How-To Guide to Developing and Submitting Nonpoint Source (NPS) Success Stories

The purpose of this document is to provide basic descriptions of Nonpoint Source (NPS) Success Story elements; graphic, image, and data standards; and expectations for state NPS program staff, US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regional NPS coordinators, and the EPA Headquarters (HQ) Success Story lead throughout the development, review, and publishing process.

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Section 1. Success Story Introduction and Background

Clean Water Act (CWA) Section (§) 319 nonpoint source pollution (NPS) Success Stories highlight waterbodies identified by states as being primarily nonpoint source-impaired or threatened and having achieved documented water quality improvements. Projects described in Success Stories have received funding from CWA §319 and/or other funding sources dedicated to addressing NPS impairments. These stories describe innovative strategies used to reduce NPS pollution, the growth of partnerships, and a diversity of funding sources.

Success Stories offer an opportunity for state NPS programs to highlight where their restoration efforts have resulted in water quality improvements in NPS-impaired waterbodies. Success Story development also allows EPA to track and report the number of NPS-impaired waterbodies that have been partially or fully restored through NPS program work – which is a key measure for communicating to stakeholders how NPS restoration efforts are improving water quality across the nation. See the Types of Success Stories page for detailed and current descriptions of the different types of NPS Success Stories.

Section 2. Success Story Elements

Each Success Story follows a consistent format and includes the following elements: Abstract, Water Quality Challenge, Story Highlights, Results, and Partners and Funding. This section describes the information required and level of detail expected in each Success Story element. State Success Story authors should work with their EPA regional NPS contact or EPA HQ Success Story lead to address any questions related to Success Story element requirements.

Abstract (one paragraph – limit 980 characters)

Each Success Story Abstract includes an overview that describes: the water quality problem, actions taken to address the problem, and whether the waterbody improved or was removed from Category 4 or 5 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) section 303(d) list of impaired waters.

Note: If you are choosing to forgo the flexible/optional narrative information in other Story elements (described later in this section), it is very important to highlight what the reader should know about this Success Story in the Abstract.

Abstract Example #1 (McCutcheon Creek Success Story – Tennessee):

Abstract	Water Quality	Highlights	Partners & Funding

Water Body Improved

McCutcheon Creek was added to Tennessee's Clean Water Act (CWA) section 303(d) list in 2002 for siltation after a bioreconnaissance survey in 1999 yielded ambiguous results. Multiple nongovernmental organizations, municipalities, and a private industry partnered to assess the watershed and mitigate pollutant sources. Using private donations of time and money, as well as funding from CWA section 319 and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture's (TDA's) Agricultural Resources Conservation Fund (ARCF), the habitat improved. After a 2019 survey indicated a healthy habitat, all 12.27 miles of McCutcheon Creek were delisted for siltation/sedimentation on Tennessee's 2022 List of Impaired and Threatened Waters.

Abstract Example #2 (Turtle Creek Success Story – Pennsylvania)

Abstract	Water Quality	Highlights	Partners & Funding

Water Body Improved

In 2004, excess sediment from eroding streambanks, over-widened channels, livestock access, and lack of tree canopy caused the impairment of Pennsylvania's Turtle Creek. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) added 8.79 miles of stream to the state's 2004 Clean Water Act (CWA) section 303(d) list of impaired waters. From 2012 through 2020, the Northcentral Stream Restoration Partnership worked with 14 landowners along 5.3 miles of Turtle Creek. Together, they implemented best management practices (BMPs) including streambank fencing, streambank stabilization, and riparian buffers. As a result of the partnership and landowners' efforts, water quality and aquatic habitat have significantly improved.

Water Quality (narrative text field - includes Water Quality Challenge and Results)

The Water Quality section includes two elements: Water Quality Challenge (formerly Problem) and Results. This section is comprised of a table detailing basic waterbody information and CWA section 303(d) history, as well as narrative fields that may be used to provide additional information for the Water Quality Challenge and Results elements.

The following waterbody information is auto filled in the final Success Story layout from data entered by the user in the Waterbody Information and Waterbody Listing fields in the Grants Reporting and Tracking System (GRTS) Success Story entry:

- Waterbody Name
- Waterbody ID (with ATTAINS link)
- Pollutant(s) Addressed
- Source(s) of Impairment
- Designated Use(s)
- Year Listed/Delisted (if applicable)
- TMDL(s) associated with the waterbody

Water Quality Challenge (narrative text field – one paragraph):

This narrative field allows the Success Story author to include information beyond what is displayed in Waterbody Information table described above.

This text field should include, at a minimum:

a. A description of the goal or water quality standard that should be achieved to address the water quality problem (e.g., rolling 7-day maximum average of 64°F).

Additional information also may be included based on availability and relevance to the Story, such as:

a. The location of the waterbody and geographic connection with other streams/rivers.
b. Any notable landmarks (e.g., nearby cities, waterbodies) that will provide the reader with geographic context for the Success Story.
c. Description of the surrounding watershed and land use in the problem area and how activities in the watershed contributed to the NPS issue.
d. Subcategory of NPS pollution (e.g., agriculture, cattle with access to streams).
e. A description of any major study or water quality monitoring effort that documented the NPS problem. If data are available, include monitoring results that demonstrate the water quality problem and/or informed a Category 5 CWA section 303(d) impairment listing of the waterbody(s). If segment-specific data were not collected, explain why the segment was listed as impaired (e.g., adjacent streams in the watershed were impaired because of turbidity from logging; or a visual survey was performed and this segment was listed based on best professional judgement). Please also consider the date and geographic area the data were collected and include this information as available.
f. Any additional supporting information describing the water quality challenge/impairment, or detail on particular land use, climate, or other challenges that influenced NPS management in the watershed/waterbody.

Please include citations indicating where you obtained any water quality, land use, or other data reported and see the "Success Story Development, Quality Assurance (QA), and Review Expectations" section of this document for data QA expectations.

Waterbody Information Data Table and Water Quality Challenge Narrative Example #1
(McCutcheon Creek Success Story – Tennessee):

Abstract	Water Quality	Highlights	Partners & Funding

Waterbody Information

Waterbody(s)	MCCUTCHEON CREEK (TN06040003034_0300)
Pollutant(s)	Sedimentation-Siltation
Source(s) of Impairment	Agriculture, Construction, Urban Runoff/Stormwater
Designated Use(s)	Agricultural, Fish, Shellfish, and Wildlife Protection and Propagation, Recreation, Fish and Aquatic Life
Year Listed / Delisted	2002 / 2022
TMDL(s)	Yes (2005)

Note: After the waterbody in this Story was listed as impaired for sedimentation-siltation on the CWA section 303(d) list of impaired waters, the listing cause/rational changed multiple times before the waterbody was ultimately determined to be restored (i.e., water quality standards for sedimentation-siltation for the noted designated use(s) were met). This Story used the Water Quality Challenge element to explain this history and give the reader a comprehensive understanding of the ecological, land use, and regulatory history that impacted this waterbody's improvement and eventual restoration.

