

DRAFT – SUBJECT TO REVISION

REGIONAL WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT

FY 2026 WORK PROGRAM AND BUDGET
DRAFT SUBJECT TO REVISION

July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026



ABOUT COG

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) is an independent, nonprofit association that brings area leaders together to address major regional issues in the District of Columbia, suburban Maryland, and Northern Virginia. COG's membership is comprised of three hundred elected officials from twenty-four local governments, the Maryland and Virginia state legislatures, and U.S. Congress.

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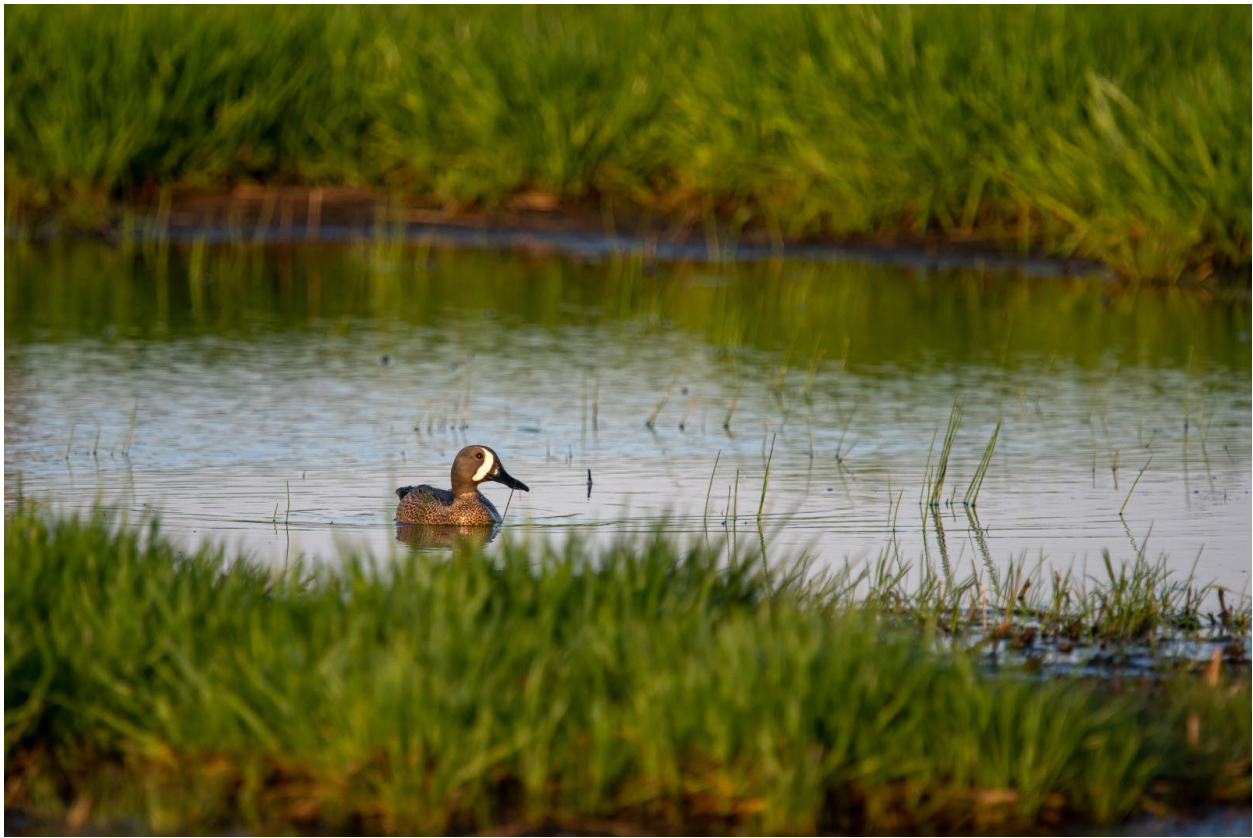
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Blue Winged Teal by Jeremy Castle

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

This is the Annual Work Program and Budget (WP&B) for COG’s Regional Water Quality Management (RWQM) Program for Fiscal Year 2026 (FY 2026). The work program is structured to meet the needs of COG’s members to address critical regional water resources and water quality issues. Key features of the FY 2026 RWQM work program are summarized below.

