



Maryland

# Maryland's Riparian Forest Buffer Plan

Philip R. Hager, Assistant Secretary, Land Resources  
Maryland Department of Natural Resources

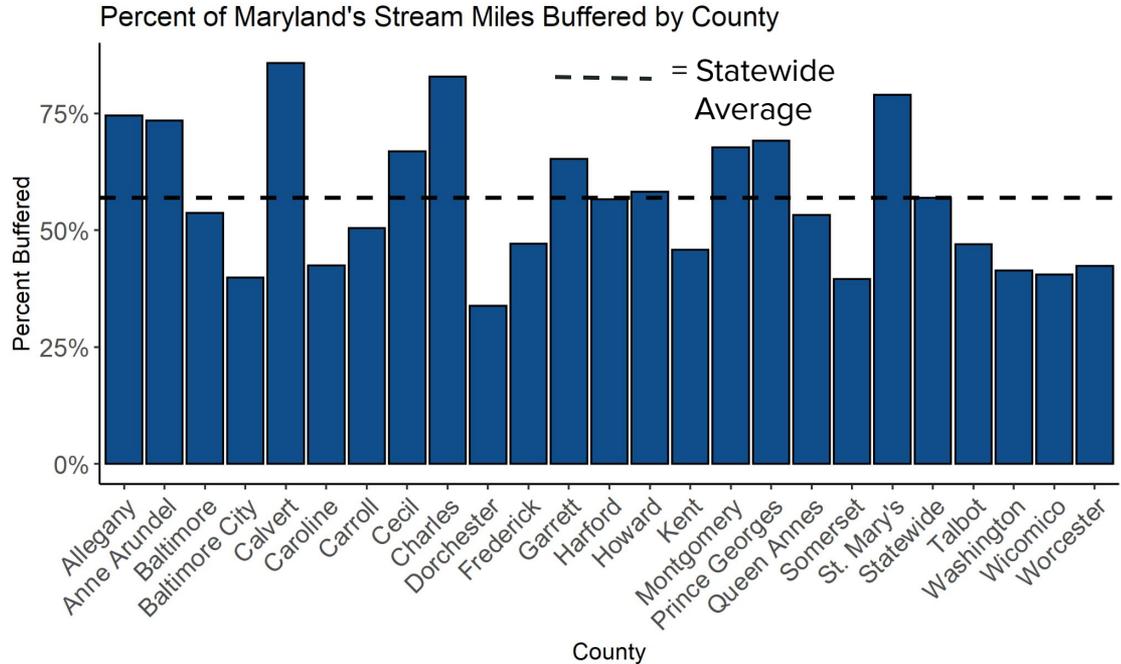
# Maryland's Strong Foundation For Progress

- ❖ Active coordination within DNR
  - Land & Aquatic divisions working together
- ❖ Good GIS targeting data and tools
- ❖ Strong coordination among agencies and partners
  - CREP Advisory Committee
  - Chesapeake Bay Program tracking & Workgroups
  - Stream ReLeaf Committee
    - State, local, fed. agencies, nonprofits, other
- ❖ Robust laws for conservation
  - Forest Conservation Act
  - Critical Area Law
- ❖ New legislation to fuel progress
  - Tree Solutions Now Act of 2021 (\$15 million/year)
  - Conservation Finance Act of 2022



# Chesapeake Bay Agreement Goal: Maryland Status

- ❖ CBP Goal: 70% of all riparian areas buffered long-term, 900 miles per year Baywide
- ❖ Statewide, streams and shorelines are 57% buffered
  - 10,452 miles fully buffered
  - Based on 2013 imagery
  - Planning to update with 2018 land cover in 2022/23