Water Quality Challenge

McCutcheon Creek is in the Rutherford Creek Upper Watershed (TN0604000203) in Maury and Williamson counties, Tennessee. The headwaters of McCutcheon Creek are near the city of Spring Hill, Tennessee, which is one of the Top 10 fastest-growing cities in the nation, according to U.S. Census Bureau 2020–2021 data. These data also show that Williamson County is experiencing the most rapid growth in Tennessee. Land use along McCutcheon Creek is evolving quickly from mostly agrarian to densely urban and residential, which is putting significant stress on the stream.

In October 1999, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) performed a bioreconnaissance survey (biorecon or BR) which yielded an ambiguous result with a score of 9. (A biorecon is a screening tool used by TDEC to provide a quick evaluation of the relative health of the biological community. Biorecon scores of 5 to 9 indicate additional information is needed to determine impairment.) A habitat assessment conducted on McCutcheon Creek provided a habitat score of 119. Although a passing score for McCutcheon Creek for that time of year was 114, TDEC field staff noted the presence of sand and silt and high levels of turbidity. Based on these observations, the stream was added to Tennessee's Clean Water Act (CWA) section 303(d) list in 2002 for siltation due to land development and urban runoff/storm sewers. A subsequent evaluation in 2003 indicated a slight decline, with a habitat score of 111. In 2010, the habitat score indicated improvement (score of 132); however, due to rapid urbanization in the watershed, TDEC decided to continue surveillance prior to delisting the stream. In 2018, the sources of pollution were updated to site clearance (land development or redevelopment) and grazing in riparian or shoreline zones.

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Waterbody Information Data Table and Water Quality Challenge Narrative Example #2
(Spring Creek Success Story – Virginia):

Abstract	Water Quality	Highlights	Partners & Funding

Waterbody Information

Waterbody(s)	SPRING CREEK (VAP-J02R_SPA01A02)
Pollutant(s)	Pathogens (E. coli)
Source(s) of Impairment	Agriculture, Other NPS Pollution, Onsite Waste Disposal Systems
Designated Use(s)	Recreation
Year Listed / Delisted	1998 / 2020
TMDL(s)	Y (2004)

Water Quality Challenge

Spring Creek is part of the James River basin (U.S. Geological Survey Hydrologic Unit Code 02080207) and the Appomattox River basin. Prior to the waterbody being listed on the CWA 303(d) list of impaired waters, water quality samples were collected under DEQ's ambient water quality monitoring program. Data at the monitoring site 2-SPA001.46 showed an exceedance rate of two out of 12 (16.7%) during the 2016 assessment cycle and two out of 17 (12%) in the 2018 assessment cycle. When originally listed in 1998, the violation rate was 11%, which exceeded the no greater than 10% exceedances water quality standard for E. coli bacteria.

The total watershed consists of approximately 137,100 acres; Spring Creek comprises 22,000 acres, with woodland as the primary land use (14,327 acres, or 68% of the total), followed by pasture (5,168 acres, or 21% of the total). Other land uses include barren (4%), wetland (3%), cropland (3%), and residential and commercial land (1%).

The Water Quality Challenge element of this Story provides information on the ambient water quality monitoring program and results that led to the waterbody being listed on the CWA section 303(d) list of impaired waters. Understanding this starting point helps the reader to better understand the water quality improvement that occurred. Additionally, the details on the watershed size and land use provide important context on the NPS stressors influencing water quality in Spring Creek.

Results (narrative text field – one paragraph)

Like the Water Quality Challenge element, the Results element also expands beyond the basic information included in the Waterbody Information table. Success Story authors are encouraged to include charts, graphs, or other visual figures to demonstrate water quality improvement/restoration of the previously impaired waterbody(s) and use the narrative Results section to expand on this information.

This section should require, at a minimum:

a. Data demonstrating water quality or ecological improvement. This data may be provided in the form of graphs, charts, or other visual figures or a narrative description (figures strongly encouraged).
b. Any narrative text necessary to understand charts, graphs, or other visual figures.

Additional information also may be included based on availability and relevance to the Story, such as:

a. The water quality goals that were achieved due to the work described in the Story. Refer to any charts, graphs, or other figures showcasing water quality monitoring data that demonstrates water quality improvement/restoration. Please consider:
   i. Where the data were collected;
   ii. When the data were collected; and
   iii. Any pollutant load reductions achieved (e.g., nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment).

   Tip: Provide a URL link to additional resources if available. It can be helpful to provide a data source though a URL link or attachment where EPA can obtain more information about the monitoring data used to determine whether the waterbody is meeting water quality standards for its identified designated uses.

b. If the waterbody is still listed on the CWA section 303(d) list, note when the state expects to delist the waterbody from Category 4 or 5 (if applicable).

   Note: EPA may count this waterbody as being "partially or fully restored" for Strategic Plan purposes, even if the waterbody has not officially been removed from Category 4 or 5 of the CWA section 303(d) list, if the story demonstrates that actual restoration has occurred and the state has nominated that the waterbody be delisted in the next CWA section 303(d) cycle. There must be documentation that the state intends to "delist" the waterbody (i.e., draft Integrated Report). It is not sufficient to simply assume that restoration will have occurred by the next CWA section 303(d) list cycle.

c. Load reductions in other pollutants that indicate additional progress.
d. New ordinances or laws put into place as a result of the NPS management efforts.

Results Narrative and Data Image Example #1 (Tappahanna Ditch Success Story – Delaware):

Results

Bacteria levels have decreased in response to the more than 10 years of water quality protection and restoration efforts in the Tappahanna Ditch-Choptank watershed. DNREC collected monitoring data at STORET Station 207081 in Tappahanna Ditch between January 2012 and December 2016 (Figure 2). Because the 2018 geomean of 72 cfu/100 mL was well below Delaware's freshwater bacteria water quality standard of 100 cfu/100 mL, DNREC removed the 7.5-mile segment of Tappahanna Ditch (DE-110-001) from the state's list of impaired waters in 2018 per its Assessment and Listing Methodology. The 2018 Integrated Report shows the segment continues to meet the applicable water quality standards for bacteria due to ongoing restoration efforts in the watershed.

