

Chesapeake Bay Program | Indicator Analysis and Methods Document
Public Access Updated March 13th, 2020

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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Erik	Zlokovitz	MD Department of Natural Resources-Fishing and Boating Services	Eric.zlokovitz@maryland.gov

- Chesapeake Bay Program Contact: 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: <http://www.chesapeakeprogress.com/engaged-communities/public-access>.
- 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 2019 – December 2019
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 2021

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, PA and WV confirmed they had no new sites in 2019. Washington D.C. 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)
[http://www.chesapeakeprogress.com/engaged-communities/public-access.](http://www.chesapeakeprogress.com/engaged-communities/public-access)

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 2019, 18 new public access sites were opened to the public, marking a total of 194 sites opened since the baseline year in 2010. These cumulative sites represent 65% completion of the goal.

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 21.6 sites per year. In that time frame there have only been four years when we had less than 20 new sites developed and three of those years were between 2011 and 2014 with 15 sites in 2011, 18 sites in 2012, and 17 sites in 2014. In 2013, we had a high of 36 new sites. Between 2015 and 2018 we had a low of 21 sites in 2017 and a high of 24 sites in 2016. The 18 sites in 2019 is the first time in five years that we have seen less than 20 new public access sites opened. Thus, the long-term data trend, to date, has been positive and in excess of the needed 20 sites per year.

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?

A total of 1,333 existing public access sites (including baseline sites) were identified as providing access to the Chesapeake Bay and its streams (fifth-order and higher) as of December 31, 2019.

In 2019, 18 new sites were added, 7 in MD, 1 in DE and 10 in VA. This is a decrease from last year's total of 23 new public access sites. Annual variation is expected based on partner ability to fund and develop sites in any given year. For example, state agencies reported less available funding for new access sites and the need to use available funds to maintain existing sites during the most recent data collection cycle. However, it should be noted that with the budget reductions we are seeing in our partner agencies as a result of COVID-19, we could see a downward trend in the development of new public access sites until the economy recovers.

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.

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.
- Beginning in 2018 more data was requested from states as the Public Access Workgroup began to incorporate quality of sites into measures as a result of the SRS adaptive management process. Examples of additional data requested to determine site quality were the number and type of parking spaces, the type of boat launch, and whether or not the site as ADA accessible. This is reflected in the current [Logic & Action Plan](#) and [Management Strategy](#).

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*)

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