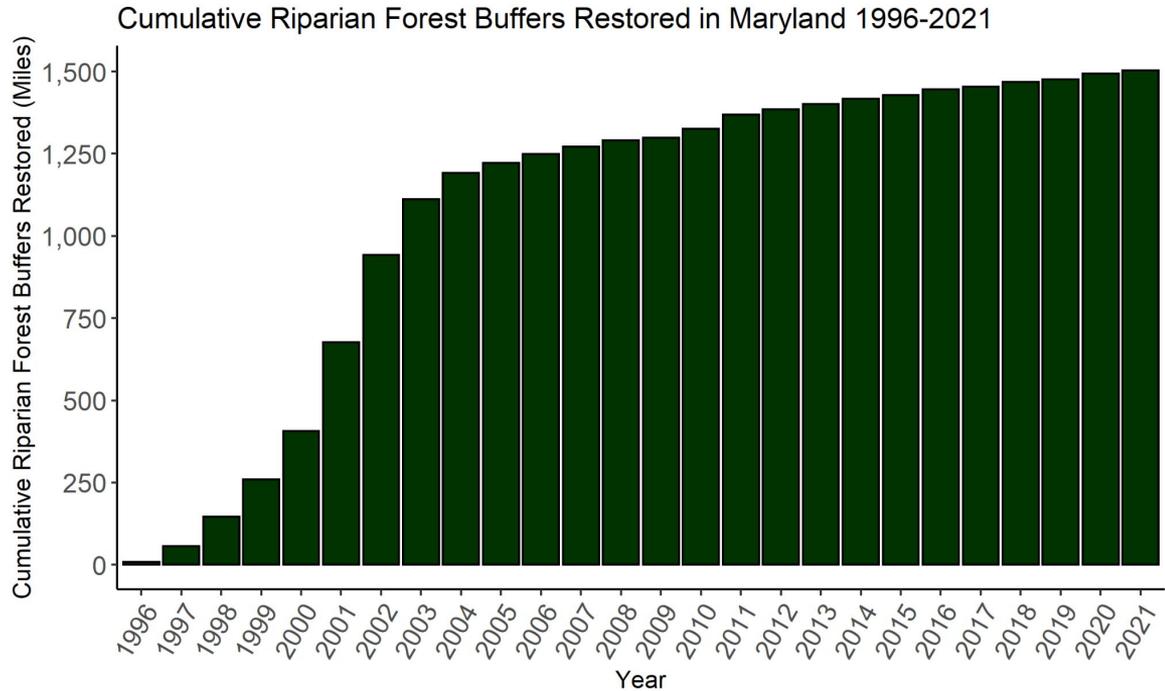
# Watershed Implementation Plan Goals for Maryland

- ❖ MD WIP Phase III Goal from 2018-2025
  - Natural Filters on public lands: 350 acres
  - County Ag Buffers: 1,489 ac
  - County Urban Buffers: 48 ac
  - Total: **1,887 acres**
- ❖ Maryland has met previous WIP milestones
  - Phase II Goal = 1,546 ac of planted buffers from 2010-2017
  - Actual = 2,789 acres from 2010-2017
- ❖ **Maryland is on track to meet its Phase III WIP goal**
  - **2018-2021 progress = 861 acres**



# Maryland's Buffer Progress

- ❖ Maryland had the first CREP program, delivered statewide
- ❖ Early progress with CREP captured “low hanging fruit”
- ❖ Forest Service staffing has declined since 2000
- ❖ Reduced landowner interest-
  - maintenance,
  - program complexity,
  - lowered rates, eligible areas
- ❖ Capacity can be expanded, but at a more modest rate
- ❖ Tracking is kept up to date by Maryland DNR in the RFB database
- ❖ Now tracking with shapefiles to better quantify services- habitat



## Expanding Funding Options for Forest Buffers

- ❖ Tree Solutions Now Act of 2021- climate change legislation
  - New 5 Million Trees funding to support outreach initiatives and tree planting
  - Additional \$1,000/acre CREP bonus
- ❖ Conservation Finance Act of 2022
  - Broadens funding and loan opportunities, including Revolving Loan Funds
- ❖ Federal Funding Opportunities
  - Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
  - Chesapeake WILD and other wildlife options
- ❖ Coordination with Stormwater Program
  - Expanded MS4 credits in new MDE guidance
  - MDE Forest Financing Implementation Tool to plan cost-effective MS4 approaches with trees
  - State Revolving Loan Fund options



## Increase Means & Materials of Production

- ❖ State Seedling Nursery investments
  - Personnel, equipment
  - Seed supply
- ❖ Coordination with MD Nursery, Landscape, and Greenhouse Association to increase larger tree stock
- ❖ 13 New MFS hires through 5 Million Trees
- ❖ Green workforce development to expand skills and contractor availability
  - UMD's Natural Area Management Services Training



## Elements for Successful Planting Programs

- ❖ Wide outreach with community connections
- ❖ Maintenance Options
  - 3-5 years of turnkey maintenance
  - Volunteer crews
  - Regional maintenance crews
- ❖ Simple access for landowners
- ❖ Leverage partner resources
- ❖ Make it easy to plant a tree
  - Multiple options, depending on site and landowner



## Conservation Resources

- ❖ Keep existing buffers while restoring new ones to reach 70% coverage
- ❖ Program Open Space expanding easements and acquisitions in statewide priority areas
- ❖ The CREP permanent easement program
  - Led by MD DNR Land Acquisition and Planning
  - Over 12,000 acres eased, trees and grass