COG’s WATER RESOURCES PROGRAM

COG’s Water Resources Program staff assist local government members and affiliated water utilities with protecting, restoring, and conserving the region’s water resources as well as addressing the policy and technical aspects of state and federal initiatives that have water quality and resource implications for the COG region. COG provides support through this Water Quality Management Program and through the Blue Plains Committee services. The WP&B for the Blue Plains Committee services are covered in a separate budget paid by the IMA parties in accordance with the IMA Service Agreement #1 Secretariat Services to Blue Plains Parties.

There are three primary water resource program areas included in the FY 2026 work program and budget:

Regional Water Quality Management (RWQM) – This program area addresses regional water quality issues, particularly in the Potomac River. Primary support for this area comes from the Regional Water Fund, which is paid for by the Blue Plains Intermunicipal Agreement (IMA) Parties on behalf of the localities they serve¹ [under the terms of the 2012 Blue Plains IMA, Service Agreement #2], and other COG local governments. Oversight of this program area is provided by COG’s Chesapeake Bay and Water Resources Policy Committee (CBPC) and the Blue Plains IMA Leadership Committee. The work is supported by the Water Resources Technical Committee (WRTC) and the IMA Regional Committee.

Urban Watershed Programs– This program area includes regional stormwater and watershed restoration activities that support the needs of COG’s members and affiliated water utilities. The regional aspects of the program are incorporated in the RWQM Program, while oversight of specific grant-funded projects is by the grantor agencies.

Water Security and Resources – This program area addresses security and supply issues with local drinking water and wastewater utilities. The program is funded primarily through contributions from the region’s water utilities and through federal grants. Oversight for this program is provided by the Water Security Work Group and the National Capital Region Homeland Security Executive Committee (HSEC).

KEY INITIATIVES IN 2026

The FY 2026 RWQM Work Program uses existing resources, creates synergies with other COG programs, and helps the region and COG members address various water sector challenges. Guided by CBPC’s Policy Principles, the Key Initiatives for FY 2026 are outlined below, with specific outcomes, work products, and activities detailed in the subsequent Program Area Details.

¹ Blue Plains IMA Parties – District of Columbia, DC Water, Fairfax County, Montgomery County, Prince George’s County, and Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission.

Dialogue and Policy - Maintain ongoing discussions with the EPA, states, and other stakeholders on the Chesapeake Bay Program and other water quality initiatives to address local issues and needs. This will ensure an active local role in decision-making processes that impact local governments and water utilities. A focus in FY 2026 will be the Beyond 2025 initiative, ensuring that local governments have a voice in defining revised goals and outcomes under the Bay Agreement.

Partnerships - Maintain regular exchanges and foster partnerships to leverage resources and further common water resource objectives. Address technical, policy, and economic issues, while supporting shared infrastructure, job skills development, workforce training, and other opportunities.

Focus on Emerging Issues – Regulation of PFAS (polyfluoroalkyl substances) compounds, freshwater salinization syndrome, water supply redundancy and changing weather patterns brought on by climate change are examples of emerging issues facing the region. COG staff will work to provide our members with up-to-date data and assessments regarding these and other emerging issues. In FY 2026, this includes collaborating with local water utilities and universities on leading edge research and monitoring related to PFAS regulation and freshwater salinization.

Technical Analysis and Use of Sound Science – Continue to analyze information and advocate for the use of sound science in federal and state programs, recognizing:

- The evolving nature of scientific knowledge and the need for adaptive management.
- The importance of data-driven decision-making.
- Balancing innovation with risk under regulatory requirements.
- Considering cross-media and multi-sector benefits and unintended consequences of decisions.

