

Chesapeake Bay Program | Indicator Analysis and Methods Document
Public Access | Updated April 23, 2021

Indicator Title: [Public Access Sites](#)

Relevant Outcome(s): [Public Access Site Development Outcome](#)

Relevant Goal(s): [Public Access](#)

Location within Framework (i.e., Influencing Factor, Output or Performance): [Performance](#)

A. Data Set and Source

(1) Describe the data set. What parameters are measured? What parameters are obtained by calculation? For what purpose(s) are the data used?
[Number of public access sites in each state in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.](#)

(2) List the source(s) of the data set, the custodian of the source data, and the relevant contact at the Chesapeake Bay Program.

First Name	Last Name	Agency/Organization	Email Address:
Scott	Bollinger	PA Fish and Boat Commission	scbollinge@pa.gov
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Andy	Fitch	U S Geological Survey – Chesapeake Bay Office	afitch@chesapeakebay.net
Lisa	Gutierrez	MD Department of Natural Resources	lisa.gutierrez@maryland.gov
Mark	Hohengasser	NY State Parks	Mark.Hohengasser@oprhp.state.ny.us
Jackie	Kramer	National Park Service- John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail	Jackie_kramer@nps.gov

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- Chesapeake Bay Program Contact (name, email address, phone number): Jackie Kramer, Jackie_Kramer@nps.gov, 717-252-0229 ext. 4 or 410-271-8731 (cell)

(3) Please provide a link to the location of the data set. Are metadata, data-dictionaries and embedded definitions included?

- Data/metadata is available via the “Download Data” link provided at: <https://www.chesapeakeprogress.com/engaged-communities/public-access-site-development>

- Definitions, methods, and supporting materials are documented in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Public Access Plan. This plan is available at: <https://www.nps.gov/chba/learn/news/public-access.htm>.

B. Temporal Considerations

- (4) Data collection date(s): January 2020 – December 2020
- (5) Planned update frequency (e.g., annual, biannual, etc.):
- Source Data: annual
 - Indicator: annual
- (6) Date (month and year) next data set is expected to be available for reporting: February 2022

C. Spatial Considerations

- (7) What is the ideal level of spatial aggregation (e.g., watershed-wide, river basin, state, county, hydrologic unit code)? Watershed-wide
- (8) Is there geographic (GIS) data associated with this data set? If so, indicate its format (e.g., point, line polygon). Data is in point format.
- (9) Are there geographic areas that are missing data? If so, list the areas.
NY and DE confirmed they had no new sites in 2020. Washington D.C. and WV did not respond.
- (10) Please submit any appropriate examples of how this information has been mapped or otherwise portrayed geographically in the past.
The data is mapped and can be seen on the Bay Program web site at: (data is current through 2019) <https://www.chesapeakeprogress.com/engaged-communities/public-access-site-development>

D. Communicating the Data

- (11) What is the goal, target, threshold or expected outcome for this indicator? How was it established?
The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement established a watershed-wide public access goal to “By 2025, add 300 new public access sites, with a strong emphasis on providing opportunities for boating, swimming and fishing, where feasible.”
- (12) What is the current status in relation to the goal, target, threshold or expected outcome?

In 2020, 12 new public access sites were opened to the public, marking a total of 206 sites opened since the baseline year in 2010. These cumulative sites represent 69% completion of the goal. In addition, while the number of new access sites is important, more emphasis is now also on the quality of the sites and the types of access that can be provided. Our goal is not just sites but more new site users so that we can build on the number of conservation stewards in the watershed. As a result, more data was requested from states in 2018 as the Public Access Workgroup began to incorporate quality of sites into outcome attainment. Though not currently included in the indicator data, this information is useful for assessing progress towards the outcome and can be found through the below state-held websites:

Pennsylvania: <https://www.fishandboat.com/Pages/default.aspx>

Virginia: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/vopmapper>

Maryland: <https://dnr.maryland.gov/boating/pages/water-access/boatramps.aspx>

New York: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7832.html>

West Virginia: https://www.wvdnr.gov/fishing/public_access.asp?county=all&type=all

Washington, DC: <https://dpr.dc.gov/page/parks-and-recreation-facilities>

Delaware: <https://dnrec.alpha.delaware.gov/fish-wildlife/fishing/access/>

(13) Has a new goal, target, threshold or expected outcome been established since the last reporting period? Why?

