

Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin



"A RIVER IS MORE THAN AN AMENITY, IT IS A TREASURE."
- Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.

**2020 - 2023
REVISED STRATEGIC PLAN**



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A Message from the Executive Director

Eighty-years ago, Congress approved a ground-breaking interstate compact creating the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin ("ICPRB") and authorizing all the jurisdictions within the Potomac River watershed to work together for the "abatement of existing pollution and the control of future pollution." Thanks to the ICPRB and its many partners, the "Nation's River" has made a remarkable comeback. Yet, there is much work still to do to achieve the goal of a "fishable and swimmable" Potomac.



It is commonly understood that a strategic plan records an organization's mission, vision, and values, as well as its long-term goals and the action plans the organization will use to reach them. As you would expect, the Revised Strategic Plan of the Interstate Commission on the Potomac Basin articulates the ICPRB's mission, vision, and values.

Unlike most Strategic Plans, however, this document is not to be read in isolation. Rather, it follows an intensive multi-year planning effort that produced the Potomac River Basin Comprehensive Water Resources Plan adopted by the ICPRB on June 5, 2018 ("Comprehensive Plan"). That basin-wide plan, prepared in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, sets out a detailed 15-year roadmap for the Commission and Staff to follow, as both a catalyst and partner with others in the Basin. Accordingly, this Revised Strategic Plan will both complement and supplement the Comprehensive Plan during the next three years.

I would like to thank the Members of the ICPRB Strategic Plan Committee for their input into --- and oversight over --- the creation of this noteworthy document: Willem Brakel (Chair); John Wirts; Lee Currey, Mark Peterson, and James Tsai. All did a great job working on this important project amid a global pandemic.

With the guidance of our seasoned Commissioners and the work of our excellent Staff, the ICPRB is well positioned to implement this Revised Strategic Plan with the assistance of our many "fellow travelers" in the Potomac River Basin. I look forward to achieving successes together.

Sincerely,

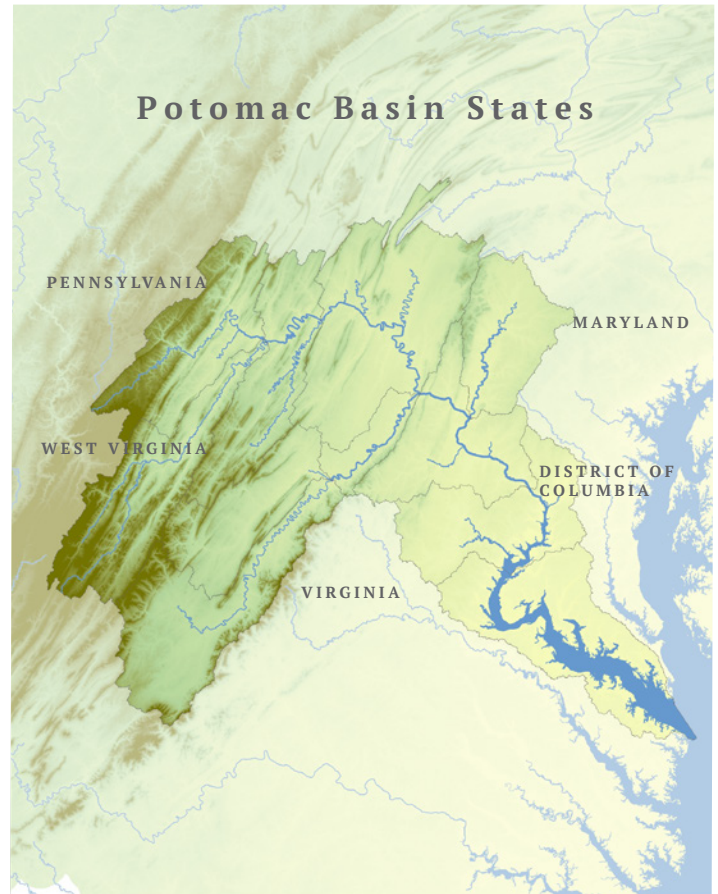
Michael Nardolilli

Executive Director
Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin

A. Introduction

Authorized by an Act of Congress in 1940, the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB) is a science-focused, non-regulatory interstate compact agency of the jurisdictions comprising the 14,670 square miles of the Potomac River watershed. The Commission includes appointed Commissioners from each basin jurisdiction (Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia) as well as the Federal Government. The ICPRB was formed in response to extreme pollution levels in the Potomac River that required a regional cooperative response. In 1970, amendments to the Compact empowered ICPRB to address water resources and related land issues as well.