Advocate for Local Interests in the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP)

Advocate for COG members by providing local input and data to the CBP, including:

- Representing COG's members in the Beyond 2025 initiative, ensuring that local governments have a voice in defining revised goals and outcomes under the Bay Agreement.
- Updating the Watershed and Water Quality Models to define nutrient/sediment loads and reduction efforts.
- Monitoring and providing input on modeling assumptions, especially concerning assumptions related to local water quality and wastewater treatment.
- Participating in workgroups on modeling, wastewater, urban stormwater, land use, climate resiliency, communications, and toxics, including the Water Quality Goal Implementation Team and the Local Leadership Work Group.

Communicate Water Resource Successes and Challenges

Continue to communicate on behalf of the COG region and in support of COG Board initiatives to address and recognize:

- The impacts and benefits of pollution control efforts in the Potomac, Anacostia, Patuxent, and Occoquan rivers, as well as other local waters and streams, and the Chesapeake Bay.
- Current and future challenges faced by wastewater and stormwater managers, including issues related to funding, staffing, feasibility, and capacity.
- Water infrastructure needs and opportunities for addressing those needs.

- Contributions of the water sector workforce, along with the education pathways and skill sets required for filling future water sector jobs.
- Potential extreme weather vulnerabilities, and their implications for regional water infrastructure and permit compliance.

RWQM PROGRAM AREAS AND DETAILS

The RWQM Program is overseen by the CBPC and coordinated with other COG programs (e.g., energy, climate change, sustainability, air quality, security, farming and food security, and Anacostia watershed). It is also designed to complement and support the COG Board’s Mission and priorities on a wide range of issues that have water resource and broader environment implications such as:

- The Metropolitan Washington Planning Framework and related planning priorities
- [Region Forward](#) vision
- Water-specific commitments in conjunction with COG’s [Climate, Energy, and Environment Policy Committee \(CEEPC\)](#)
- [Economic Competitiveness](#)
- [Housing Affordability](#)
- [Agriculture and Forestry](#)
- [Legislative Priorities](#)

The FY 2026 Regional Water Quality Management (RWQM) Work Program focuses on activities related to water quality and water resources in the metropolitan Washington region. It is designed to address the key challenges faced by COG’s local government members and water utilities that manage stormwater management, wastewater collection and treatment, and drinking water treatment and distribution. The program comprises four fundamental areas:

- Policy and Program Development
- Water Resources Committee Management and Technical Analysis
- Urban Stormwater Management
- Water Resources Outreach and Water Supply Security

POLICY AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Working with the Chesapeake Bay and Water Resources Policy Committee (CBPC) members and other stakeholders, COG staff will address regional water resource priorities, develop policy recommendations, advance COG Board’s legislative priorities, and advocate on behalf of COG’s local government and utility members. This includes analyzing issues, preparing summary documents and presentations, organizing outside speakers, supporting CBPC meetings, preparing materials, and responding to requests. This program area addresses policy, partnerships, advocating for local interests, input to the Chesapeake Bay Program, and communicating water resource successes and challenges.

KEY FOCUS AND OUTCOMES - POLICY AND PROGRAMMATIC

Identify, recommend, and assist in the development of policies and actions that will support COG’s members and the CBPC’s Priorities and Key Initiatives. Collaborate with other organizations to amplify the voice and input of local governments and utilities. Provide recommendations and input to state and federal regulatory agencies. Examples of activities include:

DIALOGUE AND POLICY

- Advocate for funding and comment on legislation for water quality and infrastructure.
- Recommend policy actions to the COG Board.
- Organize an annual Bay and Water Resources Forum with the EPA and states.
- Focus on drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, funding, affordability, and workforce development.
- Coordinate with COG policy committees and the COG Board of Directors on cross-cutting issues like sustainability, infrastructure, resiliency, and workforce development.
- Enhance understanding of water issues through presentations from various organizations.
- Offer tours of facilities and projects to understand challenges and successful efforts.

