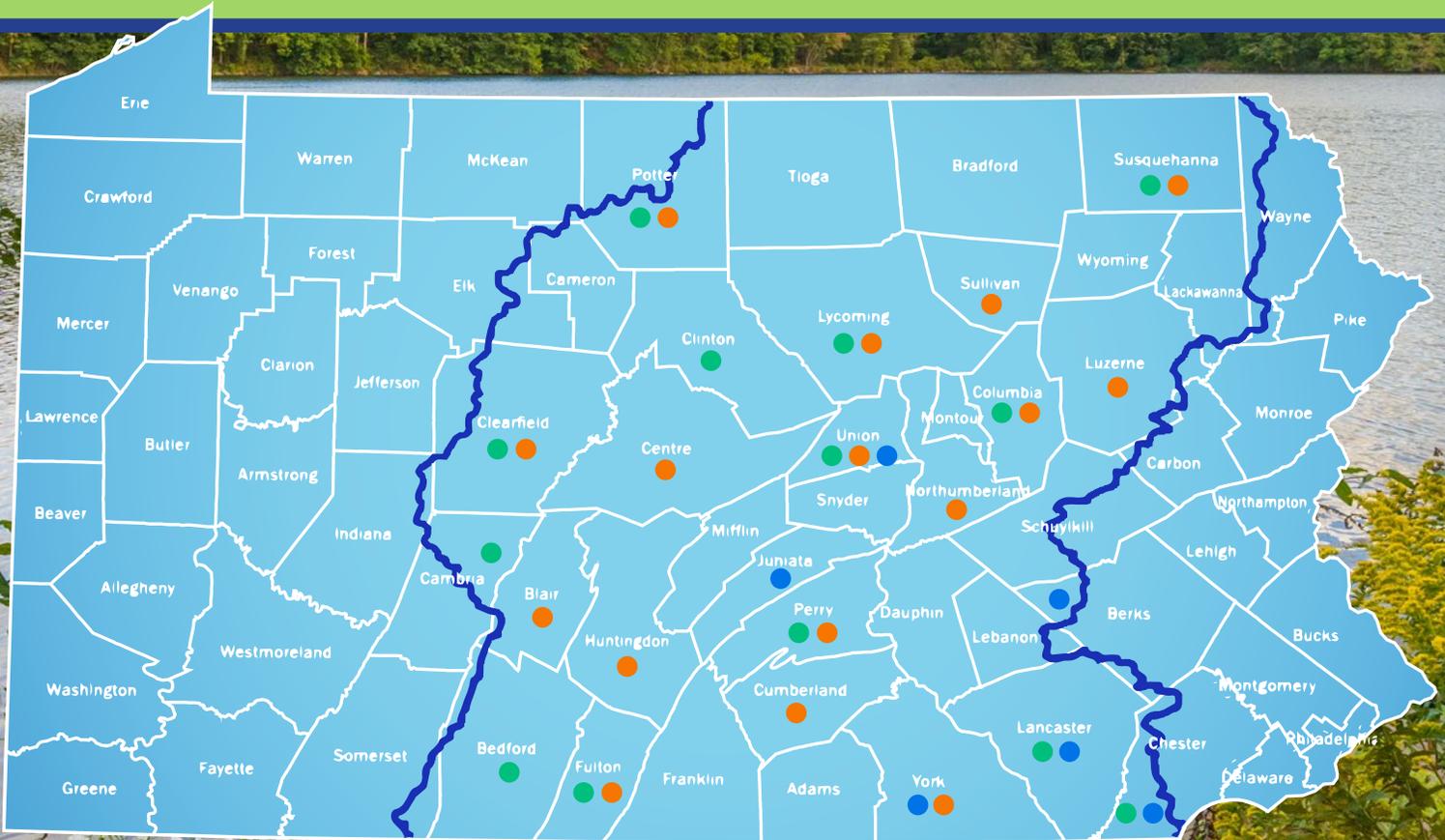




# COUNTYWIDE ACTION PLANS

## REPLICATING SUCCESS ACROSS THE WATERSHED

A cornerstone of Pennsylvania's Phase 3 WIP is communication: communication between the state and county partners, and also communication between counties. The goal of all this is to make sure good ideas that support clean water and reduce barriers to participation are shared across the watershed. Opportunities for collaboration, learning and networking come in many forms: workshops, webinars, newsletters and meetings. The results of this can be seen across the watershed, where successful programs are being replicated in dozens of counties. Three programs highlighted here are: Agricultural Equipment Rental, Riparian Rangers and Cover Crop Incentive Programs. These programs started in just one or two counties and, as word spread about their benefits, more counties have adopted them. Below is a map that pinpoints the counties that feature each of these programs.



### Agricultural Equipment Rental Program

Agricultural equipment rental programs are housed in county conservation districts. The programs make participating in no-till or cover crop programs affordable for farmers.



### Riparian Ranger Program

Riparian Rangers are volunteers who help take care of riparian forest buffers and provide maintenance during the growing season.



### Cover Crop Incentive Program

Cover Crop incentive programs offer technical assistance and funding to farmers for planting cover crops on their land.

### Agricultural Equipment Rental

Agricultural equipment rental programs have sprung up in Conservation Districts across the Chesapeake Bay watershed as a way to support farmers who are willing to try out no-till farming but do not have the necessary equipment. Districts typically rent: no-till drill, no-till corn planters, no-till seeders, and interseeders. Some programs also deliver the equipment to the farm, help set up the equipment, and pick it up when the job is done. Additional incentives may include offering the equipment at a reduced cost to farmers who also plant cover crops.

No-till farming is a way of growing crops or pasture from year to year without disturbing the soil through tillage. This technique increases the amount of water, organic matter, and nutrients in the soil. Leading to reduced soil erosion, healthier/resilient soil, and more efficient farm operations.



### Riparian Rangers

Riparian Rangers is an Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay project in Pennsylvania that started in 2019. The goal is to provide much-needed maintenance support to newly planted riparian forest buffers. Without it, newly planted buffers can struggle to thrive due to invasive species pressure, flood damage, animal browsing, and low tree survivorship. Riparian Rangers provide regular maintenance for tree plantings when landowners or the organizations that organized the plantings do not have the time, resources, or expertise to do it all themselves. When Riparian Rangers first started, it only addressed sites that the Alliance planted. However, there are numerous other organizations within the watershed that plant riparian buffers. In 2021, the Alliance began expanding the Riparian Rangers by adding regional groups called “Branches” to support sites of other buffer planting organizations.

The Riparian Rangers boost collective capacity and success by monitoring and tending to forest plantings monthly during their growing season. This extra care yields a higher tree survival rate and more effective restoration efforts. The end goal of this program is to ensure all riparian buffers within the Chesapeake Bay watershed have access to regular monitoring and maintenance for the first 3 years after their planting.



### Cover Crop Incentives

Cover crops are included in most countywide plans (CAPs) as part of Pennsylvania’s Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan. Cover crops offer benefits to the farmer while also reducing water pollution. Increasing their use helps counties meet their CAP goals, and cover crop incentive programs are helping them do just that. These programs pay farmers to use cover crops on their fields once the season’s harvest is complete. Participating farmers are paid by the acre to plant cover crops on their land instead of leaving it bare.

Cumberland County’s cover crop incentive program has become a model for other Pennsylvania counties and farmers looking to improve soil health and reduce polluted agricultural runoff. The Cumberland County Conservation District’s (CCCD) cover crop program started in 2007 and provides funding and technical assistance. The CCCD has advised several other counties looking to start their own cover crop incentive program, sharing tips and advice on how to get started.

