Talking Points: Beyond Environmental Benefits of Water Quality Conservation Practices

Consider including some of these points as you make the case to your community for installing water quality best practices as part of your Chesapeake Bay Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan.

These points can help community leaders, farmers, business owners and other landowners understand the diverse benefits—community, economic and environmental—that result from practices put in place to reduce nutrient and sediment levels and improve the health of local waterways.

You can incorporate these points in all kinds of outreach, including presentations, one-on-one conversations, flyers, email and others.

**Overview of water quality conservation practices**

* Conservation practices are the most effective and practical way to reduce the amount of nutrient and sediment pollution that runs off non-point sources, such as crop fields and city streets, into local waters during rainfall.
* Conservation practices are also known as best management practices (BMPs).
* Funding is available from a variety of federal, state and private sources to help with the cost of installing conservation practices.
* There are examples across the watershed of how conservation practices have provided municipalities, farms, businesses and other landowners with community or economic benefits on top of environmental improvements.
* Conservation practices that include community and economic benefits may appeal to more members of the community.
* There are a wide variety of conservation practices that each provide different combinations of benefits. You can choose ones that best meet your local goals.
* Different conservation practices exist for different sectors, such as forestry, agriculture or urban stormwater.
* Urban water quality conservation practices can include rain gardens, permeable pavement, stream restoration, wetland restoration, tree planting, street cleaning and shoreline management.
* Agricultural conservation practices can include conservation tillage, conversion to pasture, nutrient management, forest and grass buffers, exclusion fencing and barnyard runoff control.
* Conservations practices need to be properly installed and maintained to provide benefits.
* Conservation practices can help your state meet its goal for reducing the amount of nutrient and sediment pollution that flows into your local waters.

**Community and economic benefits**

* Water quality conservation practices provide public health benefits, including cleaner air, safer drinking water supplies, more shade, less exposure to flooding risk and reduced noise pollution.
* Some conservation practices, such as wetland and stream restoration, can help reduce flooding. This lowers the costs of damage repair for municipalities, taxpayers and business owners.
* Conservation practices increase recreational opportunities and beautify a community, which can lead to increased sales revenue for outfitter shops, restaurants, commercial and recreational fisheries, tourism companies, fishing/boating charters, outdoor adventure companies and other businesses.
* The process of installing and maintaining conservation practices creates jobs in engineering, construction, property maintenance and other areas.
* Increasing the sense of community and improving aesthetics, privacy and quality of life can raise property values.
* Agricultural conservation practices often improve livestock and soil health, as well as reduce veterinary expenses and increase farmers’ crop yield.
* Conservation practices can reduce energy use and associated cost.
* Conservation practices can help prevent erosion and stream collapse, which can reduce property damage and injury to livestock.
* Conservation practices can be targeted—to protect drinking water sources, promote the long-term viability of economically valuable fisheries or lower energy use, for example.

**Environmental benefits**

* Some conservation practices reduce carbon emissions, resulting in cleaner air and water.
* Conservation practices improve habitat for wildlife, increasing the number and diversity of species.
* Conservation practices help protect threatened native plant species.
* Conservation practices increase the amount of conserved or protected lands.
* Stream conservation practices increase shade, cooling the water temperature and improving the insect population in streams, which helps prized native fish species thrive.
* Establishing forest buffers along water bodies provides a natural area that helps to filter polluted stormwater, dissipate flood energy and reduce erosion.
* Wetlands help filter pollutants and toxins from water and provide habitat for wildlife.
* Planting cover crops on agricultural lands helps maintain soil health, reduce erosion and prevent nutrient runoff from fields.
* Rain gardens can be especially useful in urban areas because they slow and filter stormwater runoff while also providing wildlife habitat, especially for pollinators.