Thanks to the ICPRB and its partners, the Potomac River water quality has in many ways vastly improved, but ongoing threats to the river (population increases, land use change and the growth of impervious surfaces, chemical contaminants, sediment runoff, nutrient enrichment, and climate change) require regional attention. The efforts needed to address these challenges are set out in the [Potomac River Basin Comprehensive Water Resources Plan](#) ("Comprehensive Plan") adopted by the ICPRB on June 5, 2018 (Executive Summary attached as Appendix A).*



Potomac River Basin State Jurisdictions Map

B. Purpose of the Revised Strategic Plan

This Revised Strategic Plan (RSP) is based on the ICPRB's Comprehensive Plan. Given the four-year effort that created the Comprehensive Plan, the Revised Strategic Plan is not designed to re-write the Comprehensive Plan. Rather, the Revised Strategic Plan will both complement and supplement the Comprehensive Plan and run through the end of the long-term milestone period of the Comprehensive Plan, set to be completed by 2023. The Revised Strategic Plan incorporates the goals of the Comprehensive Plan and complements its implementation, particularly by laying

*The Comprehensive Plan included a Commissioner Statement noting that the report "represents what we believe to be a broad, informed consensus on a shared vision and a way forward," although "specific details may not in all instances reflect the official views or policies of ICPRB signatories" and that "implementation is voluntary and is subject to applicable laws and regulations."

out a financial plan to support the accomplishment of the Comprehensive Plan. The Revised Strategic Plan also supplements the Comprehensive Plan by identifying new areas that have come to light since the Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2018, such as concerns about per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

C. Our Vision

The Comprehensive Plan provides a roadmap to achieving our shared vision that the Potomac River basin will serve as a national model for water resources management that fulfills human and ecological needs for current and future generations. The Plan focuses on sustainable water resources management that provides the water quantity and quality needed for the protection and enhancement of public health, the environment, all sectors of the economy, and quality of life in the basin. The Plan is based on the best available science and data. The Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin will serve as the catalyst for the Plan's implementation through an adaptive process in collaboration with partner agencies, institutions, organizations, and the public.

D. Our Values



- Maximizing the environmental sustainability of the entire Potomac River Basin including all sub-basins and tributaries, for the benefit of all residents, including marginalized and vulnerable communities throughout the watershed.
- Cultivating and fostering a talented and diverse workforce to encourage professionalism, innovation, productivity, teamwork and leadership.
- Working with integrity and in conformity with highest ethical principles.
- Embracing open and transparent communications in all our relationships.
- Building and strengthening ecosystem and organizational resilience.
- Focusing on scientific research through rigorous and unbiased analysis
- Increasing outreach through a broad range of public and private sector partnerships.
- Educating policymakers, scientists, and the general public through the free dissemination of data and information.

E. Our Mission

The Mission of the ICPRB is to protect and enhance the waters and related resources of the Potomac River basin through science, regional cooperation, and education.

F. Complementing the Comprehensive Plan

As noted above, one of the functions of this Revised Strategic Plan is to complement the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan can be strengthened in several ways as shown below. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list and may be supplemented from time-to-time depending on the circumstances.

1. Fundraising Plan

The Comprehensive Plan stated that “one major hurdle towards successful implementation of this plan’s recommendations is funding.” The ICPRB Staff has estimated the cost of implementation through the long-term milestones (2023) as \$4 million. \$1.8 million in anticipated funding has been identified, leaving a gap of \$2.2 million. The fundraising element of the Revised Strategic Plan includes several ways to diversify the sources of revenue for the ICPRB and the specific means for achieving that goal.