PARTNERSHIPS

Coordinate with governmental organizations and other stakeholders on a range of technical, policy, and economic issues. Partners typically include MACo/VACo, MML/VML, CBP’s Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC), Local Leadership Work Group, the Chesapeake Bay Commission, and others. Collaborate with regional and national organizations on matters of shared water resource interests (e.g., WEF, WERF, AWWA, WRF, NACWA, NACO, VAMWA/MAMWA, VAMSA/MAMSA); and state and federal regulatory agencies (e.g., DOEE, MDE, VA DEQ, and EPA).

ADVOCATE FOR LOCAL INTERESTS AND INPUT TO THE CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM

Provide formal comments to the CBP on the Beyond 2025 initiative. With support from the Water Resources Technical Committee, ensure local governments’ concerns are addressed, including Conowingo loads, resiliency, BMP performance impacts, stream restoration, salinization, emerging contaminants, tree canopy, affordability, and flexibility. Address issues related to biosolids, septic systems, and combined sewer system loads affecting COG local governments and utilities.

POLICY AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNICATE WATER RESOURCE SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

Communicate regularly about water resource issues to local elected officials, the COG Board, state and federal officials, and the COG region. Use the CBPC's Outreach Work Plan to highlight:

- Success stories, innovations, and accomplishments in regional water resources.
- Infrastructure needs and challenges.
- Ongoing water quality improvements in the Potomac River, the Anacostia River, and other local waters.
- Integrate these efforts with COG's website, podcast, social media, and member resources.



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POLICY AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

MAJOR PRODUCTS

Meetings, conference calls and events in support of the CBPC (Bi-monthly meetings; dedicated events, and other meetings as needed), including:

- Bay and Water Quality Forum with EPA/federal and state representatives.
- Tours of water resource/wastewater and stormwater facilities in the region.
- Anacostia Water Society boat tour of the Anacostia River.
- Advocacy letters supporting COG’s legislative priorities (e.g., appropriation of WRDA funding for U.S. Army Corps study of alternative water supply for metropolitan Washington).

Support CBPC and its work groups to:

- Analyze CBP and other water resource issues.
- Analyze proposed state/federal legislation.
- Identify policy implications for the region and make recommendations.
- Prepare formal correspondence/comments on behalf of CBPC.
- Update/report on water resource indicators/metrics in COG’s Region Forward initiative.
- Briefings/presentations/testimony for COG Board members, local elected officials, and others.
- Respond to COG member and media information requests.
- Provide ad-hoc technical assistance to COG member jurisdictions.
- Routinely update COG website as a regional resource.
- Prepare the Annual Work Program and Budget for next FY 2026.
- Provide Work Program management and oversight.



The Anacostia by Krista Schlyer

WATER RESOURCES COMMITTEE MANAGEMENT AND TECHNICAL ANALYSIS

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

COG staff will work with WRTC members and other stakeholders to address technical issues related to the CBPC's water resource priorities. This program produces technical work to support local governments and water utilities by analyzing issues, preparing briefing documents and presentations, organizing briefings for WRTC meetings and webinars, and responding to requests for regional water quality data. It emphasizes using sound science in setting regulatory policy.

WATER QUALITY MONITORING

COG allocates part of the Regional Water Fund to a monitoring program focused on regional priorities. In 2020, COG began focusing on freshwater salinization. Research teams from the Occoquan Watershed Monitoring Laboratory, U.S. Geological Survey, and University of Maryland are working on a multi-year project to assess and mitigate freshwater salinization in regional water bodies. In FY 2026, monitoring for PFAS in the Potomac River watershed will be added, continuing work started under Water Research Foundation project 5269.