Note: This example was adapted from the original Tappahanna Ditch Success Story and shows how data images and the optional narrative section can work together. In this case, Figure 2 demonstrates multiple years of monitoring data, and the narrative section provides additional context on monitoring locations, water quality standards, and delisting criteria and notes that work continues in the watershed.
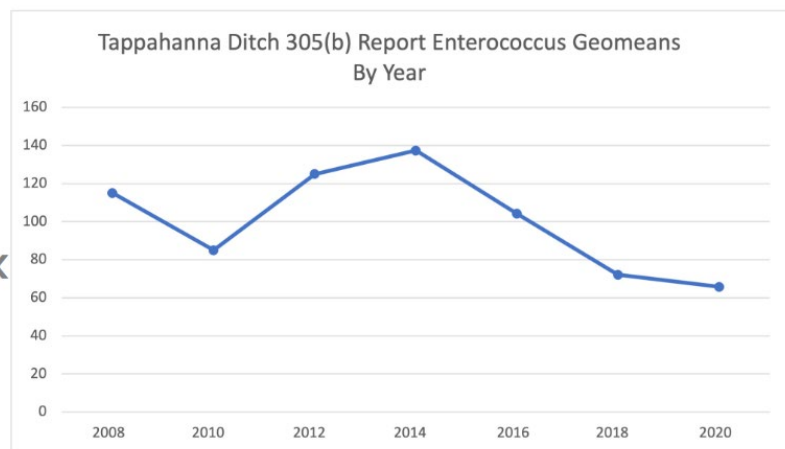
Figure 2: Tappahanna Ditch Enterococcus Geomean by Year

Results Narrative and Data Image Example #2 (Turtle Creek Success Story – Pennsylvania):

Results

Water quality has improved. The stream channel stabilization and floodplain reconnection work eliminated vertical, eroded banks while promoting the flushing of fine sediments from the channel substrate. Stream reaches that had been widened over time by cattle access were narrowed using habitat structures, thereby improving sediment transport, lowering thermal gain, raising dissolved oxygen, and eliminating excessive algal mats. Electrofishing survey data from one stream reach site shows the number of lithophilic fish (fish species that need clean gravels to spawn) dra¬matically increased after restoration (Figure 3). Index of biological integrity (IBI) scores and habitat scores also increased between 2014 and 2018 at multiple monitoring sites (Figures 4 and 5). By 2018, habitat scores, representing 1.5 miles of stabilization, reached attaining status due to the changes in substrate, bank stability, and increased vegetation.

Note: This Story uses multiple types of data to demonstrate water quality improvement for a pollutant in a waterbody that is still listed as impaired on the CWA section 303(d) list. The narrative provides descriptions of additional habitat and ecological improvements that may not be fully captured by the monitoring data alone.
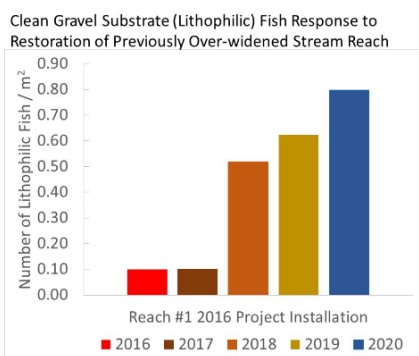

Clean Gravel Substrate (Lithophilic) Fish Response to Restoration of Previously Over-widened Stream Reach

Figure 3. Electrofishing survey data conducted shows number of lithophilic fish increased after restoration.
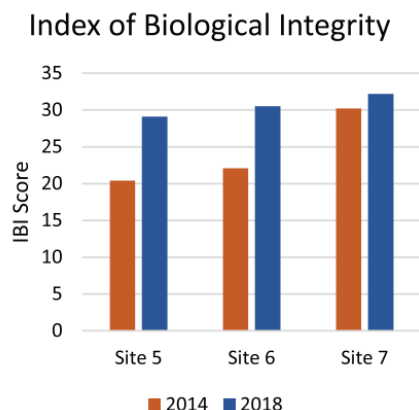

Index of Biological Integrity

Figure 4. Turtle Creek IBI scores increased between 2014 and 2018 at multiple sites.

Project Highlights (one-two paragraphs)

This element includes a summary of the NPS management projects that contributed to water quality improvement/restoration and is comprised of a data table detailing the Best Management Practices (BMPs) implemented and a narrative text field. The BMP table is automatically populated in the final Success Story layout with the BMP data entered into the Success Story builder in GRTS. The narrative text field in this section is available for the Success Story author to provide any additional information that is not captured in the BMP table.

This section should include, at a minimum:

a. BMP Table (automatically populated with data from the BMP table in the Success Story builder). This table lists BMP types that were implemented to address the causes of pollution identified in the Water Quality section and led to the observed water quality improvements. This table also includes fields to indicate the quantity/number of BMPs installed and any additional comments. Users are encouraged to fill out the BMP table in the Success Story builder in GRTS as completely as possible.

Additional information may be included in this element, either as a Comment in the BMP table or in the narrative text field, based on availability and relevance to the Story, such as:

a. The obstacles the project team overcame to achieve success.
b. Any lessons learned throughout the planning and project implementation process.
c. Name(s) of the partner(s) that implemented each BMP.
d. Which activities were funded through Section 319 (if applicable).
    i. If Section 319 grant money was not used for the project, describe the involvement of any state nonpoint source program staff member(s) (if applicable). Additionally, note whether the project builds on, or was implemented in partnership with any other projects that have been funded by Section 319. The objective here is to link any Section 319 program efforts that are related to the success of the project.
e. The timeframe in which the activities occurred.
f. A reference to any watershed, comprehensive, or other overarching plan that guided project work.
g. A description of any ongoing work or additional plans to continue improvement in the watershed or waterbody(s).
h. Anything else of interest that the reader should know about the planning or project implementation work conducted.

Tip: if available, please attach photographs that show project implementation (e.g., before/after, photos of BMPs, photos of partners in the field).

BMP Table and Story Highlights Narrative Example #1 (College Creek Success Story – Tennessee):

Best Management Practices

BMP ↑≞	Number Installed	Units	Comments
Access Road	170	FT	ARCF
Alternative Water Sources	28	INDIVIDUAL UNITS	3 units - 319 Funds 25 units - ARCF
Catch Basin	2	INDIVIDUAL UNITS	319 Funds (urban wet ponds)
Constructed Wetland	3	INDIVIDUAL UNITS	319 Funds
Cover Crop	46	AC	319 Funds
Critical Area Planting	.5	AC	ARCF
Fence	26868	FT	319 Funds - 1,350 feet ARCF - 25,518 feet

Note: Success Story authors are encouraged to fill out the BMP table as completely as possible, like this Story on College Creek. This author also used the Comment section of the BMP table to differentiate which partners supported the various types of BMPs implemented in the watershed. The narrative section describes the history of the project work, the types of NPS addressed, and which BMPs were implemented to address the different types of NPS in the watershed.

Story Highlights

To begin restoring College Creek, a CWA section 319 grant was awarded in 2005 to the Greene County SWCD to develop a restoration plan. Partnerships were developed between many interested parties from the private sector (Niswonger Foundation), SWCDs, nonprofits (Middle Nolichucky Watershed Alliance), Tusculum University, local municipalities and landowners. Both urban and agricultural sources of pollution were tackled, with best management practices constructed along College Creek and throughout the watershed. Urban sources of siltation and habitat alterations were mitigated with catch basins, constructed wetlands and streambank stabilization projects (Figures 2 and 3). Shoreline grazing impacts were minimized with fencing, alternative watering facilities, and heavy use areas. In all, a total of 106 practices were installed between 2003 and 2021.