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recommendations is funding.**

- Comprehensive Water Resources Plan

As the primary focus, the Revised Strategic Plan envisions using an event to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the 1940 founding of the ICPRB, in or around October 2020. All proceeds from the event will go to implementing the Comprehensive Plan. Because few know about the ICPRB, a brochure will be used to document the 80-year history of the ICPRB listing the top achievements of the agency. A separate flyer will detail the event and list the sponsorship opportunities. The targets will include engineering firms, the water suppliers, corporations that use or connected with water or the recreation industry, ICPRB vendors, and other similar entities within the watershed. A speaker and event site should be selected that would act as a draw to the event.

The second component of the fundraising plan will be to ramp up ICPRB's pursuit of the United States' equitable funding obligation to ICPRB as described in Article IV of the Compact and Section 4001 of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 amending Section 5019 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2007. (The Commission has determined that amount to be \$650,000 for FY20). Given the decades-long inability to obtain funding through the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the ICPRB should join with the other Mid-Atlantic River Basin Commissions (the Delaware River Basin Commission and the Susquehanna River Basin Commission) and seek to move the authorizing agency from the USACOE to the Environmental Protection Agency or the Department of the Interior. Along those same lines, ICPRB should work with the other Mid-Atlantic River Basin Commissions to form a Congressional caucus to build Congressional support for future appropriations. (The three Mid-Atlantic River Basin Commissions comprise 46 Congressional Districts and 23.4 million people).



Occoquan Reservoir, 1966 severe drought conditions.

Third, Staff is urged to work with local and state representatives of the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the USDA about ways to utilize funding potentially available under Section 2503 of the Farm Bill that stipulates that no less

than 10 percent of funds from all conservation programs (except the Conservation Reserve Program) be targeted at source water protection.



Little Falls, Potomac flood conditions.

Fourth, Staff should present proposals to the Commission about changing the investment strategy for funds maintained by the ICPRB but not dedicated to any purpose. (For example, this would not include Reserves or the CO-OP funds). The recent drop in the stock market may be an opportunity to invest outside of FDIC-insured instruments and into conservative and low risk instruments to increase the rate of return.

Fifth, the ICPRB should aggressively market its services to all member jurisdictions. ICPRB may have an advantage as a government agency of each of the basin jurisdictions in securing new business without the need to go through standard procurement channels, if allowed by each jurisdiction.

Finally, after the completion of the 80th anniversary celebration, individuals should be approached to establish a pool of yearly supporters for the ICPRB. This could be called the "383 Club" and be named after the 383-mile long main stem of the Potomac River from the Fairfax Stone to Point Lookout. A small event could be held each year for Club Members who donate at least \$383 each year to the ICPRB.

2. Communication Plan

Because so few people are aware of the ICPRB, the Comprehensive Plan can succeed only through an expanded broadly-based communication plan that raises the profile of the ICPRB. Recommendation 1 of the “Interstate Water Solutions for the New Millennium,” published by the Interstate Council on Water Policy in 2006, noted that it was important to “highlight and promote the effectiveness of interstate water organizations.” Accordingly, improved communications constitute a key element of the Revised Strategic Plan.

First, the 80th anniversary event will provide the platform for highlighting the past successes of the ICPRB over the years (such as the successful shad restoration project) through targeted publications (such as brochures), videos, conventional and social media (including “Throwback Thursday” postings that use vintage photographs to attract attention).

Second, the ICPRB should be seen and heard through highly visible public appearances across the basin. The communications staff should arrange speaking engagements and interviews for the Executive Director and others that can be used to tout our current projects and scientific research that resonate with the widest demographics, such as our work on salt management and algal blooms.

Third, each scientist working for ICPRB should be encouraged to present their results to technical and resource management audiences and turn their research into papers for publication. Peer-reviewed publications form a stronger, more lasting base of scientifically defensible knowledge, which is needed for effective policy and decision-making. Much of what we do could

be packaged into research papers for wider dissemination (and recognition) throughout the scientific community.