WATER QUALITY MODELING

COG staff monitors and analyzes changes in the Chesapeake Bay Program's modeling tools, especially the watershed model used for the Bay TMDL. They participate in several Bay Program workgroups, including Modeling, Urban Stormwater, Wastewater Treatment, and Land Use. Technical presentations are given to the WRTC and the CBPC. COG also uses a regional model to predict future wastewater flows based on demographic projections.

RESILIENCY AND HAZARD MITIGATION

COG staff will focus on how changing weather patterns affect wastewater, stormwater infrastructure, BMP performance, and nutrient dynamics. They will organize peer exchanges on assessing and mitigating extreme weather impacts, especially flooding, through WRTC meetings and specialized workshops. Additionally, COG staff will coordinate with the state, Federal, and academic experts on this issue.

DATA SYNTHESIS

COG staff uses the Bay Program's wastewater database and watershed model to update regional summaries of water quality parameters, like nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment reductions by source category and geography. This information is provided to members on request and updates are given to the WRTC as needed.

NATIONAL CAPITOL PARTNERSHIP FOR REGIONAL INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT (NATCAP PRISM)

The NatCap PRISM is charged with preventing the spread of or eradicating local populations of early invading species through detection, reporting and rapid removal response activities. Funding for this activity is provided by PRISM members and grant funding.

FOCUS

In FY 2026, COG staff will collaborate with members to assess how their wastewater and stormwater treatment plans align with the Chesapeake Bay TMDL, the Beyond 2025 initiative, and other regulations. Focus will remain on PFAS, freshwater salinization, and resiliency efforts. Staff will also support members in adopting COG's best practices for stream restoration. Input from the WRTC will help organize committee meetings and workshops.

WATER RESOURCES COMMITTEE MANAGEMENT AND TECHNICAL ANALYSIS

MAJOR PRODUCTS

MONITORING AND MODELING

- Monitoring for PFAS in the Potomac River watershed, continuing work started under Water Research Foundation project 5269.
- New results from the freshwater salinization monitoring project, in the form of written summaries and oral presentations.
- Host a series of webinars that focus on four pillars: Water quality, quantity, resilience, and security.
- Provide Bay Program estimates of land use, septic numbers, and BMP implementation to members.
- Compare COG member forecasts of future loads and land use changes to those estimated by the Chesapeake Bay Program.
- Continue to track new developments in Chesapeake Bay Program modeling, with a focus on projections of climate change impact, to be summarized in WRTC presentations.
- Update a stormwater fees and taxes table for the region.

RESILIENCE AND HAZARD MITIGATION

- Completion of a blue green infrastructure flood mitigation project with Prince George's County and the District of Columbia.
- Summary of regional Best Practices for addressing flood impacts.
- Best Practices for communicating flood risks to local communities.

NatCap PRISM

- Peer exchange of early invasive invading species in the Potomac and Anacostia rivers, and early rapid response removal techniques.
- Negotiate a cost-share agreement with the US Army Corps for the management of traps.
- Continue to curate Invader Detective observations and scan for early detection. The Program Manager will reach out to land managers about the new occurrence, and assist with technical information, documentation, and in some cases, coordinate removal of the infestation.

URBAN STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Stormwater management is a significant challenge for COG’s members operating under MS4 permits. They face issues like intense rainfall, inland flooding, expanding impervious surfaces, and stricter regulations on pollutants. COG supports its members with permitting coordination, workshops, and technical assistance. The Regional Tree Canopy Subcommittee (RTCS) addresses the connections between trees, buffers, soils, conservation, and water quality. This program complements regional efforts to reduce water pollution.