## Expanding and Updating Training

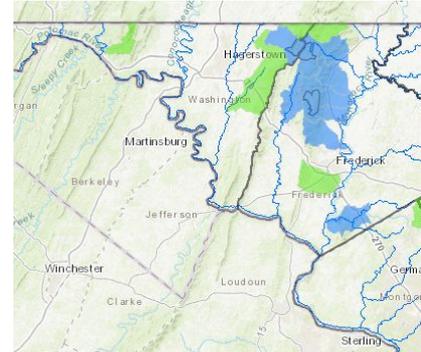
- ❖ New employee training
  - Providing Buffer Planting 101
- ❖ Support development of informative webinars/ field tours to address emerging concerns
  - New fact sheets on invasive species and concentrated flows
  - Buffer roundtable series
- ❖ Important issues to address
  - Invasive species control
  - Farm friendly design



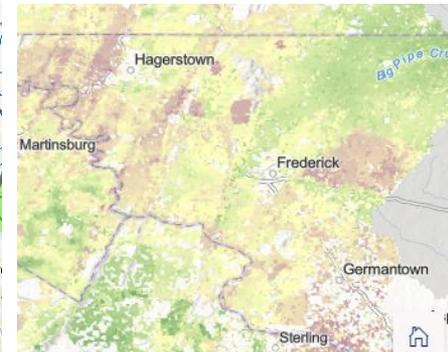
## Outreach to Landowners/ Governments

- ❖ High priority areas for outreach
  - Brook Trout Priority
  - Drinking water priority
  - Counties with low % buffered streams
  - Conserved lands
  - State and local parks
- ❖ Outreach to local governments
  - MS4 permits
  - Drinking Water State Revolving Fund

*“The best place to plant a tree is where someone wants one”*



DNR Fisheries Coldwater  
Resource Mapper



Land Prioritization Mapping for  
Protecting Drinking Water Quality

## Coordination and Partnerships

- ❖ Leverage Stream ReLeaf coordination
- ❖ Complete multi-state Upper Potomac Buffer Strategy
  - Expected Summer 2022
- ❖ Provide DNR leadership for private/public partnerships such as Healthy Forests, Healthy Waters, building pipelines of viable buffer projects for new funding
- ❖ Expand partnerships with local conservation organizations
- ❖ Merge buffer efforts for water, air, and carbon, and equity goals, working with agencies and other partners



## Expanding Opportunities

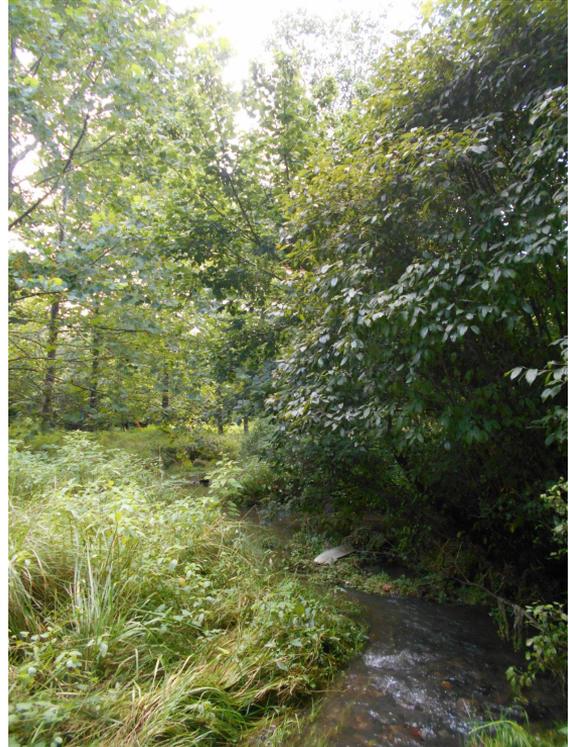
- ❖ Linking buffers to climate resiliency and wildlife habitat mosaics
- ❖ Infrastructure funding through DNR and other agencies (e.g., MDE, MDOT, MDA, MDP)
- ❖ Potential to re-negotiate CREP contract to better support buffer management
- ❖ Invigorate urban forest restoration with climate actions and a focus on equity



# Role for Regional coordination

## Opportunities for regional coordination

- ❖ Shared regional training for outreach and restoration techniques
- ❖ Consistent assessment of status of fully buffered streams and shorelines
- ❖ Attract federal funding to Chesapeake Watershed (e.g., Climate Smart Ag and Forestry grant opportunity collaborating with NFWF and multiple states)



# Reasons for optimism for buffer progress in Maryland



- 5 Million Trees funding and focus on community engagement and equity
  - Support for more training and youth engagement
- New audiences
  - Climate concerns
  - Wildlife and fisheries habitats
  - Conserved lands
  - Parks
- Carbon markets-
  - Being pursued for 5 Million Trees
  - Aided by new Conservation Finance Act
- New tools
  - MDE MS4 guidance and financing tools emphasizing trees,
  - Newly funded USFS competitive grant to pilot in 2 counties



*Riparian forest buffers build **core benefits**  
for our environment, not just co-benefits*

**Thank You!**  
**Questions?**