

CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM AND WATER RESOURCES UPDATES

March 2026

Chesapeake Bay Program

[An Effort to Ease Water Pollution With Oysters Fizzled. Why?](#)

Undark

According to a registry maintained by Maryland's Department of the Environment, there have been just three trades involving oyster aquaculture over the program's lifetime, and none since June 2020. Oyster farmers have been slow to participate, and would-be buyers of nutrient credits even slower.

[While the Chesapeake Bay freezes, these 2 boats break the ice](#)

The Banner

In Maryland, where the upper bay is more likely to freeze, the state usually operates three steel-hulled boats that patrol the estuary's icy reaches. Like giant snow plows, they clear critical channels for those who need to leave the harbor in frigid temperatures.

[Oysters protect Chesapeake's blue crabs from deadly diseases](#)

Oceanographic

New research from William & Mary's Batten School of Coastal & Marine Sciences shows that oysters can also reduce the spread of disease in nearby marine species, including among Chesapeake Bay's prized blue crabs.

[New study tells us what's up with what's going down with the sinking Chesapeake Bay](#)

WTOP

It has long been known that the Chesapeake Bay region is sinking, and an extensive new study led by Virginia Tech now details how fast, with rates that vary widely. The Virginia Tech study highlights how sinking land can worsen the effects of relative sea level rise, which combines global ocean rise with local land subsidence.

[EPA Mid-Atlantic Region Highlights Funding to Accelerate Chesapeake Bay Restoration](#)

EPA

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today announced more than \$44 million in grant awards through its Chesapeake Bay Program Office to support water quality improvement, habitat restoration, and community stewardship efforts in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The grants were awarded through the Chesapeake Bay Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction (INSR) Grants and Small Watershed Grants (SWG) programs, which are administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF).

[Maryland oyster hatchery faces federal funding cut](#)

The Bay Journal

In a potentially serious blow to oyster restoration efforts in Maryland, the Trump administration has slashed federal funding that supports the operation of the state-run oyster hatchery on the Eastern Shore.

[Revamping of Bay Program governance expected by summer](#)

The Bay Journal

By July, the Chesapeake Bay Program, which oversees the restoration of America's largest estuary, is expected to finalize a plan to restructure its governance...among the key recommendations put forward by an internal panel: fusing the top two committees into a single board, overhauling subject-specific groups to align with the watershed agreement's changes and strengthening coordination with federal agencies.

Water Quality, Wastewater and Stormwater

The EPA wants to eliminate one of the few ways that tribes can protect their water

Grist

Earlier this month, the Environmental Protection Agency announced a proposal to revise the Clean Water Act, specifically a section of the law that regulates water quality and limits states' and tribes' authority over federal projects, as well as how tribes can gain the authority to conduct those reviews. Experts say the move would dissolve one of the few tools tribes have to enforce treaty rights and hamper their ability to protect tribal citizens.

An Obscure Provision In FEMA's Program To Prevent Disaster Is Making Serious Flooding Worse

Circle of Blue

Known within FEMA as the "no-rise" rule, the directive prohibits any earth-moving activity in low-lying, flood-prone areas if water levels during a storm would rise above what was present before the construction started. In other words, any project — defined as "development" by the agency — must not increase the volume of water in flood-prone areas by any amount.

Anacostia River contamination concerns come as snow piles grow

NBC 4 Washington

As D.C. scoops up snow and ice to clear streets and dumps much of it on mounds in four parking lots around the city, concerns are raised about the environmental impact on local waterways.

DC Water Releases Key Findings on Extent of Sewer Overflow and Potomac River Impact

DC Water

DC Water is releasing new findings regarding the environmental impacts following the January 19, collapse in a section of the Potomac Interceptor located along the Clara Barton Parkway at the 495 interchange and C & O Canal National Historical Park. Based on flow monitoring data collected before and after interim bypass pumping was activated, DC Water estimates that approximately 243 million gallons of wastewater has overflowed from the collapse site.

Cleanup begins along the C&O Canal after sewage spill, but rain slows early work

WTOP

Rain slowed down D.C. Water's environmental restoration work Tuesday along the C&O Canal and Potomac River, but cleanup efforts are well underway after January's massive sewage spill.

