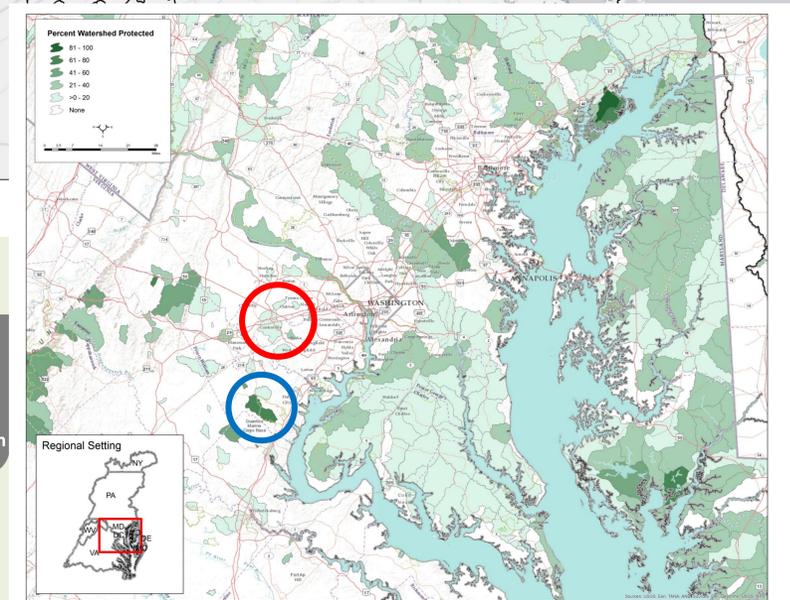
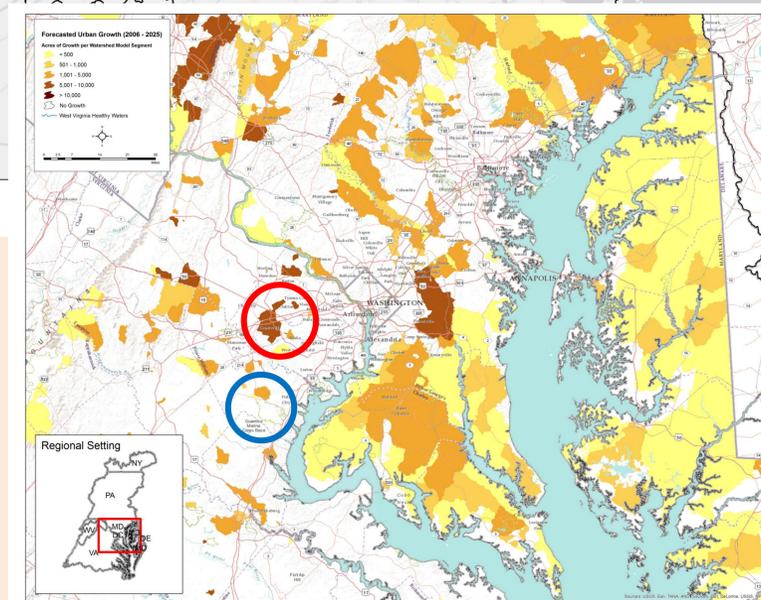
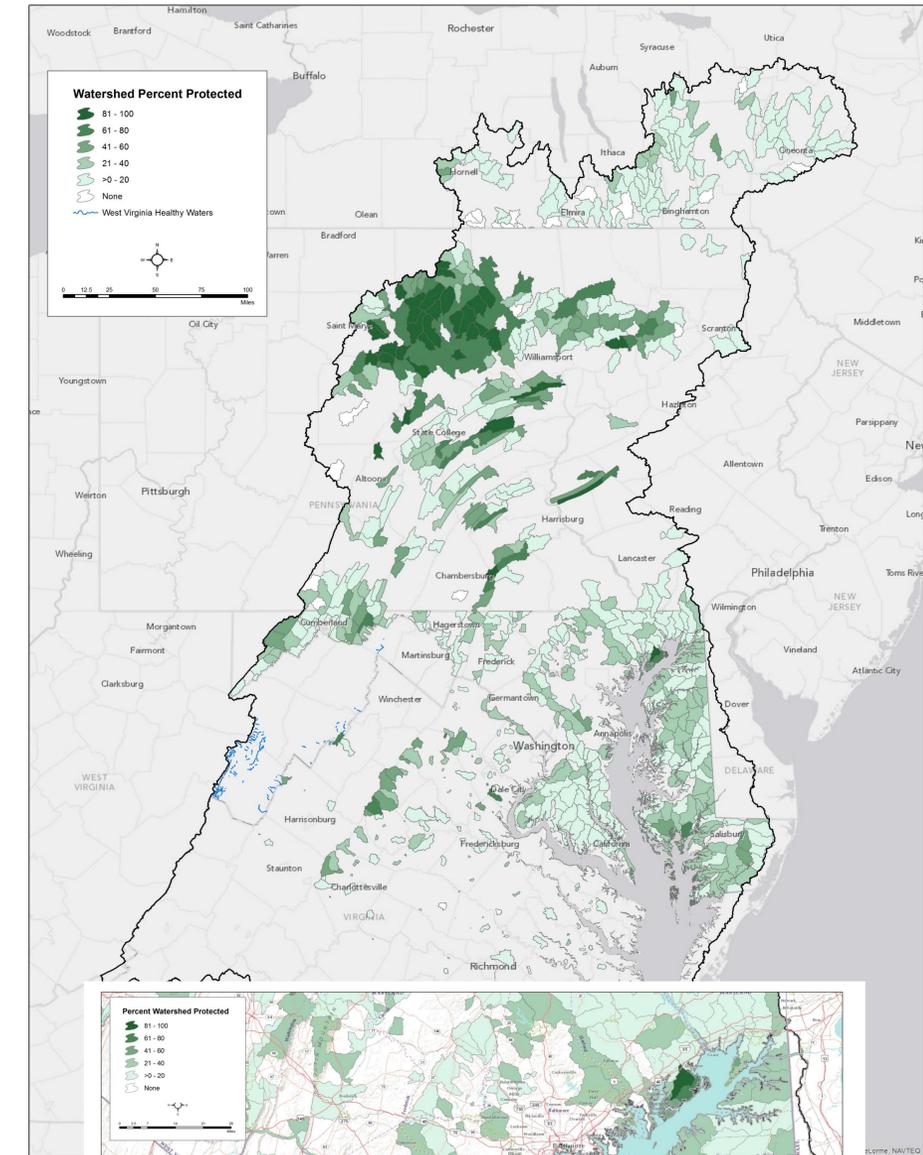
