

A Local Government Guide to the Chesapeake Bay

PRESERVING LOCAL CHARACTER AND LANDSCAPES

A Local Government Guide to the Chesapeake Bay is a seven-module series created to support decision making by local officials. As a local leader, your decisions set the course for your community. Your actions determine the health and vitality of your jurisdiction, as well as that of local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay. You can achieve win-win outcomes by prioritizing local economic development, infrastructure resiliency, public health, and education while also protecting your environment. This fact sheet accompanies a module about land conservation, including tools that you can use to preserve your community's character.

YOUR LAND

You and your community make decisions about local land use that impact the character of your local landscapes, quality of life, and the future of your home. Your decisions may also affect the whole region.



The value of agricultural products in the Chesapeake Bay watershed each year is over **\$10 billion**¹, its forests provide **\$24 billion** annually in ecological benefits (like carbon dioxide removal and flood control)², and the outdoor recreation industry that relies on forests and open space employed over **730,000** people in the watershed states³.



Natural landscapes, like wetlands and forests, filter pollutants from water and air. Trees provide shade to mitigate heat islands. Lastly, trees and open space boost your community's wellbeing by reducing mental fatigue and aggression, encouraging exercise, and bringing people together outdoors.



One acre of forest produces **36 times** less runoff than one acre of parking lot⁴. The reduced runoff lowers the risk of damage to community infrastructure through flooding. These benefits can be gained through the conservation of natural landscapes and creation of green infrastructure in your community.



Access to trees and nature improves academic performance, creativity and problem solving, focus and engagement, enthusiasm for learning, and impulse control⁵.

¹[US Department of Agriculture](#)

²[The State of Chesapeake Forests](#)

³[The Bureau of Economic Analysis](#)

⁴[PennState Extension](#)

⁵[Trees and Schools](#)

WHAT'S IN YOUR TOOLBOX?

Learn more about the tools below on slides 20-26 (including case studies) or in the [Chesapeake Bay Trust Conservation Land-Use Policy Toolkit](#).

Comprehensive Planning
Zoning Ordinances
Subdivision Ordinances
Impact Fees

Urban Service Boundaries
Conservation Easements
Purchase of Development Rights
Transfer of Development Rights



Photos by W. Parson and M. Rath (Chesapeake Bay Program)

PROTECT YOUR COMMUNITY

WHAT YOU CAN DO



Explore the data on land use and the rate at which it is changing for your community. Use the data to identify vulnerable areas and prioritize your conservation efforts.



Share this toolkit with your planning commission or department and discuss the tools that your community can use to plan for the future.



Support conservation actions, such as incorporating appropriate regulatory and voluntary tools, during your community's next comprehensive planning activity.

A FEW RESOURCES

Beyond this module, here are a few other resources you may find useful.

Chesapeake Bay Trust's Conservation Land-Use Policy Toolkit

<http://bit.ly/LandUseToolkit>

Learn about tools local governments can use to slow the conversion of farmland, forestland, and wetlands.

American Farmland Trust's Farms Under Threat

<http://bit.ly/FarmsUnderThreat>

Read how to plan for and protect agricultural lands.

Chesapeake Bay Program's Accounting for Growth

<http://bit.ly/AccountingForGrowth>

Learn about projected population growth and what that means for your jurisdiction.

USGS's Chesapeake Bay Phase 6 Land Use Viewer

<http://bit.ly/LandUseViewer>

Explore high-resolution land cover data.

EPA's EnviroAtlas

<https://www.epa.gov/enviroatlas>

Interact with geospatial data, tools, and resources related to ecosystem services, their stressors, and human health to help inform policy and planning decisions.

Chesapeake Bay Program's Chesapeake Bay Watershed Data Dashboard

<https://gis.chesapeakebay.net/wip/dashboard/>

Along the top of the window, select the "Land Policy & Conservation" tab to explore additional resources.