Susceptibility to Runoff Impacts in the Potomac Basin

ICPRB

Developers, planners, and zoning agencies can use the information in these maps as a factor in siting new development, anticipating the effects of planned development and/or identifying areas where mitigation efforts may prove useful. This Susceptibility Index map ranks areas in the Potomac basin by their susceptibility to the negative impacts from surface runoff based on the following

physical characteristics of the area: total watershed area, percent of watershed with underlying karst geology, average annual precipitation, soil characteristics, physiographic province, and average watershed slope.

[DC Water CEO issues open letter amid new sewer collapse challenges](#)

ABC7

The developments come as DC Water CEO and General Manager David L. Gadis released a new open letter acknowledging community frustration and outlining the utility's response.

[Old chemicals and new concerns](#)

Chesapeake Bay Program

The revised Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, approved by the Chesapeake Executive Council in December 2025, includes an updated Toxic and Emerging Contaminants Outcome. This revised outcome emphasizes the Bay Program's role as a convener—bringing together scientific and technical experts to share information, close knowledge gaps, and improve understanding of how toxic contaminants affect the watershed and what mitigation options exist.

[What separates a lake from a pond? What about creeks and rivers?](#)

The Washington Post

What a conveniently thematic question! To answer, we cracked open the National Hydrography Dataset, a modern monument built over decades by the U.S. Geological Survey, the Environmental Protection Agency and dozens of allied groups.

[Potomac Interceptor Update and FAQs](#)

DC DOEE

The latest water quality monitoring results for sampling are located here. DOEE will continue posting new information as it becomes available (anticipated results will be available 48-72 hours after testing).

[Overshadowed by 'forever chemicals,' PCBs remain a toxic threat to Chesapeake waters](#)

The Bay Journal

Polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, haven't been produced since 1979, after studies found that exposure to them could cause a variety of harmful health effects, including cancer. But they were so widely used before then and so long-lasting that they still impair water quality in much of the tidal Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

[Maryland congressional delegation enters the fray over massive Potomac sewage spill](#)

Maryland Matters

Congressional lawmakers from Maryland and Virginia are pushing for a "rigorous" environmental remediation plan, public briefings and continued bacteria monitoring in the wake of last month's spill of millions of gallons of sewage into the Potomac River.

[Drinking Water, Water Supply and Drought](#)

[Overview of COG's Drought Plan and History](#)

MWCOG

This document, updated in April 2025, provides an overview of COG's Water Supply and Drought Awareness Response Plan and the CAO's role during times of drought.

[How a thirstier region and shifting weather patterns may impact your water supply](#)

GGWash

Without stronger investments in water infrastructure, the chance of a water shortage could be as high as 5% within a quarter century. What that investment looks like is still to be seen. Some possible solutions include a reservoir in Montgomery County and/or advanced water reuse. Either option would require installation of massive pipelines to an already crowded area.

[Is your drinking water safe after the Potomac River sewage spill?](#)

WTOP

More than 200 million gallons of sewage have spilled into the Potomac River this month, creating an ecological disaster. Bacteria levels near the break, which occurred just south of the American Legion Bridge, have soared, but on Friday morning the leaders of the Washington Aqueduct worked to reassure and explain why drinking water isn't being impacted by the spill.

[Slightly salty water could come out of your faucet soon in these Maryland suburbs](#)

WTOP

WSSC Water — the water utility for Montgomery and Prince George's counties in Maryland — said salt used on roads and sidewalks during the recent snowstorm will eventually wash into waterways and make its way into the drinking water supply.

[What we know about the massive sewage leak in the Potomac River](#)

NPR

It could now take months to repair a broken sewer pipe that pumped millions of gallons of wastewater into the Potomac River about 8 miles from the White House. The damage is worse than initially thought after officials found a massive blockage in the ruptured pipe.

[How States Are Stepping Up to Protect Their Fresh Water](#)

Pew

Across the U.S., Pew has supported states' efforts to protect and restore bodies of fresh water through policies that support the long-term conservation of these systems. As other states explore possible solutions to their freshwater threats, here are some recent approaches from around the country that they could consider.

[So There's 300 Million Gallons of Poop Water in the Potomac River. Now What?](#)

Washingtonian

The overflow is downstream of the Washington Aqueduct's intakes for drinking water at Great Falls," DC Water spokesperson Sherri Lewis told Washingtonian in a statement Tuesday. "Additionally, the Potomac Interceptor is a sanitary sewer line; and the wastewater system and the drinking water system are completely separate." But a raw sewage spill of this magnitude still presents risks to public health and wildlife. Here's what to keep in mind, even now that the leak is largely contained.