Fourth, the on-line usability of the Comprehensive Plan will be enhanced through the Revised Strategic Plan with the goal of developing easy-to-read summaries of the Comprehensive Plan (with a checklist to show completed items) that will engage the public throughout the course of the Revised Strategic Plan.

Finally, after the completion of the year marking the 80th anniversary celebration, another event should be planned for 2021. Although it wouldn’t mark a milestone year, a re-creation of the famous trek from the Fairfax Stone to Point Lookout may capture the public’s imagination and generate good publicity for the ICPRB. Congressman Gilbert Gude led a small group along that route in August 1975. A daily journal comparing what Gude found then to what is observed now may be of interest to scientists and lay people alike.



Brochure Publication, 80th Anniversary Campaign

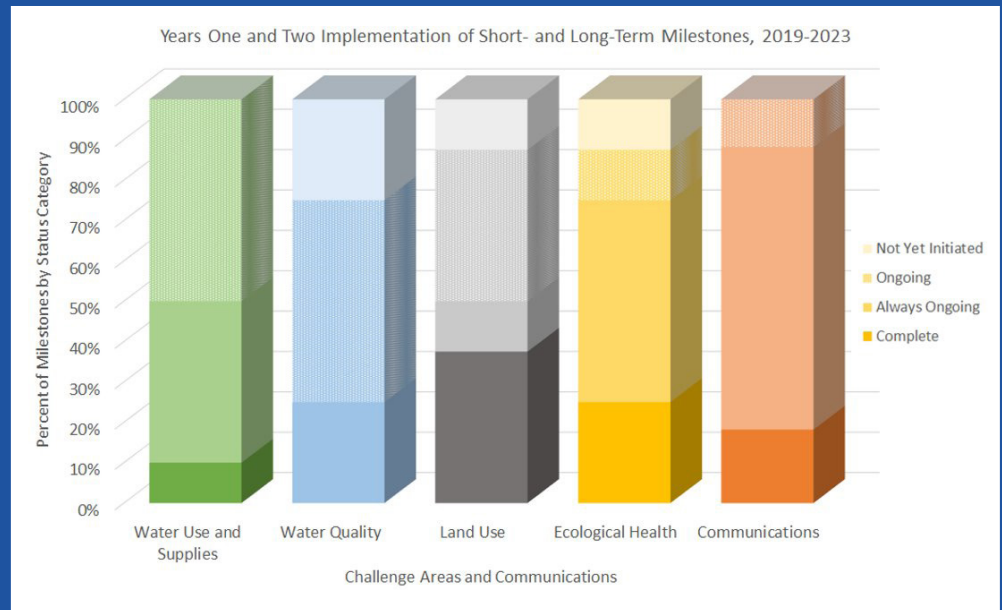
3. Outreach Plan

While the Commission regularly interacts with many key stakeholders identified in the Comprehensive Plan, engaging a wider circle of Basin actors in partnerships will help assure the success of the Comprehensive Plan. These entities include, but are not limited to, the many park agencies (local, regional, state and national) in the Potomac Watershed as well as the many land trusts operating in the region (such as the Land Trust of Virginia, the Potomac Conservancy and the Maryland Environmental Trust). Staff will also contact and connect with groups that focus on environmental justice in the Basin, such as the effort underway on the Anacostia River known as the 11th Street Bridge Park Equitable Development Plan.

The Land Prioritization Project could serve as a template for such outreach efforts, particularly with the land trust community. There, under the auspices of the ICPRB Drinking Water Source Protection Partnership, the water suppliers and a foundation were tapped to provide the funding for a study of land within the Potomac Watershed and ranking those properties for their value as source waters.

The Revised Strategic Plan envisions more partnerships between the ICPRB and outside entities by working and collaborating with other players in the Basin. Staff is already working on an ongoing webinar series of land use decision-makers to talk about timely issues.

Other examples include expanding clean-up efforts and the popular “Walk in the Woods” series to engage far more partners than currently.



