

Watershed Governance: A Local Look

The Chesapeake Bay watershed partially encompasses six states and the District of Columbia. Each jurisdiction has a unique local government structure, which impacts their role in watershed restoration and conservation.

Jurisdiction	Delaware	District of Columbia	Maryland	New York	Pennsylvania	Virginia	West Virginia
Total Population	1.06 million	694,000	6.27 million	20.0 million	13.1 million	8.88 million	1.77 million
Total Number of Counties in Jurisdiction	3	1*	24**	62	67	95	55
Number of Counties Fully or Partially in the Watershed	3	1*	24	20	43	70	14
Total Number of Municipalities in Jurisdiction	10 Cities 44 Towns 3 Villages	1*	28 Cities 1 Independent City 123 Towns 5 Villages	62 Cities 933 Towns 555 Villages	57 Cities 956 Boroughs 1,546 Townships	38 Independent Cities 190 Towns	77 Cities 148 Towns 6 Villages
Number of Municipalities Fully or Partially in the Watershed	2 Cities 11 Towns 0 Villages	1*	28 Cities 1 Independent City 115 Towns 5 Villages	7 Cities 187 Towns 58 Villages	16 Cities 379 Boroughs 796 Townships	32 Independent Cities 98 Towns	6 Cities 15 Towns

*DC performs the functions of a county/municipality. **Baltimore City is both a county and a municipality.

Additional resources: [National Association of Counties – Counties 101](#), [National League of Cities – Cities 101](#).

Updated in June 2026.

Local Government Authority & Expenditures

Local government authority and expenditures play an important role in water resource management, but they can vary widely across the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Jurisdiction	Delaware	District of Columbia	Maryland	New York	Pennsylvania	Virginia	West Virginia
Local Government Authority	Dillon's Rule	N/A	Mixed Structure	Home Rule	Mixed Structure	Dillon's Rule	Dillon's Rule

States delegate authority to local governments through their state constitution, a state charter, or legislation. Under [Dillon's Rule](#), the state dictates local government structure, function, and fiscal organization. Under [Home Rule](#), local governments have more autonomy and are able to determine their own structure, function and fiscal organization. Some states have a mixed structure that falls between Dillon's Rule and Home Rule.

Jurisdiction	Delaware	District of Columbia	Maryland	New York	Pennsylvania	Virginia	West Virginia
Total Annual Local Government Expenditures	\$4.4 billion	\$25 billion	\$41 billion	\$250 billion	\$83 billion	\$52 billion	\$7 billion
Per Capita Local Gov. Expenditures	\$4,100	\$36,000	\$6,500	\$12,500	\$6,300	\$5,800	\$4,000
Local Gov. Spending on Stormwater (%)	8.4%	0.3%	3.9%	3.1%	2.4%	3.3%	1.9%
Local Gov. Spending on Wastewater (%)	9.8%	3.4%	7.6%	3.7%	7.6%	7.9%	8.6%

Data from: [Urban Institute – State and Local Expenditures](#). Expenditures are state-wide and not specific to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.