BMP Table and Story Highlights Narrative Example #2 (Upper Spring Creek Success Story – North Dakota)

Best Management Practices

BMP ↑≟	Number Installed	Units	Comments
Alternative Water Sources	12	<<UNITS NEEDED>>	
Cover Crop	860.3	AC	
Fence	60845.8	FT	
Invasive Species/Noxious Weed Control	12790	FT	
Livestock Use Area Protection	460	FT	
Pasture & Hayland Management	507.5	AC	
Pasture & Hayland Planting	921	AC	
Pipeline	5234	FT	
Prescribed Grazing	1172.9	AC	
Tank/ Trough	20	<<UNITS NEEDED>>	

Note: This Story used the BMP table to list the suite of conservation practices and the quantity implemented to restore Spring Creek. The narrative section describes how prior project work and monitoring informed the efforts described in the Story. Additionally, the narrative provides context on project goals and objectives that informed practice selection and implementation.

Story Highlights

The Spring Creek Watershed Project began in 2011 through the coordinated efforts of the Mercer and Dunn County soil conservation districts (SCDs). Upon conclusion of the project in fall 2018, data from four monitoring sites showed that the upper stream reaches of Spring Creek continued to be impaired. The Dunn County SCD successfully sought CWA section 319 funding support beginning in 2019 for Phase II of the project—additional best management practice (BMP) planning and implementation in the Upper Spring Creek watershed. As part of this project, monitoring was conducted at two creek sites in 2019–2021.

To improve the overall condition of the watershed, the local SCD targeted conservation planning assistance, along with voluntary implementation of BMPs. A project implementation plan was developed that identified beneficial use improvement and pollutant-reduction goals, specific activities for accomplishing these goals, and a method for evaluating progress.

The Dunn County SCD and its partners developed a project goal to restore (and then maintain) the recreational use of Upper Spring Creek as "fully supporting" through improved livestock management. As the primary sponsor, the Dunn County SCD employed project staff to develop contracts and provide technical assistance to local producers for implementing BMPs.

Partners and Funding (Populated from GRTS Success Story Builder)

This element includes a list of the project partners and funding sources that contributed to the NPS success and is comprised of two data tables that are populated automatically using the data entered by the Success Story author into the Partners and Funding section in the GRTS Success Story builder. There is no additional narrative text field in this element. Users are encouraged to fill out the GRTS data fields as completely as possible with the partner type, name, and funding amount that was contributed to the work described in the Story (if applicable), and use the "Notes" field to include any additional relevant information.

This section should include at a minimum:

    a. List of specific partners who contributed to the improvements in the waterbody.
    b. Total amount of Section 319 dollars dedicated over the lifetime of the project.
        i. If applicable, identify which partners contributed or received Section 319 funds.
    c. Other matching sources of funding (e.g., state agricultural funds, USDA/EQIP, SRF, and local/private, if such information is available).
    d. Whether a project partner provided in-kind or another type of non-monetary support (please include this information in the Notes section).

Example Partners and Funding Table (Gunpowder Creek Success Story – Kentucky):

Partner Details

Partner Type	Agency/Program	Notes
State	Kentucky Division of Water	CWA 319 Funds
Federal	CWA 319	Watershed planning
Federal	USDA NRCS	Agriculture BMP funding.
University/College	NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY	NKU's Stream & Wetland Restoration Program restored 2,700 linear feet of stream.

Funding Summary

Funding Type	Funding
Federal ()	$595,616
Other	$239,000
State	$0

Note: Partner and Funding data is entered into one table in the GRTS Success Story builder but, in the final layout, the partner names and funding information are automatically split into two tables. The Partner Details table lists all agencies and organizations involved, and the Funding Summary table generalizes all funding reported into three categories: Federal, State and Other. This is done in case a partner prefers not to have their specific funding information displayed publicly.

Section 3. Editorial Formatting Guidance

State-submitted Success Stories should adhere to the following editorial formatting. In cases where submittals do not adhere to these conventions, EPA will make these changes when finalizing the Story and will not return the revised Story for state review based solely on these changes. However, EPA will provide states with any substantive comments and edits via track changes and ask for state approval.

a. The title of the Story should include the name of the waterbody. If the waterbody is not included in the title, the title will be edited.
b. Designated uses will be placed into lowercase form (if included in narrative text fields).
c. Numbers ≤ 10 will be written out in word form unless they are found before a unit of measurement.
d. Number > 10 will be placed into numerical form in all cases.
e. When referring to percentages, the word "percent" will replace any instance of "%".
f. "United States" should be changed to "U.S.".
g. "Waterbody" should be one word.
h. There should be only one space after a period.
i. XX-mile stream segment should be hyphenated.
j. Acronyms are fine, but the full description should be provided in the first instance in all stories.
k. When "EPA" is cited, the word "the" should NOT be placed before the acronym
l. When the "303(d) list" is mentioned, it should be in this format: (1) if it's the first time it's mentioned in the Story, "Clean Water Act (CWA) section 303(d) list of impaired waters" or, (2) if it's not the first time it's mentioned in the Story, "CWA section 303(d) list of impaired waters".
m. The phrase "is located in" should be replaced with "is in"
> Incorrect: The Blue watershed is located in Rainbow County.
> Correct: The Blue watershed in Rainbow County.
n. EPA strongly suggests that states use the active voice. However, EPA will not make these changes if a state submittal doesn't use the active voice. Below are a few examples of "passive" vs. "active" voice.

Example 1 (Passive): As a result, these two waterbodies were added to [insert state name]'s Clean Water Act (CWA) section 303(d) list of impaired waterbodies in 2002 for sediment and non-volatile suspended solids (NVSS).

Example 1 (Active): As a result, the [insert state organization name] added these two waterbodies to the state's Clean Water Act (CWA) section 303(d) list of impaired waterbodies in 2002 for sediment and non-volatile suspended solids (NVSS).

Example 2 (Passive): Prescribed grazing was implemented on 1.700 acres and nutrient management plans were adapted for 150 acres.

Example 2 (Active): Landowners implemented prescribed grazing on 1.700 acres and adopted nutrient management plans for 150 acres.

Section 4. Graphics and Image Guidance

EPA strongly encourages the submittal of maps, graphs, and images as part of NPS Success Stories. Images provide important context and detail alongside GRTS data tables and narrative fields and improve overall Story clarity. This section provides specification requirements for graphics submitted as

part of NPS Success Stories. Please see Section 2. Elements of Success Stories for additional guidance on images, figures, and maps that can be provided to support the various Story elements.

