



Maryland's Approach for Healthy Watersheds Designation December 19, 2013

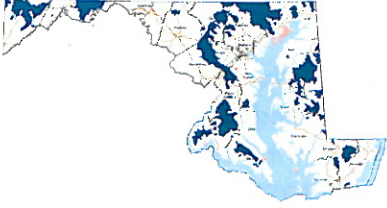
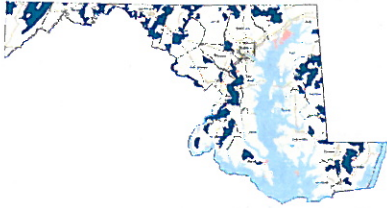


While other state and federal programs focus on restoring impaired waters, the Healthy Watersheds Initiative augments the watershed approach with proactive, holistic aquatic ecosystem conservation and protection. The Healthy Watersheds Initiative includes both assessment and management approaches that encourage states, local governments, watershed organizations, and others to take a strategic, systems approach to conserve healthy components of watersheds, and, therefore, avoid additional water quality impairments in the future. ~EPA

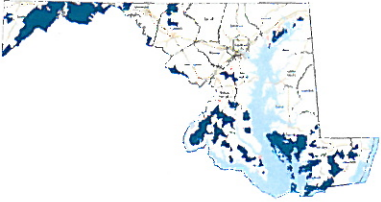

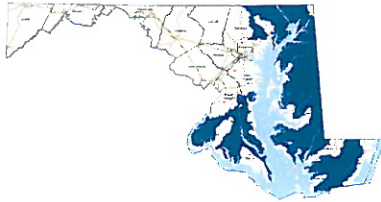
Maryland has launched a parallel effort to identify Maryland's Healthy Watersheds and direct resources to protect these watersheds. Initially, we identified several key watershed-based conservation priorities based on monitored and modeled measures of health. In addition, we designated certain stream segments and their drainages for regulatory protection based on various measures of stream health and condition. The datasets together constitute Maryland's Healthy Watersheds in a macro context. In the coming months, we will continue to reach out to our partners to trim our list using data and science in order to identify the "best of the best" for protection.

Next Steps

- Document the connections between healthy watershed protection and source-water protection
- Determine if a refined healthy watershed identification map would benefit state agency program implementation and coordination.
- Develop a plan for updating the "Surf Your Watershed" website as a way to improve public communication of healthy watershed condition, management needs and protection status.
- Collaborate with NGOs, such as The Nature Conservancy, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, and others, to coordination protection and communication efforts.
- Develop and implement communications to local communities:
 - guidelines to support integration of healthy watershed protection into local comprehensive plans
 - focus on what localities will lose if they develop healthy watershed "X"
 - focus on economic argument (protection is cheaper than restoration)
- Initiate interagency coordination to discuss the development of a Tier III antidegradation designation for highest quality waters and watersheds
- Continue interagency coordination for further development of the Biological Recovery Initiative, in partnership with EPA, to evaluate restoration priorities based on measures of recovery potential.
- Refine Maryland's land conservation tracking system in support of the NPS Landscape initiative.

Healthy Watersheds Definition: Tidal and non-tidal watersheds including those under regulatory anti-degradation protection and those with functioning habitats that support productive, diverse or unique populations of aquatic animals and plants that, collectively, provide the ecological services needed to protect downstream water resources.

<p><i>Tier II Watersheds:</i> Non-tidal watersheds, under regulatory anti-degradation protection, that exceed minimum applicable water quality criteria and standards. Currently, Tier II streams are identified according to fish and benthic indices of biotic integrity.</p>	
<p><i>Stronghold Watersheds:</i> Small, non-tidal watersheds with the largest populations of rare, threatened and endangered aquatic animals.</p>	
<p><i>Sentinel Site Watersheds:</i> Small, healthy nontidal watersheds that are used for long-term monitoring to detect changes from global climate change and from other natural phenomena.</p>	
<p><i>Priority Cold Water Conservation Areas:</i> Watersheds that support coldwater dependent species.</p>	
<p><i>Use Class 3 Watersheds:</i> Watersheds that support streams designated through regulation as Use Class 3 which sets criteria and standards to meet nontidal cold water goals.</p>	<p>Watershed delineation under development</p>

<p><i>High Priority Water Quality Protection Watersheds:</i> Highest ranking (top 20th percentile) small watersheds important for protecting water quality based on biophysical characteristics.</p>	
<p><i>High Priority Blue Infrastructure Watersheds:</i> Highest ranking small watersheds that support high quality coastal habitat, natural resources and critical fisheries spawning and nursery areas in tidal waters and near-shore areas.</p>	
<p><i>Priority Anadromous Spawning Watersheds:</i> Large watersheds that provide important spawning and nursery habitat for commercial and recreational anadromous fisheries.</p>	

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Chesapeake Bay Program Healthy Watersheds Goal Implementation Team:

http://www.chesapeakebay.net/groups/group/maintaining_healthy_watersheds_goal_implementation_team