[How DC dodged a bullet in Potomac River sewage spill](#)

E&E News

The spill is a potent reminder of the threat of aging water and sewer pipes across the nation, which have been underfunded for years and are unlikely to get more funding under the Trump

administration. In Washington, the stakes are especially high because the city and some suburbs rely exclusively on one source – the Potomac River – for drinking water.

PFAS

Scientists Say This Simple Underground Fix Could Keep PFAS Out of Drinking Water

Food & Wine

Scientists from Brown University, the University of Minnesota, and the U.S. Navy found that injecting colloidal carbon into contaminated soil can trap PFAS chemicals underground, dramatically reducing contamination.

EPA's Focus on PFAS to Persist with Ongoing Efforts to Increase Knowledge of the Large Family of Compounds

JD Supra

The Environmental Protection Agency recently issued a press release on its efforts over the last year regarding PFAS contamination, noting it “represents just the beginning of the Trump Administration’s fight against the risks of PFAS contamination.”

Climate and Energy

Maryland Joins Global Commitment to Protect 30% of Land and Water by 2030

MD DNR

By joining the coalition, Maryland officials will work with members to understand new and innovative ways to propel land conservation forward in a way that benefits ecosystems and communities. Maryland has long been a leader in land conservation since approving the Program Open Space initiative in 1969, which is used to fund purchases of public lands and conservation easements.

As massive winter storm hits, NWS has been using new AI-powered forecasts

The Washington Post

With a winter storm set to blanket about 2,000 miles of the United States with snow, sleet and ice, government forecasters are incorporating new, AI-fueled tools as they track the system.

Solar can save Virginia farms — if government gets out of the way

Virginia Mercury

If solar integrates so well into the agricultural economy, what is the reasoning behind the county ordinances that ban solar or limit it to only a few projects? And why, when a county doesn’t prohibit solar outright, do local leaders so frequently reject permits for projects that meet all their conditions?

Maryland is farther behind on its emissions goal than expected, new research shows

Maryland Matters

The sobering data, revealed Thursday by the University of Maryland’s Center for Global Sustainability, indicates that state and federal policies currently on the books in Maryland will only reduce globe-warming emissions 42% from 2006 levels.

Food, Forestry and Agriculture

A tree’s bark can take a staggeringly large bite out of climate change

Anthropocene

Trees have a well-earned reputation as climate heroes for their ability to suck up carbon dioxide and

respire oxygen. But until now, people have been overlooking tinier but far more numerous parts of the equation: the trillions of bacteria inhabiting tree bark.

Beech Leaf Disease: An Emerging Threat to Our Forests

Casey Trees

That's why a relatively new but fatal disease affecting American beech trees, known as Beech Leaf Disease, threatens to change our forest floors and our ecosystems forever. Within the District, American beech is the most common species of tree, comprising 16% of the two million trees in DC's urban forest.

New AI Program PlantMap3D Helps Farmers Cut Fertilizer Use in Chesapeake Bay

The Nature Conservancy

Farmers in Maryland, Delaware and Pennsylvania will soon have access to AI-powered intel about their cover crops' unique nitrogen contributions, thanks to a partnership led by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS). \$16 million will support farmers directly or through their agribusiness partner to implement this technology on their farms.

'Ghost forests' are even more widespread than we thought

The Washington Post

"We can pretty confidently say we can count basically every dead tree," said Xi Yang, a University of Virginia professor and one of a team of researchers whose recent work has helped shed new light on the proliferation of what are known as "ghost forests."

Bill to ban the use of herbicide paraquat in Va. advances with narrow vote

Virginia Mercury

The use of the controversial herbicide paraquat has been banned in 70 nations across the world, including in China where it is manufactured, but is used widely in Virginia. A bill that would make the commonwealth the first state to implement a total ban on the use and sale of the chemical cleared a House of Delegates committee Wednesday.

Upcoming Meetings and Events

FARM: [Friday, April 10th 2026](#)

CBPC: [Friday, May 15th 2026](#)

COG Staff Contacts

Sushanth Gupta: sgupta@mwkog.org

Caitlin Bolton: cbolton@mwkog.org

Katie Dyer: kdyer@mwkog.org

Christine Howard, cdhoward@mwkog.org

Lindsay Smith (Food and Agriculture), lsmith@mwkog.org