No. However, we are looking at measuring quality of sites in addition to counting number of sites added.

(14) Has the methodology of data collection or analysis changed since the last reporting period? How? Why? No.

(15) What is the long-term data trend (since the start of data collection)?

In order to meet the 300-site goal, an average of 20 new public access sites per year in the watershed are needed. The trend since we began the annual data count in 2011 has been an average of 20.6 sites per year. However, based on the opportunistic nature of public access site development, the lack of dependable funding for new access projects and the trends of public access development from the past decade, variation between the numbers of additional sites developed each year is anticipated and we cannot rely on past trends to indicate future trajectory.

(16) What change(s) does the most recent data show compared to the last reporting period? To what do you attribute the change? Is this actual cause or educated speculation?

In 2019, a total of 18 new public access sites were reported. This year's call for data reported 12 new public access sites. That number is somewhat smaller than

previous years (for example, 23 new sites were opened in 2018). However, the variation in the number of sites developed is to be expected because of the lack of dependable funding. Some of our sources mentioned that the development of new public access sites was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

(17) What is the key story told by this indicator?

This indicator tells us the number of existing public access sites to the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, and documents progress towards the creation of new sites. Physical access to open space and waterways can improve public health and quality of life. Increasing public access for our citizens fosters connections with our local resources and supports more engagement in stewardship and conservation efforts.

E. Adaptive Management

(18) What factors influence progress toward the goal, target, threshold or expected outcome?

Development of public access is often opportunistic when a site manager, a good site, and funding all come together. Funding is generally tied into agency budgets at the federal, state, or local level and this can vary greatly from one year to the next. One of the key issues in meeting the access goal is consistent funding. Thus, there will likely be major variations between one year and the next in the number of new public access sites opened. To reach the goal the hope is that an average of 20 new sites will be opened each year. COVID-19 may have impacted development for part of 2020. Some states and local governments are focusing on maintenance of and upgrades to existing sites. COVID-19, age of infra-structure, climate change and budgets were all cited as the basis for this focus.

(19) What are the current gaps in existing management efforts? None

(20) What are the current overlaps in existing management efforts? None

(21) According to the management strategy written for the outcome associated with this indicator, how will we (a) assess our performance in making progress toward the goal, target, threshold or expected outcome, and (b) ensure the adaptive management of our work?

Our performance is assessed each year when we inventory all new public access sites opened in the watershed. We will continue to gauge progress over the average of sites added over several consecutive years, in relation to the anticipated average of 20 new sites annually. New access is a function of the ability of our partners, at both the governmental and non-governmental level, to be able to develop new access sites. We can adapt our strategy only to the extent that we look for and work with our partners in developing new sites as opportunities arise.

F. Analysis and Interpretation

Please provide appropriate references and location(s) of documentation if hard to find.

(22) What method is used to transform raw data into the information presented in this indicator? Please cite methods and/or modeling programs.

None - raw number of sites developed is used as the indicator.

(23) Is the method used to transform raw data into the information presented in this indicator accepted as scientifically sound? If not, what are its limitations? N/A

(24) How well does the indicator represent the environmental condition being assessed? Accurate representation - raw number of sites.

(25) Are there established reference points, thresholds, ranges or values for this indicator that unambiguously reflect the desired state of the environment? N/A

(26) How far can the data be extrapolated? Have appropriate statistical methods been used to generalize or portray data beyond the time or spatial locations where measurements were made (e.g., statistical survey inference, no generalization is possible)? N/A

G. Quality

Please provide appropriate references and location(s) of documentation if hard to find.