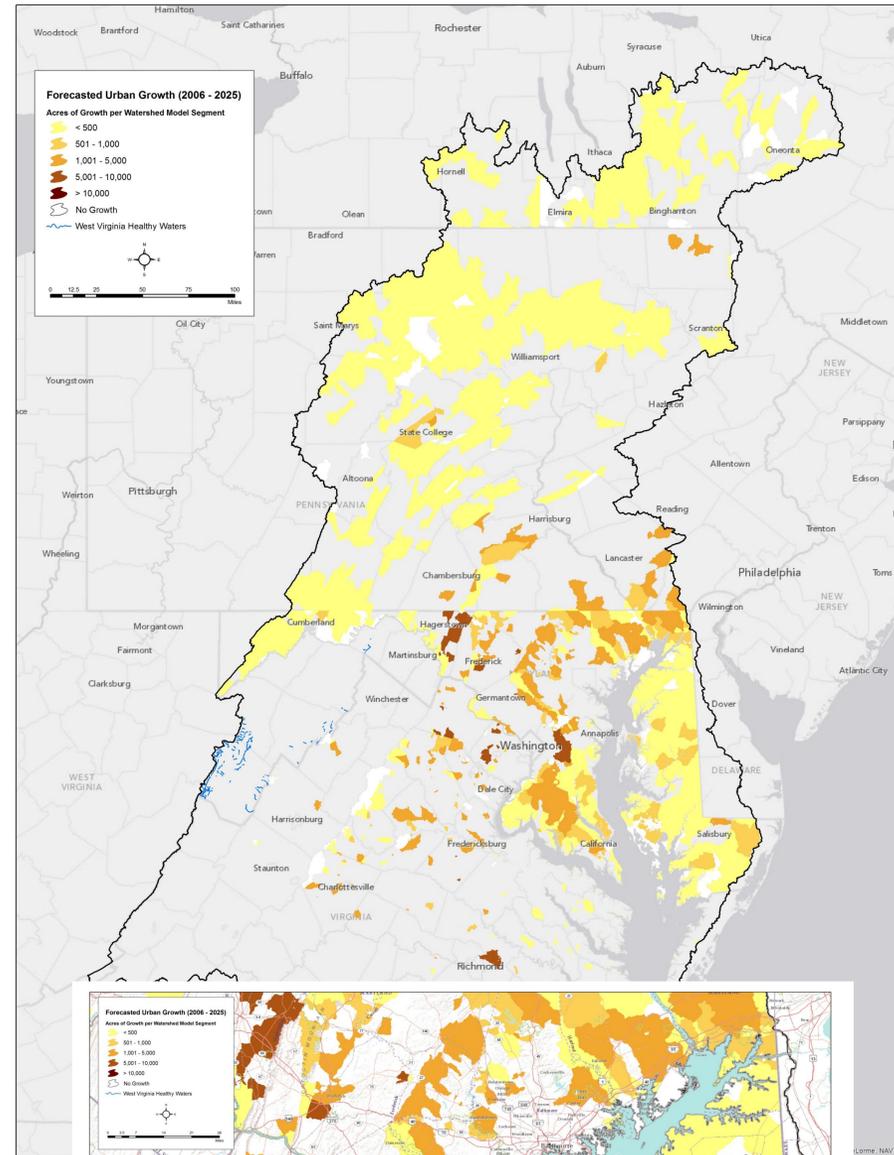
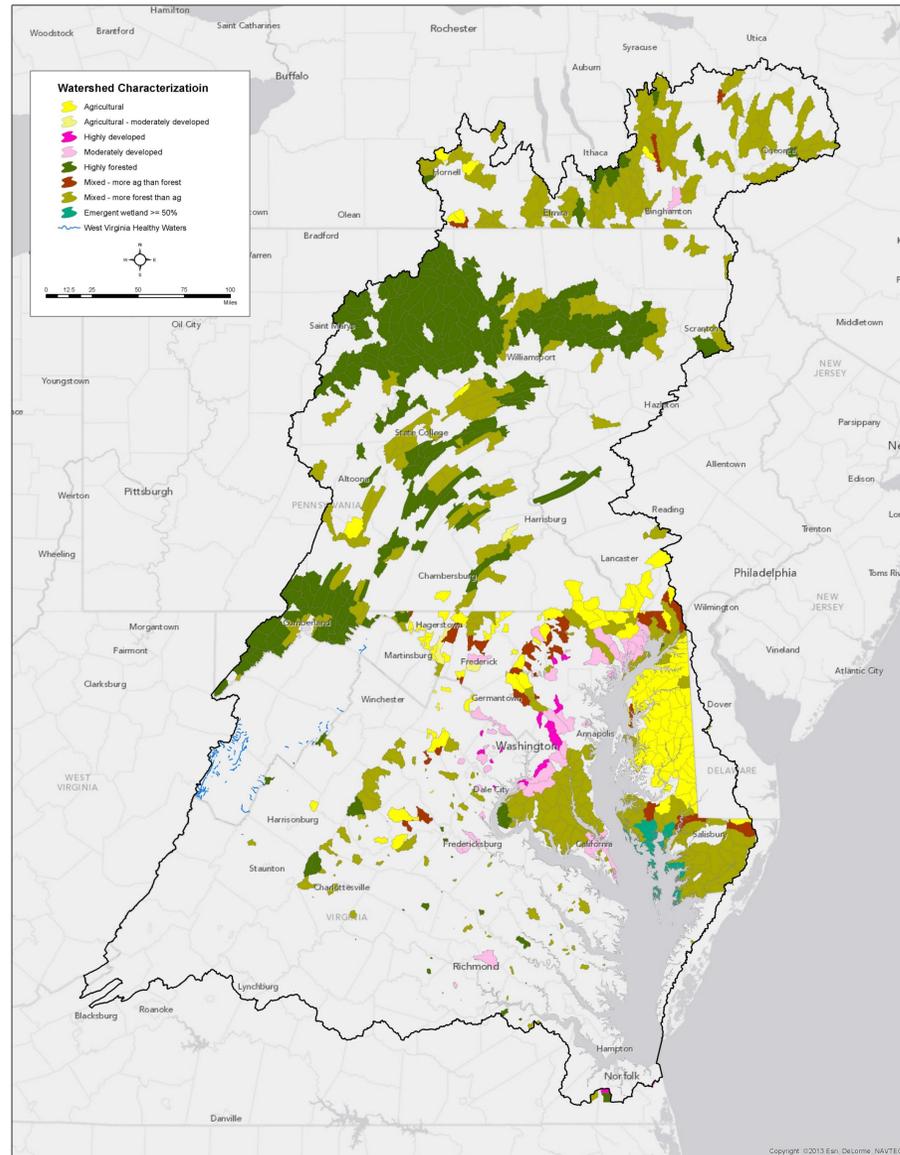