URBAN STORMWATER REGULATORY AND PROGRAM SUPPORT

Anticipated activities for FY 2026 include:

- Technical information exchange on MS4 stormwater permit compliance, BMP performance, flooding, and resilience, primarily via workshops.
- Coordinate salt mitigation efforts in northern Virginia, DC, and Maryland.
- Support MACo-COG Maryland MS4 Phase 1 group in permit negotiations, including Good Housekeeping Plan development and A-StoRM design standards.
- Analyze Chesapeake Bay Program modeling data for stormwater BMP placement and performance, focusing on new precipitation data impacts on regulations and infrastructure.
- Share technical information on urban stream restoration approaches among COG and regional members.
- Collaborate with Anacostia Restoration Program on restoration metrics, mapping services, and information sharing within COG membership.
- Analyze potential regional collaboration on bacteria source tracking to update bacterial TMDLs.
- Coordinate information on fecal bacteria monitoring and microbial source tracking using various PCR methods.
- Exchange information on DNA metabarcoding of environmental samples to identify multiple taxa.

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT, GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE, AND FORESTRY PROJECTS

- Support the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Partnership, focusing on promoting the river as a valuable resource, sharing effective messaging strategies with WRTC and CBPC. Funding comes from Partnership members and grants.
- A workshop organized with PlanitGeo and American Forest will explore tools for tree planting in urban areas. The Chesapeake Bay Program and Chesapeake Conservancy will provide data on tree canopy conditions for COG members. Information on the Anacostia Trash TMDL monitoring will be shared, including management techniques to reduce trash and improve water quality.
- NatCap PRISM's grant activities will build capacity for small non-profits to manage invasive species and establish a region-wide two-horn trapa management program.
- Support will be provided for the COG CEEPC Regional Tree Canopy Subcommittee and the development of a 2026 Action Plan.
- A report on blue-green infrastructure planning and community engagement will address flooding around Watts Branch and Oxon Run in DC, and Arundel Canal and Watts Branch in Prince George’s County, MD will be completed.

URBAN STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

MAJOR PRODUCTS

- Technical information exchange on MS4 stormwater permit compliance, BMP performance, flooding, and resilience.
- Peer exchange of technical information among COG members regarding active BST monitoring and laboratory analysis methodologies,
- Peer exchange of active NatCap PRISM to improve regional capacity to manage invasive species and establish a region-wide two-horn trapa management program. grant management activities. current Peer exchange of the Anacostia Trash TMDL monitoring and effective management techniques that reduce trash from entering the streams.
- COG staff, collaborating with the members of the Regional Tree Canopy Subcommittee, will develop an inventory of forest cover / land cover resources in the region using Chesapeake Conservancy high-resolution land cover data, and other related products.
- A report on blue-green infrastructure planning and community engagement will address flooding around Watts Branch and Oxon Run in DC, and Arundel Canal and Watts Branch in Prince George’s County, MD will be completed.



Lookout by Philip Yabut

WATER RESOURCES OUTREACH AND WATER SUPPLY/SECURITY

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

COG staff will collaborate with COG members and water utilities on priority water resources projects and programs. This work is coordinated with other COG programs, COG member activities, and organizations like HSEC, EPA, DHS, CDC, ICPRB, MDE, VADEQ, VDH, DOEE, DOH, FBI, and others to maximize synergies, avoid duplication, and leverage resources. A major initiative over the next three years will be a study with USACE looking at a secondary water supply to the Potomac River. Anticipated activities for FY 2026 will occur throughout the year and include:

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CAMPAIGN

Implement the regional educational and information campaign elements of drought preparedness, source water protection, Value of Water and Protect Your Pipes to promote responsible water use, benefits of drinking tap water, and protection of critical wastewater infrastructure.

DRINKING WATER SUPPLY, SECURITY AND DROUGHT MANAGEMENT

- Support regional water supply resilience through implementation of the Potomac Secondary Source study with USACE and regional water utilities, and other related initiatives.
- Facilitate communication and notification among local and state governments, water utilities, the media, and the public for water supply emergencies, including drought.
- Integrate regional Homeland Security initiatives given the importance of and linkages to drinking water and source water protection to enhance preparedness, response, and resiliency.
- Provide comprehensive and up-to-date information and coordination to enable timely regional responses to potential and actual water supply emergencies.
- Coordinate and develop regional water messaging for source water protection, infrastructure, water supply emergencies, preparedness, and specific contaminants.