(27) Were the data collected and processed according to a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved Quality Assurance Project Plan? If so, please provide a link to the QAPP and indicate when the plan was last reviewed and approved. **If not, please complete questions 28-30. No.**

(28) *If applicable:* Are the sampling, analytical and data processing procedures accepted as scientifically and technically valid? N/A

(29) *If applicable:* What documentation describes the sampling and analytical procedures used?

All definitions associated with this Public Access tracking effort and details on the geographic areas included are provided in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Public Access Plan: <https://www.nps.gov/chba/learn/news/public-access.htm>.

(30) *If applicable:* To what extent are procedures for quality assurance and quality control of the data documented and accessible? N/A

(31) Are descriptions of the study design clear, complete and sufficient to enable the study to be reproduced? Yes.

(32) Were the sampling, analytical and data processing procedures performed consistently throughout the data record?

- Data collection methods changed in 2010/2011 with the establishment of the new Public Access Indicator goal to “increase public access to the Bay and its tributaries by adding 300 new public access sites by 2025.”
- Based on the new goal, the geographic area covered has been greatly expanded to include stream order 5 and larger streams in the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- Previous tracking efforts in support of the Chesapeake 2000 commitment were coordinated through the Chesapeake Bay Program each year through a simple data-call process. Representatives from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia (the states included in the process at that time) would annually report the number of public access sites that were developed in their jurisdictions to the Chesapeake Bay Program. It should be noted that the area inventoried included only the tidal portion of the Bay and its Tributaries in VA and MD and just the main stem of the Susquehanna in PA. The cumulative sum of baseline data and annual updates from state partners were reported as the number of public access sites within the covered area.
- The Chesapeake Bay Program’s Public Access Workgroup, a partnership of all Chesapeake Bay states, the District of Columbia, federal agencies, and relevant nonprofit partners with National Park Service leadership, will continue to coordinate public access tracking updates. In the new tracking process, designated state agency staff will use either a spread sheet or a simple, on-line system to input the geographic locations of newly developed access sites, based on the established definitions of “new” and “public access.” Public access program staff will also use this process, to provide a few fields of information (name, water body, access type, ownership, etc.) on each new site. Additional information, such as project cost, could also be collected if deemed necessary.
- This updated tracking process will be an improvement over past efforts, because it gathers the location of new sites via the GPS coordinates on the spreadsheet or directly on an interactive map and provides a significantly wider range of information. As new sites are developed, they will be tracked to meet the 2014 Agreement goal while allowing the public to follow the progress. New tracking methods have also expanded the study area to include public access sites in Delaware, New York, and West Virginia as well as greatly expanded the area covered in MD, PA and VA. The collaborative process used to establish the new tracking methods also clarified tracking definitions and further defined the study area.
- More data was requested from states in 2018 as the Public Access Workgroup began to incorporate quality of sites into measures as a result of the SRS adaptive management process. This is reflected in the current workplan and management strategy.

- 2020 didn't add new criteria and used the 2019 form so the collection method was the same.

(33) If data sets from two or more sources have been merged, are the sampling designs, methods and results comparable? If not, what are the limitations? N/A

(34) Are levels of uncertainty available for the indicator and/or the underlying data set? If so, do the uncertainty and variability impact the conclusions drawn from the data or the utility of the indicator? N/A

(35) For chemical data reporting: How are data below the MDL reported (i.e., reported as 0, censored, or as < MDL)? If parameter substitutions are made (e.g., using orthophosphate instead of total phosphorus), how are data normalized? How does this impact the indicator? N/A

(36) Are there noteworthy limitations or gaps in the data record? No.

H. Additional Information (*Optional*)

(37) Please provide any further information you believe is necessary to aid in communication and prevent any potential misrepresentation of this indicator. N/A