State-Identified Healthy Waters and Watersheds



● = high threat, low protection
● = low threat, high protection

The Chesapeake Bay Program partnership is working to maintain healthy watersheds by identifying and tracking areas with high natural resource values that may come under development pressure. In light of the new Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, the CBP Maintain Healthy Watersheds Goal Implementation Team has proposed a goal to “Protect state-identified healthy waters and watersheds, recognized for their exceptional quality and high ecological value.” In order to achieve this goal, the states have identified their healthiest waters and watersheds for protection.

With this goal, CBP intends to bring attention to the challenge of protecting streams and watersheds that are healthy today, as a programmatic complement to the "dirty waters" approach which focuses on restoring waters after they are allowed to be degraded. Healthy watersheds sustain local social, economic, and environmental benefits and contribute to the achievement of Chesapeake Bay Program goals for the tidal Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

The objective of the vulnerability assessment is to characterize and track threats to the long-term ecological health of watersheds. This may include exposure to the threat of land conversion and the ecological impacts of conversion. Included in the assessment are measures such as the potential expansion of the developed footprint (including impervious surfaces) as well as the loss of resource lands (farmland and forest land). Healthy watersheds that are highly vulnerable could be targeted for conservation efforts.

Protection from threats may be characterized by a number of factors, such as percent of habitats protected through acquisition or easement; strength of local land use policies, ordinances, and regulations; strength of state anti-degradation policies and enforcement; and the level of citizen stewardship (e.g., active local land trusts and watershed organizations). Healthy watersheds for which there is low level of protection could be targets for conservation efforts.