DROUGHT COORDINATION COMMITTEE

- Implement a regional water supply work program to address water supply/drought management issues.
- Monitor regional water supply conditions and
- Prepare monthly drought outlook and water supply conditions reports.
- Update the Water Supply Emergency and Drought Awareness Response Plans based on the outcomes of recent drought exercises.
- Implement the regional Water Supply Emergency and Drought Awareness Response Plans in response to water supply emergency events.

WATER SECURITY WORK GROUP

- Coordinate and manage regional water security activities in monitoring, redundancy and resiliency, planning, facility hardening, notification, communication, mutual aid, and training and exercises.
- Work with utility partners to assess risks, threats, and vulnerabilities of NCR source water, drinking water, treatment plants, distribution systems, and wastewater collection and treatment systems.
- Identify strategies and best practices to address the highest priority risks, threats, and vulnerabilities.

WATER RESOURCES OUTREACH AND WATER SUPPLY/SECURITY

MAJOR PRODUCTS

- Protect Your Pipes (PYP) website, salt smart webpage, and regional communications (Year-round and Seasonal), including graphics and social media posts for COG's platforms and for members to use.
- Manage and coordinate Drought Coordination Committee and Drought Technical Committee during periods of drought
- Track and monitor Potomac basin drought and water supply conditions and website updates.
- Prepare monthly Regional Drought and Water Supply Outlook Reports (Season: April – Oct).
- Staff support for assessing Drought Watch Trigger and preparing updates to Response Plan.
- Staff support and management coordination to the Water Security Work Group.
- Continue management and coordination of NCRWARN (regional utility mutual aid network).
- Implement and support one or more regional exercises.
- Update the WRTC and CBPC regarding drought reports and general briefings regarding regional security initiatives.

FUNDING AND BUDGET FOR FY 2026

COG's water resources programs are supported by funding from the Regional Water Fund, the Regional Environmental Fund, COG membership fees, federal grants, private foundations, and contributions from COG member utilities.

REGIONAL WATER FUND (RWF)

The COG Board of Directors adopted the FY 2026 Member Dues and Regional Fees on October 9, 2024, which included \$1,882,600 for the RWF. When combined with an increase in regional population, COG member dues increased \$89,700 (5.0%), from \$1,792,900 to \$1,882,600. The RWF primarily supports work performed under the Regional Water Quality Management Program (RWQM).

COG MEMBERSHIP FEES AND OTHER

All 24 members of COG pay an annual fee to be a member of COG using a per capita rate applied to each jurisdiction. This is adjusted using a 9% per jurisdiction population growth-based cap to establish a population adjusted budget. For FY 2026, the COG member dues represent an increase of 5.0% from FY 2025. Table 1 shows the Regional Water Fund contributions by jurisdiction in FY 2025 and FY 2026.

Table 1: Local Government Contributions to the Regional Water Fund Program FY 2025 and FY 2026

Local Government Contributions to COG's Regional Water Fund FY 2025 and FY 2026		
Jurisdiction	Regional Water Fund Allocations FY25	Regional Water Fund Allocations FY26
Alexandria, City of	36,940	40,634
Arlington County	51,271	54,186
Bowie, City of	12,724	12,484
College Park, City of (WSSC)	6,717	7,389
District of Columbia (DCWATER)	358,731	375,819
Fairfax County	358,731	375,819
Fairfax, City of	5,799	6,275
Falls Church, City of	3,233	3,486
Gaithersburg, City of (WSSC)	15,123	15,927
Greenbelt, City of (WSSC)	4,985	5,316
Loudoun County	95,158	101,052
Montgomery County (WSSC)	358,731	375,819
Prince George's County (WSSC)	358,731	375,819
Prince William County	107,465	113,188
Rockville, City of	14,789	15,600
Takoma Park, City of (WSSC)	3,817	3,813
TOTALS	1,792,946	1,882,625