



Elevating Forest Conservation in a Revised Watershed Agreement



Protected Lands

*“**Protected lands**” means lands permanently protected from development, whether by purchase or donation, through a perpetual conservation or open space easement or fee ownership for their cultural, historical, ecological, or agricultural value.*

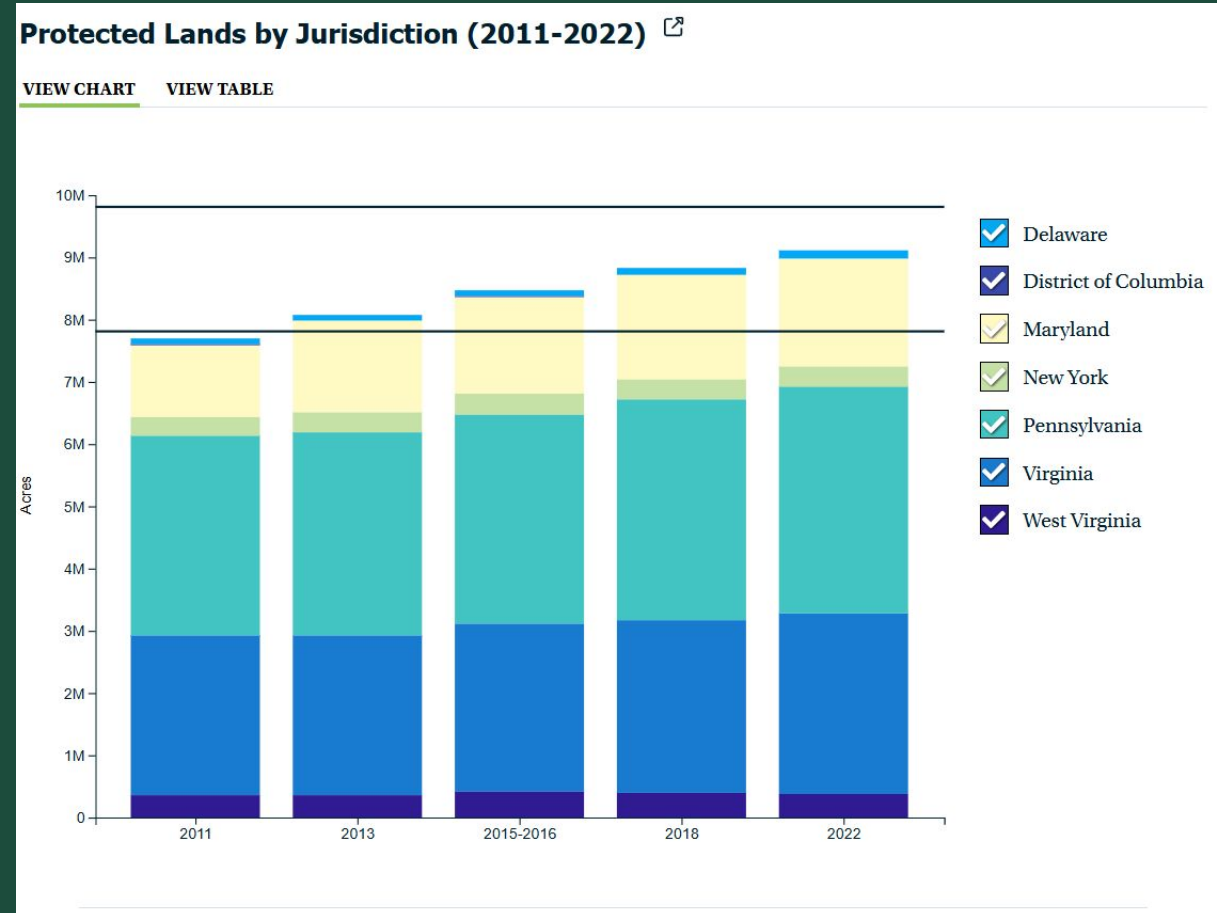
Current Protected Lands Outcome

- By 2025, protect an additional two million acres of lands throughout the watershed- currently identified as high conservation priorities at the federal, state or local level- including 225,000 acres of wetlands and 695,000 acres of forest land of highest value for maintaining water quality



Protected Lands - Data Progress

According to 2022 data, nearly 1.64 million acres of land in the Chesapeake Bay watershed have been permanently protected since 2010. This marks an achievement of 82% of the land conservation goal adopted in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and brings the total amount of protected land in the watershed to 9.1 million acres.



CCP proposal for revising the protected lands outcomes

- 2040 outcomes:
 - “By 2040, protect a total of (TBD) million acres of lands throughout the watershed—including (TBD) acres of wetlands, (TBD) acres of forest riparian buffers and (TBD) acres of upland forests, which also includes (TBD) percent of urban areas in the watershed. (TBD) percent of people will live within a ten-minute walk of a park or public access site.”
- 2050 outcomes:
 - By 2050, protect an additional (TBD) million acres of lands throughout the watershed —beyond 2025 levels currently identified as high-conservation priorities at the federal, state or local level—including (TBD) acres of wetlands, (TBD) acres of forest riparian buffers and (TBD) acres of upland forests, and (TBD) percent of urban areas in the watershed. (TBD) percent of people will live within a ten-minute walk of a park or public access site.”

