

# An Introduction to Watershed Management Planning

## Planning for the Future of Your Watershed

### What is a watershed?

The total land area that drains water into a given river, lake, estuary or other body of water. A watershed can be as large as the Chesapeake Bay or as small as your local stream.

### What is watershed management?

A method for maintaining, protecting and restoring the natural resources within a watershed while also enhancing the quality of life in our communities.



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### Why is watershed management planning important?

When water flows across the land during rainfall events, it carries fertilizers, loose soil, litter and other pollutants into streams and other surrounding water bodies. As a result, everything we do on the land affects the quality and quantity of our water resources and the natural systems that surround us. Therefore, the natural resources and the quality of life in our communities are directly affected by the way we plan for and manage land use activities.

Watershed management planning provides opportunities to address water quality and habitat issues within the physical boundaries of a watershed rather than political boundaries. It is an inclusive approach to support environmental protection, quality of life issues, and economic development—using the watershed as a holistic planning framework.

### What does watershed management planning involve?

The process common to watershed management planning includes:

- Assemble all interested parties
- Identify concerns
- Inventory and evaluate resource conditions
- Set goals
- Develop an action plan to meet goals
- Evaluate progress toward goals
- Conduct ongoing community outreach and education

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## What are the benefits of watershed management planning?

### Environmental

- Improves quality of water for drinking and recreational use
- Enhances water supply
- Protects wildlife habitat and improves natural resources
- Controls flooding by restoring riparian and wetland areas

### Social

- Directly involves community members in developing a vision for the future of the watershed
- Provides educational opportunities for citizens to understand the interaction of natural resources management with existing and future development
- Gives citizens an active voice in protecting and restoring natural resources that are important to the community
- Provides opportunities to increase cooperation with neighboring communities

### Financial

- Avoiding development in sensitive areas can help minimize compliance and mitigation costs
- Improves water supply protection to reduce the need for costly drinking water treatment
- Provides a framework and rationale to pursue various funding opportunities

### Administrative

- Provides a structure for communities to target geographic areas for land conservation and development to maximize the efficiency of community planning efforts
- Enables more efficient management of permitting programs
- Focuses data collection and analysis for environmental assessments
- Provides benchmarks for measuring the success of management efforts

### Want to know more?

Check out the next steps in, "Planning for the Future of Your Watershed: Getting Started"



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For additional information about watersheds and watershed management, please visit:  
[www.chesapeakebay.net/watershedplanning.htm](http://www.chesapeakebay.net/watershedplanning.htm)