<u>Photos</u>

Provide photos of BMPs that illustrate project actions. Photos should help illustrate the problem and/or the solution. Please provide a brief caption that explains and provides the context for the illustration. There is not currently a limit on the number of photos that may be included in each Success Story, but be sure that all submitted photos are relevant to the Story and support the reader in understanding the water quality challenge, the project work performed, partners involved, and/or results. Instructions on resizing graphics are provided later in this section.
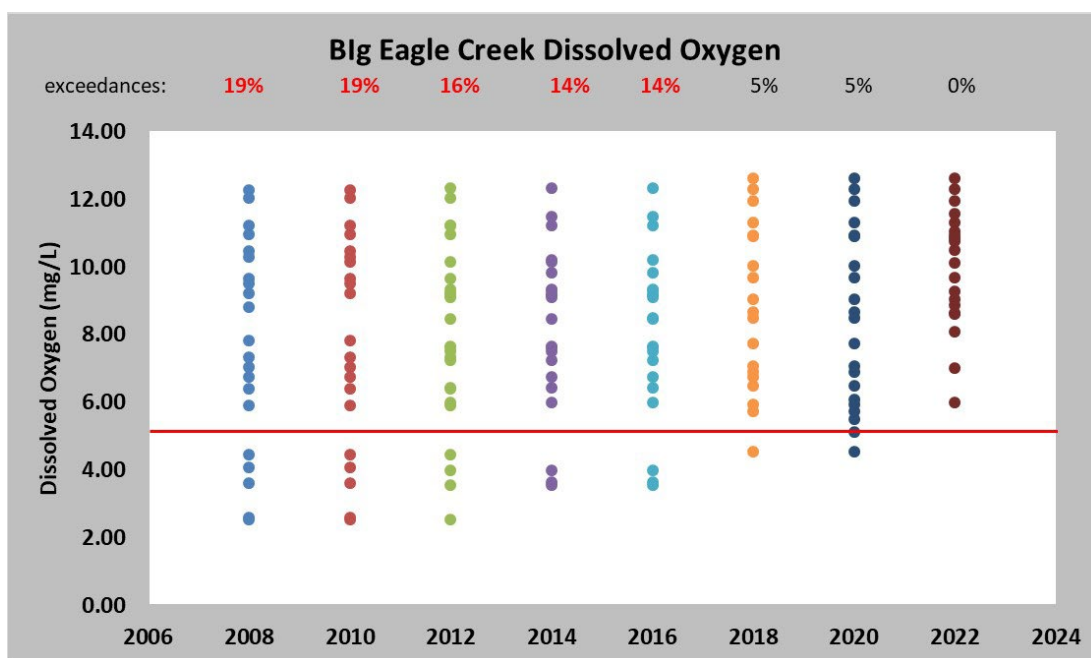
Before

After

Tables/Graphs/Charts

If data images are provided to document improvements in water quality, please be sure to label axes, indicate water quality target/endpoints, and provide a brief caption that explains the data. Attach graphs as separate files in the Attachment section in the GRTS Success Story builder, if possible.

Total Suspended Solids SC505

Figure showing TSS concentration as log mg/L over time from 1990 to 2020, with a declining red trend line.

Big Eagle Creek Dissolved Oxygen

| exceedances: | 19% | 19% | 16% | 14% | 14% | 5% | 5% | 0% |

Scatter plot of Dissolved Oxygen (mg/L) from 2006 to 2024, with a red reference line at approximately 5.0 mg/L.

Table 1. Pre- and post-project monitoring data on the Colorado River Tidal and Colorado River Below La Grange AUs.

Waterbody name	AU	Impairment	Unit	WQ standard	Pre-project	Post-project
Colorado River Tidal	1401_01	Enterococcus	cfu/100 mL	35	152	31
Colorado River Below La Grange	1401_02	*Escherichia coli*	cfu/100 mL	126	140	114

Notes: AU = assessment unit; cfu = colony-forming unit; mL = milliliter

Maps

Please adhere to the following criteria when including a map in a Success Story.

a. Maps must include at a minimum: a key, a scale, and a north arrow.
b. Images submitted should have a resolution of at least 300 dpi. Typically, a .jpg file with a file size of 300 kb or greater is of a sufficient quality.
c. Assure that a legend is legible when the map is displayed at 475-pixel width (approx. 3 inches wide).
d. Refrain from including significant additional information on a map of the watershed/project area, as this can hinder map legibility. For example, a map can include locations of monitoring stations or project locations that are relevant to the Story. However, including data tables or additional descriptive text associated with the identified points on the map can be difficult to see in the final layout.
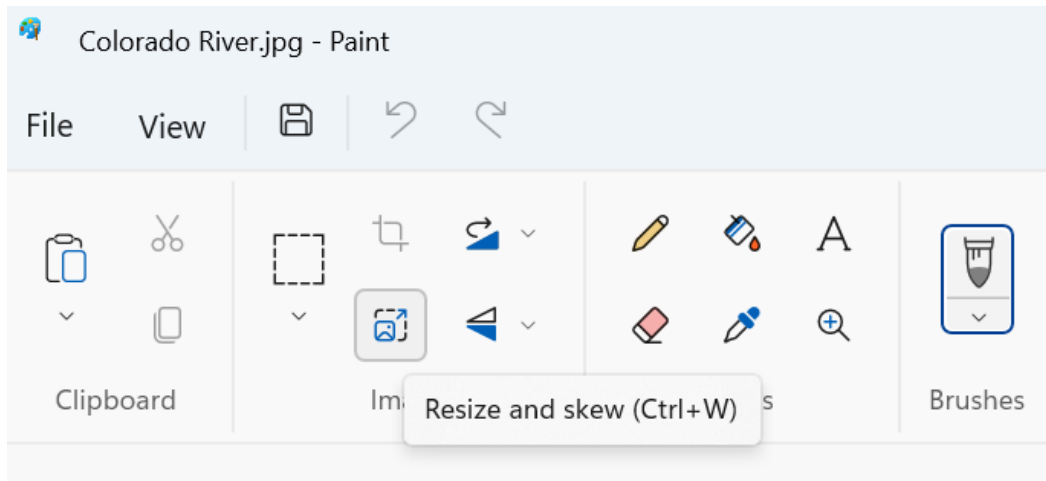
Resizing Graphics

