Identifying and Tracking Healthy Watersheds in the Chesapeake Bay Region

State Identified Healthy Watersheds

West Virginia Healthy Watershed Criteria:
West Virginia does not have a state defined "healthy watersheds" program or definition. West Virginia’s antidegradation rule can be applied to help define this category of streams. West Virginia’s Tier 3 waters are known as “outstanding national resource waters.” These include waters in Federal Wilderness Areas, specifically designated federal waters, and high quality waters or naturally reproducing trout streams in state parks, national parks, and national forests. (Source: West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection)

Pennsylvania Healthy Watershed Criteria:
Water quality criteria are used to protect designated water uses, such as fish and aquatic life, recreation, and water supply. Designated or existing uses classified as Exceptional Value or High Quality were used as the basis for identifying Healthy Watersheds. (Source: Pennsylvania Water Quality Standards as defined in Title 25 Environmental Protection, Department of Environmental Protection, §93.4b – High Quality or Exceptional Value Waters)

New York Healthy Watershed Criteria:
The Waterbody Inventory/Priority Waterbodies List (WI/PWL) is an inventory of the state’s surface water quality. The category of "No Known Impact" represents "segments where monitoring data and information indicate that there are no use restrictions or other water quality impacts/issues." (Source: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Water, Bureau of Water Assessment and Management.

Virginia Healthy Watershed Criteria:
The goal of the Interactive Stream Assessment Resource (INSTAR) is to develop a complementary, synoptic, and geospatial database for fish and macroinvertebrate community composition and abundance at stream locations throughout the state, including larger 4th order or greater non-wadeable streams and rivers. INSTAR, and the extensive aquatic resources database on which it runs, supports a wide variety of stream assessment, management, and conservation activities aimed at restoring and protecting aquatic living resources throughout the Commonwealth. (Source: Virginia Commonwealth University, Center for Environmental Studies)

Maryland Healthy Watershed Criteria:
Tidal and non-tidal watersheds including those under regulatory antidegradation 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. Data layers include (from top to bottom): priority anadromous fisheries areas, stronghold watersheds, sentinel idle watersheds, priority cold water conservation areas, high priority water quality protection areas, high priority blue infrastructure watersheds, and Maryland Tier II catchments. (Source: Maryland Department of Natural Resources and Maryland Department of the Environment)

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Background:
The Chesapeake Bay Program is a unique regional partnership that has led and directed the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay since 1983. The Maintain Healthy Watersheds Goal Implementation Team within the Chesapeake Bay Program is charged with the following in the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement:

Goal: Sustain state identified healthy waters and watersheds, recognized for their high quality and/or high ecological value.
Outcome: 100% of state identified currently healthy waters and watersheds remain healthy.

In order to achieve this, 5 States of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed have individually identified their healthiest waters and watersheds for protection.