4. Building Resiliency

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, resilience is “an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.” In order to implement those portions of the Comprehensive Plan targeted to resiliency (particularly in connection with climate change and other anthropogenic stressors), the ICPRB needs to become more resilient itself. Rather than follow the ways things have been done in the past, the agency needs to become nimbler and be able to adapt to the rapidly changing conditions in the Potomac River Basin. For example, the agency should increase the use of technology to conduct virtual meetings, to telework more to appeal to a new generation of employees, to employ social media to disseminate its research to a broader public audience, and to undertake projects outside of its comfort zone.

G. Supplementing the Comprehensive Plan

While the Comprehensive Plan was indeed “comprehensive” addressing some of the recent developments occurring after the Plan’s adoption in 2018 should be included in the Revised Strategic Plan.

1. Promoting Water Quality Information Sharing

The key recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan included promoting water quality information sharing. The DIME project (Data Inventory, Mapping, and Exploration) is a recent information/data management effort designed to give ICPRB Staff and water resources professionals an online interactive tool to quickly access, relate, explore, and download diverse Potomac-related datasets and GIS layers. The project is expected to result in more holistic, robust, and efficient evaluations of water quality conditions and ecosystem integrity in the Potomac River basin.

2. Reinstating an Annual Potomac River Conference

Since the publication of the Comprehensive Plan, advancements in the scientific community have continued to progress and are not reflected in the static Comprehensive Plan. One way to keep the Comprehensive Plan “fresh” is for ICPRB to hold (once again) an annual “Potomac River Conference” that would focus on one of these areas of recent research. Sponsors could be solicited to underwrite the cost of this exercise and ICPRB could partner with other entities to help with the logistics. For example, concern has increased about public exposure to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), a family of human-made chemicals that are found in a

wide range of products used by consumers and industry. (The Comprehensive Plan is silent as to PFAS). Called “forever chemicals,” interest has risen with the publication of “Troubled Water.” ICPRB could host a scientifically based conference modeled on a recent event organized by Commissioner Jones at Howard University called “PFAS in Water: Policy and Management.” If successful, other conferences could be organized by ICPRB each year.

3. Establishing Robust IT Infrastructure

The ICPRB needs to build an office IT environment with system redundancies and secure cloud storage to minimize downtime in network access and to ensure full file access in case of emergencies. With the workforce moving more towards telework where accessibility of files with security is becoming increasingly important, the Commission must apply new IT technologies to ensure security and accessibility of files required for the Staff to continue their work. Until now, the focus of the Commission’s IT infrastructure was based mostly on budget. The IT technology and threats are constantly changing. It is important that the Commission continue to pursue and maintain a robust IT infrastructure to ensure that the Commission can continue its mission.

4. Implementing the 2017 Resolution

At its March 7, 2017 Business Meeting, the ICPRB adopted a resolution calling for an expert, independent review of the Low Flow Allocation Agreement (LFAA) (dated January 11, 1978) and also recommended an examination of the Water Supply Coordination Agreement (WSCA (signed on July 22, 1982) to be conducted in coordination with the water suppliers. On February 23, 2018, the Cruden Team published their evaluation of the LFAA. On September 19, 2019, the CO-OP suppliers released a brief report on their internal review of the WSCA, which concluded that “there were no immediate items requiring action.” Staff will facilitate discussions amongst the LFAA governing parties to determine which



Great Falls (an iconic location on the Potomac River) during the 1965 drought which led to the Low Flow Allocation Agreement, the Cooperative Water Supply Agreement, and ICPRB's Section for Cooperative Water Supply Operations (CO-OP) on the Potomac.

recommendations of the Cruden Team should be implemented and to establish a timetable for implementation. Staff will facilitate a dialog between the CO-OP suppliers and the Commission on potential updates to the WSCA that would help ensure that that agreement continues to serve as the basis for regional cooperation and cost-sharing in future decades.

5. Creating an Intern Program

In order to inspire the next generation of scientists to pursue careers in our field, Staff could create and implement an annual intern program. Interns should be solicited throughout the Basin with a focus on diversifying the workforce of tomorrow.