There are several options for resizing images. Microsoft (MS) Paint is a simple option that uses standard MS office software.
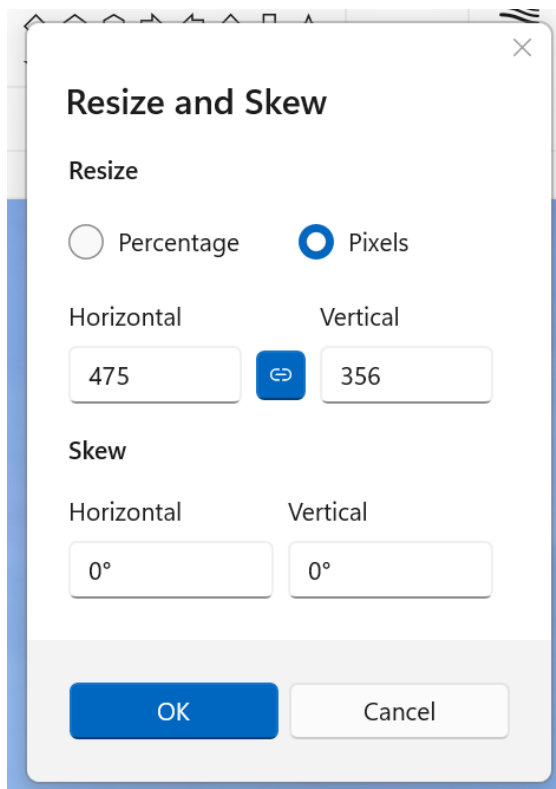
From the Microsoft Paint application, open the image you want to resize:
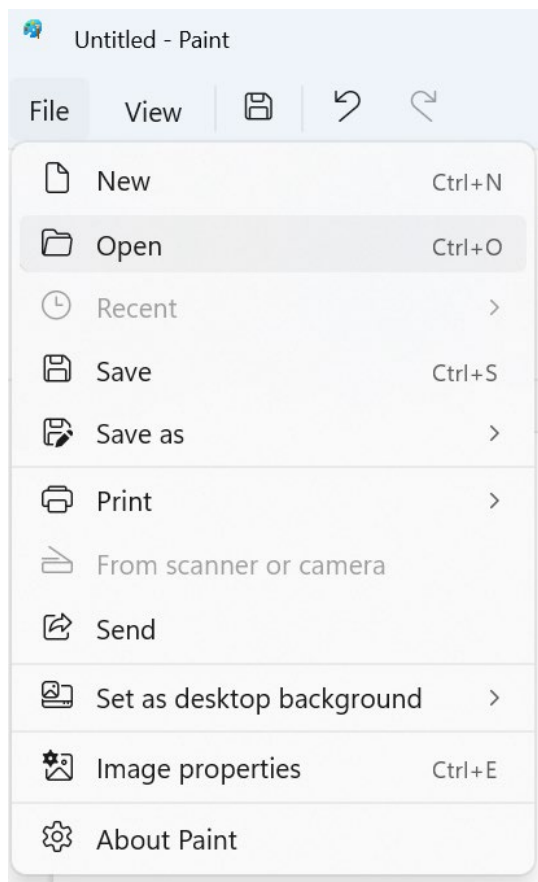
Select Resize:

Select the Pixels radio button, type in the horizontal width, and select "OK":

Save the image file. You now have an image of the proper size ready to upload and include in the success Story.

Section 5. Success Story Quality Assurance (QA), Development, and Review Expectations

Success Story Quality Assurance (QA) Expectations

Success Story authors are expected to ensure that all information and water quality data submitted to demonstrate water quality improvements or results are of known quality, truthful, accurate, and have gone through appropriate state-level Quality Assurance (QA) review. It is the responsibility of the state Success Story author and/or state NPS coordinator to verify that any environmental data submitted to demonstrate environmental results were collected through a technically sound monitoring or study effort that includes a state and/or federally approved QA process.

Stages of Success Story Development

1. **Add Success Story in GRTS:** Complete all Success Story Elements and GRTS data fields in accordance with this guide (also see GRTS training videos for additional instructions). State programs are responsible for developing and completing Success Story entries in GRTS. State programs should ensure that all fields in the Success Story builder are complete before submitting for EPA review. States may work with their EPA regional contact and/or the EPA HQ Success Story lead on any questions/concerns when developing a Story. The notes section in the Success Story Builder can be used to provide additional or qualifying information the state would like EPA reviewers to know.

2. **Submit to EPA Region:** When a draft Success Story entry is complete, state programs submit the Success Story for EPA regional review through GRTS. Regional staff are responsible for reviewing the Story draft, ensuring the draft meets the expectations outlined in this document, and confirming that all GRTS data fields are complete and accurate.

   If the Story features a waterbody that has been removed from Category 4 or 5 on the CWA section 303(d) list of impaired waters, EPA regional reviewers should confirm that this change was due to restoration activities and/or new water quality data that indicates the waterbody has improved and is now meeting standards. Waterbodies that are removed from the Category 5 list due to insufficient data, a mistake in the original listing, or other similar administrative changes are not eligible to be included in a Success Story.

   If the regional EPA reviewer makes substantive changes to any GRTS data fields, those changes should be documented in the notes section of the GRTS Success Story builder or in an email (sent via GRTS) to the state contact for concurrence. Additionally, if a regional reviewer has more extensive comments, questions, and/or recommended edits, they may choose to download the draft story from GRTS as a word document and use Track Changes to complete their review in Microsoft Word. If a separate Word document is used for review, the EPA reviewer should upload the document as an Attachment in the Success Story builder when the review is complete.

3. **Return to State:** If the EPA regional reviewer identifies any significant questions, suggested edits, or missing information, they may choose to return the draft Story to the state in GRTS and ask the state to address regional comments/questions before submitting for EPA HQ review.

4. **Submit to EPA HQ:** After the EPA region reviews and approves the draft Success Story, they will Submit to EPA HQ in GRTS. At this point, the EPA HQ Success Story lead will conduct a similar review as the EPA region to ensure all Success Story criteria are met and the GRTS data fields are complete.

5. **Return to EPA Region:** If the EPA HQ reviewer identifies any significant questions, suggested edits, or missing information, they may return the Story to the EPA region via GRTS so the region may work with the state to make the necessary changes. Once all comments and/or questions have been addressed, the Story can be resubmitted to EPA HQ in GRTS.

6. **Accepted:** When EPA HQ completes their review and determines the draft Story is ready to be published, the HQ reviewer will change the status to "Accepted" in GRTS. At this point, HQ will work to make any minor, editorial changes that are necessary before the Story is finalized.

7. **Open for Review:** When EPA HQ has finished making any minor editorial or format changes, the HQ reviewer will open the Story for state and EPA regional review in GRTS. At this stage both the state and EPA region should review the draft from HQ and either approve the draft final layout or work with HQ to address any changes that should be made before finalizing the Story. If the state or EPA regional contact note any significant changes that should be made to the Story, they may share those with the EPA HQ Success Story lead via a GRTS email.

8. **Approved:** When the state and EPA regional Success Story contacts have reviewed and accepted the draft layout from EPA HQ, they will each click Approve in GRTS. Minor changes can be noted in a comment box that is available when the user clicks Approve.

9. **Finalized:** After the state and EPA region approve the final Success Story draft, HQ will post the approved, 508-compliant version on the EPA Success Story webpage. At this time EPA HQ will also conduct a final QA check of all GRTS data fields.

