



Pennsylvania's Local Government Watershed Forums

A report to Pennsylvania's Phase III WIP Steering Committee from the Local Government Advisory Committee to the Chesapeake Executive Council

LGAC's Mission & Purpose

The Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) was created by the Chesapeake Executive Council through the 1987 Chesapeake Bay Agreement. The purpose of the LGAC is to advise the Executive Council on how to effectively implement projects and engage the support of local governments to achieve the goals of the Bay Agreement. LGAC's mission is to share the views and insights of local elected officials with state and federal decision makers and to enhance the flow of information among local governments about the health and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Pennsylvania Gubernatorial Appointees to LGAC

Ed Bustin, Commissioner, Bradford County

Leo Lutz, Mayor, Columbia Borough

Ann Simonetti, Former Councilmember, Marysville Borough

Danene Sorace, Mayor, City of Lancaster

John Thomas, Commissioner, Hampden Township

James Wheeler, Chief Education Officer/ Training Manager, PA State Association of Township Supervisors

Purpose of the Forums

Between 2014 and 2018, LGAC members held 14 Local Government Watershed Forums within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed of Pennsylvania. The purpose of the Forums was to increase the number of elected officials who serve as leaders in watershed protection and restoration. We accomplished this by providing a forum for local elected officials to engage in open dialogue with their peers. The dialogues were facilitated by LGAC members, with support from the LGAC Coordinator, Mary Gattis.

Summary of Events

June 6, 2014 - Cumberland County Forum and
Watershed Restoration Projects Tour
Number of attendees: 12

September 16, 2014 - Capital Region Forum in
Hampden Township
Number of attendees: 22

September 3, 2015 - Blair County Forum in
Duncansville Borough
Number of attendees: 7

August 26, 2016 - Capital Region Council of
Governments Forum in North Middleton Township
Number of attendees: 5

August 30, 2016 - Capital Region Council of
Governments Forum in Derry Township
Number of attendees: 5

February 1, 2017 - Susquehanna Riverlands Region
Forum in Columbia Borough
Number of attendees: 13

August 18, 2017 - Eastern Lancaster County
(ELANCO) Region Forum in Terre Hill Borough
Number of attendees: 22

April 23, 2018 - PSATS Annual Conference
Roundtable Session: *Farmers & Townships
Working Together for Clean Water* in Hershey
Number of attendees: 55

May 9, 2018 - Bradford County Roundtable in
Towanda Borough
Number of attendees: 11

May 30, 2018 - Centre County Roundtable in
Boalsburg
Number of attendees: 8

June 20, 2018 - Franklin County Roundtable in
Chambersburg Borough
Number of attendees: 17

November 9, 2018 - South-central Region
Roundtable in Carlisle Borough
Number of attendees: 16

November 14, 2018 - North East Region
Roundtable in the City of Pottsville
Number of attendees: 4

December 7, 2018 - South-central Region II
Roundtable in Derry Township
Number of attendees: 11

Topics Discussed

The final series of seven roundtables, held in 2018, were coordinated with PA DEP and focused more specifically on *informing local officials about their role in developing and implementing the Phase III WIP and identifying challenges local officials face complying with regulatory requirements and implementing voluntary programs.*

Participants during this final series were asked to rank the twelve co-benefit priorities from a list developed by the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership. Priorities from most important/relevant to least were: **Healthy Watersheds, Stream Health, Wetlands, Protected Lands, Toxic Contaminants, Climate Resiliency**, Fish Habitat, Forest Buffers, Tree Canopy, Public Access, Brook Trout, Underwater Grasses.

The most popular and relevant topics discussed across all seven forums held in 2018 included:

- Lack of sufficient guidance about stream restoration techniques
- How watershed protection/restoration activities be combined to address localized flooding
- Time required to obtain permits for restoration activities, and too many reviewers
- Administratively cumbersome grant funding requirements, the length of time for reimbursement, and who gets credit
- Existing information gaps, e.g. what is my water quality? Which best management practices (BMPs) can I use?

Recommended Next Steps

More opportunities for local elected officials to engage in dialogue with their peers and state agency leaders are needed. LGAC members heard, repeatedly, how important it was to be able to engage in open dialogue around the challenges and opportunities in watershed protection and restoration. Therefore, we recommend the Commonwealth continue to support the convening of forums such as this.

Because elected officials turn over fairly often, there is a need to **continually provide education about local government's role in protecting and restoring local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay.** Therefore, we recommend the Commonwealth work with the Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership's Local Leadership Workgroup to deliver programs that advance local officials' understanding of their role in watershed protection and restoration.

LGAC members welcome the opportunity to advise the Commonwealth on matters related to achieving the Vision articulated in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. To schedule a meeting with the committee, please contact LGAC Program Manager, Monica Billig, at lgac@allianceforthebay.org.

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