Watershed Model

H. Measuring Success

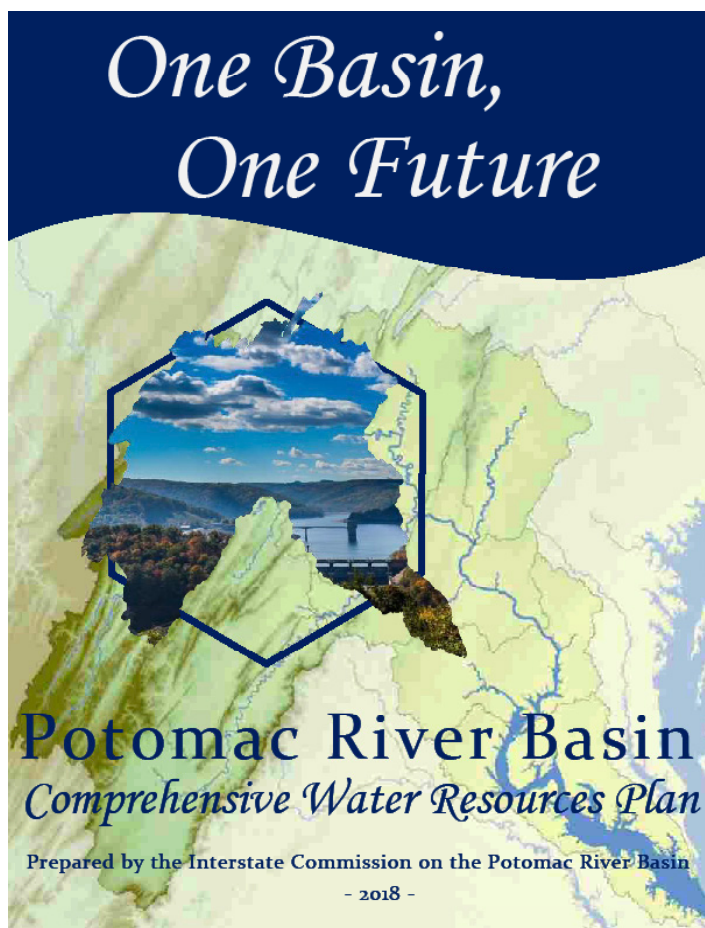
The setting of Key Performance Indicators (abbreviated as KPI) is an important aspect of the strategic planning process and plays a major role in the measurement of progress of the organization towards the attainment of its planned goals.

First, the success of the Revised Strategic Plan will be judged by the achievement of the specific milestones of the Comprehensive Plan (set out in pages 77-81 of the CP and Appendix B to the RSP). Accordingly, the KPIs for this part of the Strategic Plan align with the milestones of the Comprehensive Plan. Staff will report annually on the status of completing these milestones.

Secondly, the KPIs for that portion of the Strategic Plan that supplements the Comprehensive Plan can be partially found in the five items listed in Part G above. While these are specific outputs, the more important measure should be changes in the outcomes for the Potomac River. In this sense, this Strategic Plan will be assessed on whether these actions achieve the Vision that the Potomac River basin “will serve as a national model for water resources management that fulfills human and ecological needs for current and future generations.”

I. Conclusion

This Revised Strategic Plan will help implement and supplement the ICPRB’s 15-year Comprehensive Plan. It will begin during the 80th year of the Commission and run through the end of the period identified in the Comprehensive Plan as the long-term milestones (2023). At that time, the Comprehensive Plan states that “the planning process should be re-initiated to identify the appropriate follow-up actions” for the next five-year period of the Comprehensive Plan. It is anticipated that this Revised Strategic Plan will also be re-examined at that time. **



Cover, Potomac River Basin Comprehensive Water Resources Plan 2018

**This RSP was being finalized as the Commission began receiving indications about possible budgetary and other implications of the coronavirus crisis for all levels of government and other actors in the Basin. Notwithstanding these developments, it was decided -- given the long-term, 15-year time horizon of the Comprehensive Plan -- that the RSP would not be scaled-back or modified preemptively while the impacts of the pandemic are not yet fully known. It is recognized, however, that some modifications or adjustments might prove necessary in the months or years ahead, in order to adapt to changing realities.



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