is crucial to its future. Development of a comprehensive plan can provide a platform for Potomac jurisdictions to look at the region's

water future and discuss how their individual resources plans can work cooperatively to protect those resources. The initial stage of the plan, gathering information from the Maryland Department of the Environment and local jurisdictions, is continuing.

## **WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT**

**Chesapeake Bay Restoration.** The ICPRB is a contributing partner to the Chesapeake Bay Program, with staff providing their individual technical expertise in many of the Bay Program's issue areas. The ICPRB staff led efforts to improve measures of American shad restoration in the Bay and of stream health in the Bay's watershed. These measures are called for in the 2009 Chesapeake Bay Executive Order and the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement.

**Chesapeake Bay Watershed Modeling.** ICPRB staff are part of a team developing the Phase 6 Chesapeake Bay Model. The model is a key tool that will be used to assign pollutant load allocations to different land types and jurisdictions, and to track progress in meeting pollution reduction goals for the Chesapeake Bay TMDL. The ICPRB helped to improve model accuracy for smaller-scale processes.

Work continued on various aspects of the calibration methodology for the model, particularly for processes that control delivery of nutrients and sediments from edge-of-field to the rivers represented in the Phase 6 Model. The ICPRB will continue to work on the model in 2015. This project benefits the entire bay effort.

**Chesapeake Bay Data Management and Analysis.** The ICPRB is continuing its multi-year Data Management project for the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) which maintains and updates very large databases of monitoring data collected in the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed, including the Potomac River. The data are used by resource managers, analysts, researchers, students, and the general public to track problems back to their sources and assess progress toward meeting restoration goals.

**Leadership for Potomac Basin Water Quality Management.** ICPRB staff participate in many local, regional, and national organizations that are addressing water quality problems. ICPRB brought technical expertise and an interstate and basinwide perspective to discussions on particular issues at the local level through participation in the Anacostia Watershed Management Committee, Anacostia Watershed Citizens Advisory Committee the Trash Free Potomac group, and support for various local watershed groups. The ICPRB also works at the larger, regional, scale of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the EPA's Region 3; and with national organizations such as the Association of Clean Water Administrators and the Interstate Council on Water Policy. These connections and partnerships can spur new approaches to and ideas about issues in the Potomac basin.

## **EDUCATION AND OUTREACH**

The ICPRB's education and outreach efforts provide

ongoing educational resources for the public through its website, weekly news digest, summertime weekly public service announcements, and other tools. The unit also fields information requests from the public, researchers, and government officials.

## **PAST COLLABORATION**

The ICPRB has a long history of service to the Commonwealth and its citizens, ranging from detailed analysis of specific water quality issues to interstate efforts aimed at sustaining our water resources.

The ICPRB has assisted Pennsylvania's water quality efforts by conducting federally mandated assessments of its streams in the Potomac basin to determine if they are meeting state standards. The ICPRB also has developed tools to help jurisdictions and local governments efficiently plan and develop watershed implementation plans required under the Chesapeake Bay cleanup, and has worked with DEP on increasing best management practices to mitigate stormwater issues.

The possibility of interstate trading of nutrient credits was explored, although the complexity of such trades kept them from being initiated.

The agency has worked toward the protection and sustainability of water resources through its research with The Nature Conservancy and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to determine sustainable flows in basin's free-flowing streams, and conducted a groundwater survey of the Monocacy watershed (including Marsh and Rock creeks in Adams County) to help gage the volume and sustainability of water resources.

The ICPRB also has worked with watershed groups in the commonwealth. Several groups have received maps and other material, and ICPRB staff worked for several years with the Franklin County Watershed Association on efforts to preserve the Falling Spring in Chambersburg as well as other efforts. ICPRB staff have worked with the Watershed Alliance of Adams County in their efforts on protecting water resources. The ICPRB staff also has attended the annual winter meeting of southern Pennsylvania watershed groups.

In some years, ICPRB helped establish cleanup sites in Pennsylvania as part of the annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup held each spring, and was a presenter at the Pennsylvania Water Resources Festival held at Gettysburg College.

*These projects are highlights of some of the many activities at ICPRB.*

*For more information, contact:*

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