EPA Region and HQ Review Expectations

The following section describes review and QA expectations for both EPA regional and HQ reviewers. EPA staff should use this section as a review checklist to ensure that information submitted through the GRTS Success Story database is complete, accurate, and meets all requirements outlined in this guidance.

Intro:

- ➢ SS ID: Automatically generated by GRTS. Confirm field is complete.
- ➢ Fiscal Year: This is the fiscal year the Story will be published. Confirm the year is current.
- ➢ EPA Region: Confirm region is correct.
- ➢ State: Confirm state is correct.
- ➢ Title: The title should include the name of the waterbody(s) and give the reader a sense of what the Story will cover.
- ➢ Web link: This field is completed by the EPA HQ Success Stories lead when the Story is finalized for publishing.

- Publication date: This field is completed by the EPA HQ Success Stories lead when the Story is finalized for publishing and should reflect the date the Story was posted to the EPA Success Story webpage.
- Related GRTS Projects: If CWA Section 319 funds were utilized in any of the watershed or other planning, project implementation, outreach and education, and/or staff time related to the Story, the associated GRTS project entry/entries may be linked here.
- Notes: EPA HQ and regional reviewers should review this section and consider any additional information provided by the Success Story author, follow up on any questions from the state program, and/or ensure any information in this section is provided to HQ. This field may also be used by the EPA Regional reviewer to leave notes for HQ.

Success Story							
SS ID	2055	Fiscal Year	2023	EPA Region	03	State	Virginia
Title	BMPs Installation Lead to Improved Water Quality in Spring Creek						
Web Link	https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/202 06/VA_SpringCr_2055_508.pdf	View Link		Publication Date	06/20/2023		
Current Status	Finalized						
Type	1. Partially/fully restored water (WQ-10 eligible)						
Related GRTS Projects	[00349916-19 (616165614)]	Edit GRTS Project List					
Notes							

Waterbody Information:

- Determine if the waterbody was added though ATTAINS. Alternative sources may be used if an ATTAINS ID does not exist for the waterbody or if the ATTAINS listing is out of date/inaccurate.
- If the waterbody was added via ATTAINS, click on the Waterbody ID and verify that the following information displayed in the Waterbody Information section in GRTS is complete and matches the ATTAINS Waterbody report.
  - Waterbody name
  - Waterbody ID
  - Waterbody Size
  - Units
  - Type
  - Designated Use
- If the waterbody information described above was added through another source (i.e., state Integrated Report), verify each data field using that source.
- If any of the information listed above as provided in GRTS does not match the ATTAINS or other source information, the EPA regional and/or HQ reviewer should make the necessary changes in GRTS and confirm with the state Success Story author that the revised information is correct.
- Confirm that the waterbody listing information provided in GRTS aligns with information provided in the narrative portions of the Story.

| Waterbody Information | | | | | | | Add Waterbody | ? |

		Waterbody Name	Waterbody ID	ID Source	Size	Units	Type	Designated Use
☐	🖉	SPRING CREEK	VAP-J02R_SPA01A02	ATTAINS	5.47	MILES	Stream/Creek/River	Recreation

Delete selected waterbody(s)

🔍 ▾ [   ] Go   Actions ▾

Waterbody Listings:

➢ If the Waterbody information is added through ATTAINS, current CWA section 303(d) listings associated with that waterbody will automatically populate in the Waterbody Listing section. One Story may contain information on multiple pollutant listings.
   o The EPA regional and HQ reviewers should remove any listings that are not associated with the Success Story (i.e., if a Success Story specifically features a waterbody improvement or delisting that is related to bacteria, the Waterbody Listing section should only list information on the bacteria impairment. Other pollutant listings should be removed).

➢ Pollutants: Entry should reflect how the waterbody was listed on the CWA section 303(d) list of impaired waters (if applicable). If the relevant pollutant listing is not available to be selected in GRTS, the user may select "Other" and use the Notes section to provide additional clarifying information.

➢ Source of Impairment: Confirm whether source(s) of impairment were identified for the waterbody (if applicable) and ensure this field reflects the source(s) listed in the state Integrated Report or other source. If sources of impairment that were informed by land use or other separate studies are reported in the narrative sections of the Success Story, ensure those are listed here.

➢ Year of Listing: This should match the first year the waterbody was listed for the associated pollutant on the CW section A 303(d) list of impaired waters. Confirm listing year through ATTAINS or state Integrated Report. Ensure this information is accurately reflected in the narrative sections of the Success Story (if applicable).

➢ Year Delisted: This should match the year the waterbody was determined to meet water quality standards and was either removed from the CWA section 303(d) list, and/or moved from the Integrated Report Category 4 or 5 to Category 1 or 2 (if applicable). Confirm delisting year through ATTAINS or state Integrated Report. Ensure this information is accurately reflected in the narrative sections of the Success Story (if applicable).
   o When confirming delisting year accuracy, also confirm the delisting rationale (most often included in state Integrated Report). Acceptable delisting rationales include: delisting due to new data indicating waterbody now meets standards, delisting due to restoration activities, or other similar justifications. Waterbody delistings that are due to a water quality standard change, a mistake in the original listings, or other administrative updates are not eligible to be included in a Success Story.

➢ Delisting status:
   o Confirmed: The waterbody has been determined to be meeting WQS for the associated pollutant and designated use in a final and published state Integrated Report.

- o Proposed: the waterbody is proposed to be deslisted in a draft Integrated Report. Success Stories with proposed delistings should include data indicating the waterbody now meets water quality standards, a copy of the draft Integrated report (if available), and the status of the Integrated Report development/review process.
- ➤ Designated use: Verify the designated use associated with the waterbody listing is the use that was either determined to now be meeting water quality standards, or the type of use that the waterbody is making progress toward attaining. Ensure this information is accurately reflected in the Story narrative (if applicable).
- ➤ TMDL: This field should include "Yes" or "Y" if there is a TMDL associated with the waterbody listing that informed the restoration work. If there is not a TMDL associated with the Success Story work, the user may leave this field blank, or complete it using "No" or "N".
- ➤ TMDL Year: Verify TMDL Year (if applicable). This can be done through How's My Waterway/ATTAINS.
- ➤ Notes: Include any additional pertinent or clarifying information on the waterbody listing here.

Waterbody Listings [Add Waterbody Listing]

[Edit All Listings] [Delete selected waterbody listing(s)]

| ▼ | ✓ | ≡ Water Body Name | ✕ | ✓ | ≡ Waterbody ID | ✕ |

1 - 1

Water Body Name: SPRING CREEK, Waterbody ID: VAP-J02R_SPA01A02

☐	Edit	Pollutants	Source of Impairment	Year of Listing	Year Delisted	Listing Status	Designated Use	TMDL?	TMDL Year	Notes
☐	✐	Pathogens (E. coli)	Agriculture, Other NPS Pollution, Onsite Waste Disposal Systems	1998	2020	Confirmed	Recreation	Y	2004	-

Point(s) of Contact:

- ➤ This section should include contact information for individual(s) to whom readers can direct any questions on the Story.
- ➤ Name: Verify the name given is an appropriate point of contact and the name is spelled correctly.
- ➤ Agency: Verify the agency associated with the point of contact is accurate, current, and spelled correctly.
- ➤ Email: Verify the email associated with the point of contact is accurate, current, and spelled correctly.
- ➤ Agency URL (visible when adding or editing a Point of Contact entry): If desired, this field may include a link to the Point of Contact agency/organization website. Ensure that any links included here are functional and correct.

