



Virginia's Riparian Forest Buffer Efforts

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A Statewide Collaboration





Building Capacity

- New Watershed Program
- New Positions
 - ◆ Watershed Program Manager
 - ◆ Watershed Specialists x3
 - ◆ In addition to existing Buffer Specialists x3 (Valley)
 - ◆ COVES Fellowship Program



New Resources

- Agency RFB Implementation Plan
- Flexible Cost-share Programs:
 - ◆ James River Buffer Program (VEE)
 - ◆ Mountains to Bay (CBF)
- Riparian Buffer Outreach Project (GIC)
- Watershed Prioritization Mapping Tool
- Drone Monitoring Study (CBRAP)



Urban and Community Forestry

- Trees for Clean Water
- Turf to Trees (CBRAP)
- Existing Tree Canopy Legislation Study (GIC)
- Heat Island Projects (12)



Coastal Resilience

- VA Beach Flood Mitigation Project (VT, TNC)
- Chesapeake Forest Restoration Strategy (CBP)
- Resilient Coastal Forests of VA Project (GIC)
- Water Equity Taskforce (VA Health Catalyst)



VA Works Across Agencies

- TASK 14 prioritizes cross-agency collaboration
 - ◆ Interagency Team
- New VA Ag BMP Survey (VCE)
- State Lands Watershed Implementation Plan (SWIP)



State Lands Watershed Implementation Plan

- State agencies and public institutions of higher education shall prepare agency-wide plans for the protection and restoration of tree canopies and **riparian forest buffers**.
- Focused on parcels greater than 5 acres.
- BMPs for reducing nutrient and sediment loss will be employed on all state lands [in active cultivation or] supporting animal agriculture including pastures.



Department of Environmental Quality

Water Permitting Focus on RFB

- 2022 Report to General Assembly
<https://rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2022/RD43/PDF>
- Continuing to study the preservation/conservation of existing tree canopy that is not already deemed forest/open space as a fourth land-cover category within the Virginia Runoff Reduction Method.
- Developing a new BMP called “New Trees.”
- Reconvening the SAG, or a subset thereof that includes technical experts and VSMP authorities, to continue the work thus far initiated.



Department of Conservation & Recreation

- Working to make RFB Adoption more desirable:
 - ◆ Improving terms of cost-share and CREP
 - ◆ Additional cost-share programs beyond CREP
 - ◆ Tax Credits
 - ◆ Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP)
 - ◆ VACS Ag BMP



Barriers

- No State Budget Yet
- Administrative Transitions



Next Steps

- Complete VDOF RFB Implementation Plan
- Convene COV agencies to formulate Statewide RFB Plan



Questions?

