



TOWNSHIPS TODAY

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Clean-Water Mandates Could Be Coming to a Town Near You

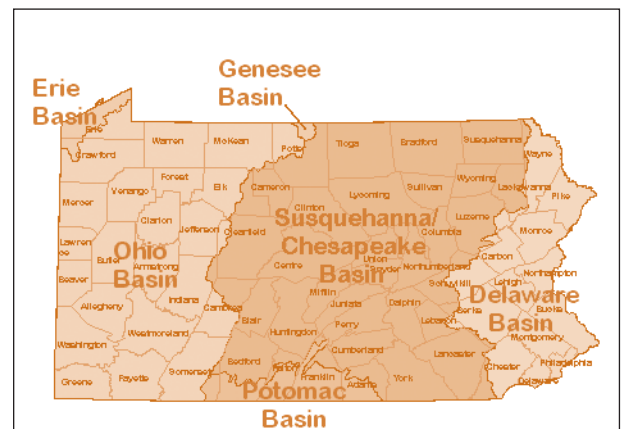
Pennsylvanians use 14.3 billion gallons of water every day, and return almost all of it — 13.7 billion gallons — to the environment, the state Department of Environmental Protection reports.

And the truth is, your manicured yard, likely cultivated with fertilizers and pesticides, is having an adverse impact on local water supplies and those further downstream.

Why? Because much of the water entering Pennsylvania's six major watersheds — the Delaware, Erie, Genesee, Ohio, Potomac, and Susquehanna/Chesapeake basins — is contaminated with nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment.

This mish-mash of pollutants, coming from such sources as lawn and garden chemicals, storm-water, livestock manure, dirt, and wastewater, is degrading streams and lakes in our township along with bodies of water much farther away, including the Chesapeake Bay, the nation's largest estuary.

"Streams, lakes, and other bodies of water are affected by what happens in their watersheds — the land areas that drain to them," DEP says on its website. "That means that each of us has a special responsibility to use our land and water in ways that do not harm aquatic life and other water users downstream." ➤



This map delineates the three primary watersheds that cover Pennsylvania: the Delaware, Ohio, and Susquehanna/Chesapeake basins. Other minor watersheds include the Erie, Genesee, and Potomac basins. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has started putting pressure on officials in the Susquehanna/Chesapeake Basin to clean up pollutants entering local waters and the Chesapeake Bay. Many believe it's only a matter of time before the EPA turns its attention to Pennsylvania's other watersheds. (Map courtesy of the state Department of Environmental Protection.)

Pennsylvania put on a 'pollution diet'

Your individual actions are especially important now that the federal government has put increased pressure on municipalities in the Susquehanna/Chesapeake Watershed, which feeds the Chesapeake Bay and covers the District of Columbia and parts of Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, New York, Virginia, and West Virginia.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has ordered officials in this region to clean up the bay or else. And it appears it's only a matter of time before the EPA turns its attention to other water basins, including those in Pennsylvania.

"The time for talking has indeed passed. We have to act, and we are settling for nothing less than real results," EPA administrator Lisa P. Jackson told attendees at a recent bay summit.

In her remarks, Jackson was alluding to the fact that efforts to save the Chesapeake Bay have stretched over decades, beginning in the 1970s with the passage of the Clean Water Act and continuing through today with bay states making plans and promises but never quite reaching their goals.

This has led the EPA, spurred to action by a White House executive order and a legal settlement with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, to put the entire bay watershed on a strict "pollution diet" based on a baywide total maximum daily load (TMDL).

This budget of sorts, the largest and most complex ever developed, establishes binding state limits for three major bay pollutants: nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment. The EPA is also targeting the sources of these pollutants: sewage treatment plants, fertilized lawns, farms, and stormwater runoff.

Since its release, the bay TMDL has been divided among the six bay states and D.C., which are now required to devise a cleanup plan that details how they intend to reduce contaminants through 2025.

The EPA will monitor the bay states' progress in reducing pollution through a series of two-year milestones. Those states that fail face a handful of consequences, from reduced funding to more federal oversight, particularly over stormwater systems and wastewater treatment plants.

Sharing the burden

So what does this mean for Pennsylvania, our township, and our residents?

Well, it means that as a state, we need to come up with programs and technologies that improve water quality in the bay watershed and beyond. For us as a community, it means we need to pull together and realize that our actions on the ground affect the water we drink and play



Do you want clean water? Then limit the amount of chemicals you use on your lawn and garden and take other measures listed below to improve our local water quality.

in here and hundreds of miles away.

Therefore, we are encouraging you to be a part of the clean-water solution by taking the following steps suggested by the Chesapeake Bay Program:

- **Reduce your nutrient input to the watershed.** Limit the amount of fertilizer spread on lawns and gardens. Plant native vegetation that requires less fertilizer and water. Leave grass clippings on lawns and gardens. Maintain your septic system. Start a compost pile, instead of using a garbage disposal.

- **Reduce the use of toxic materials around your house and yard, including pesticides.** Use safer, nontoxic alternatives for cleaning your house and controlling pests.

- **Reduce erosion.** Plant strips of native vegetation along streams and shorelines. Divert runoff from paved surfaces to vegetated areas to promote absorption and reduce runoff.

- **Save water.** Use water-saving devices in toilets and sinks. Turn off water when not in use. Wash cars in grassy areas to soak up soapy water. Use a rain gauge to monitor rainfall and water plants only if needed. Invest in a soaker hose or drip irrigation system to further conserve water.

- **Get involved.** Join or start a watershed association to monitor local waters and encourage others to be clean-water advocates. Participate in watershed cleanup activities.