Point(s) of Contact [Add Point of Contact]

[Delete selected point of contact(s)]

row(s) 1 - 2 of 2

☐		Name	Agency	Email	Phone
☐	✐	Deanna Fehrer	Piedmont Soil and Water Conservation District	dfehrer@piedmontswcd.org	
☐	✐	Justin Williams	Virginia Department of Environmental Quality	Justin.Williams@deq.virginia.gov	

Watershed Plans:

This field is optional. If there is a watershed plan associated with the project work described in the Story, the user may upload a PDF copy or link to the plan online.

➢ Ensure the plan name is accurate and spelled correctly.
➢ Ensure the file and/or link are functional and the uploaded/linked document is correct.
➢ If there is no watershed plan included in this section, confirm whether there is a plan referenced in the narrative sections of the Story. If a watershed plan is referenced in the narrative, follow up with the Success Story author to determine whether a copy of the plan can be included here.

Watershed Plans   [Add Watershed Plan]

[Delete selected watershed plan record(s)]

					1 - 2 of 2
☐	**Edit**	**Plan Name**	**Notes**	**File / URL**	
☐	🖊	TMDL Implementation: Slate River and Rock Island Creek	-	-	-
☐	🖊	Spring Creek, Briery Creek, Bush River, Little Sandy Creek and Saylers Creek TMDL Implementation Plan	-	springcrip.pdf	📄

Project BMPs/Activities:

➢ The Project BMPs/Activities table is uploaded directly from GRTS to the final Success Story layout. Success Story authors and reviewers should ensure the information in this table is filled out as completely as possible.
➢ If the author linked GRTS projects in the first section of the Success Story entry, all BMPs associated with the project entry will be automatically populated here. Review the BMPs imported from the project entry and remove any that are not directly associated with the Story.
➢ Ensure all BMPs described in the narrative portions of the Story (if applicable) are reflected in the Project BMPs/Activities table.
➢ Number Installed and Units: Check Success Story narrative to ensure that data entered in these fields and reported in the narrative are consistent. If the Success Story author did not provide Number Installed or Units, follow up with them and determine whether this information can be provided.
➢ Comments: Include any additional relevant or clarifying information on BMP implementation in the comment section.

Project BMPs/Activities   [Add BMP]

[Edit All BMPs]

row(s) 1 - 5 of 5

BMP ↑≞	Number Installed	Units	Comments
Agro forestry Planting	212	ACRES	
Cover Crop	24	ACRES	
Onsite Waste Water System [Repair/Upkeep]	2	SYSTEM(s)	
Onsite Waste Water Treatment System (pumpout)	4	SYSTEM(s)	
Stream Exclusion Fencing	19160	LINEAR FEET	

Partners and Funding:

➢ Partner Type: Ensure partner type field is complete and accurate.
➢ Agency/Program: Include full name of partner agency/organization. Spell out all acronyms. If a partner has been included in existing Success Stories, the name will autofill when the user is typing in this field.
➢ Funding provided: Report the level of funding contributed from each partner. Success Story authors are encouraged to be as thorough as possible in providing funding information. However, there may be some instances in which funding cannot be provided or a partner would prefer to exclude the exact funding amount.
➢ Notes: This field should be used to provide additional information associated with the partner agency/organization. This may include, but is not limited to: the specific type of grant or other funding mechanism used, the specific work the partner funded, whether the partner provided in-kind support, etc.
   ○ If the partner provided in-kind support as opposed to a monetary contribution, the funding amount should be zero dollars, and the notes section should indicate that the support was in-kind.
➢ If CWA Section 319 funds were used in the planning, project implementation, or staff time described in the Story, the funds should be recorded as follows:
   ○ Partner Type: Federal
   ○ Agency/Program: CWA Section 319
   ○ Funding Provided: Total Section 319 dollars associated with the Success Story
   ○ Notes: Any relevant details or clarifying information can be provided here

In this case, the state agency that distributed the Section 319 funds should be recorded as follows:

   ○ Partner Type: State
   ○ Agency/Program: State agency name
   ○ Funding Provided: $0 (unless there were other state funds that were provided, in which case those may be recorded here)
   ○ Notes: CWA Section 319 Funds

		Partner Type	Agency/Program	Funding Provided	Notes
Partners and Funding					Add Partner/Funding
Delete selected partners and funding					
				row(s) 1 - 2 of 2	
☐	✎	State	VA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	$3,839.00	
☐	✎	State	VIRGINIA AGRICULTURAL COST SHARE PROGRAM	$177,187.00	
Total				$181,026.00	

Attachments:

➢ Any photos or data images to be included in the Story should be uploaded as separate attachments in this section. Please see Section 5 for photo and image requirements.

- Ensure the Description/Caption field is complete, and the information provided is sufficient for the reader to understand the image and how it supports the Story.
- If the attachment is an image to be included in the Story, ensure that "Image for Print Layout" is selected.
- Photos/images to be included in the final Story layout should appear in their order of appearance in the attachment section. Use the up/down arrows to arrange figures numerically, as shown above.

Attachments

<div>Add Attachment</div>

Delete selected attachment(s)

Edit the attachment record to indicate whether or not the image should be included in the story printout.
Use the up/down arrows in columns 3 and 4 to sort the images in the order you wish for them to appear in the printout.

row(s) 1 - 11 of 11

	Edit				File / URL	Size	Description/Caption	Image for Print Layout	Uploaded By	Date Uploaded	File Url Link
☐	📝	∧	∨	🖼	Spring Creek Success Story Layout.jpg	1,864.1KB	Figure 1. Spring Creek Map	✓	KWOODALL	08/26/2022	GRTSADM.download_my_file? p_file=7788&p_page=SS
☐	📝	∧	∨	🖼	Spring Creek doorhanger.png	460.2KB	Figure 2. Doorhanger provides homeowners with septic system care and replacement information.	✓	RLETO	11/16/2022	GRTSADM.download_my_file? p_file=9173&p_page=SS
☐	📝	∧	∨	📄	WQ chart_Spring Run.xlsx	15.1KB	Figure 3. E. coli violation rates (exceeding 235 cfu/100ml standard) in Spring Creek.	-	AWENDT0	09/27/2022	GRTSADM.download_my_file? p_file=8458&p_page=SS