Forests

Protect the Chesapeake watershed's most ecologically and economically valuable forest land from conversion--headwater and riparian forests, large forest blocks, woodlots providing multiple values, and forests conducive to timber harvest.

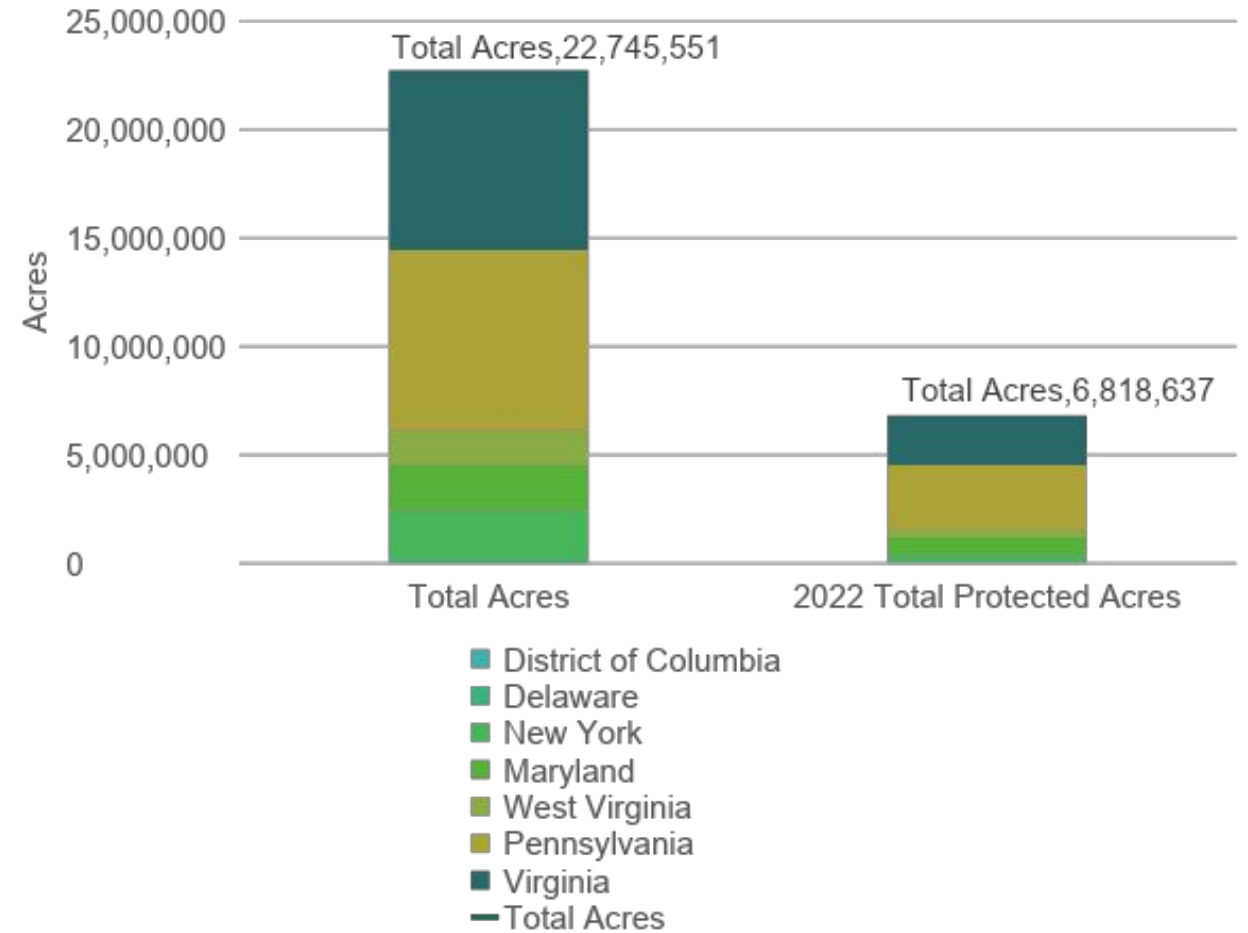
Concentration of Forest Values*

- One value
- Two overlapping values
- Three overlapping values

*Note: Due to forest patch size criteria, Large Forest Blocks and Woodlots are mutually exclusive, as are Productive Timber Growing Areas and Woodlots. Therefore, although there are four input layers, the maximum value in the composite layer is three. For instance, values of three could indicate overlap between Large Forest Blocks, Riparian/Headwater Forests, and Productive Timber Growing Areas. Woodlots can have a value of two only when they overlap with Riparian/Headwater Forests.

High Value Forests

Protected vs Unprotected



Issues with tracking conservation of high-value forests

- High-value forest layer is very outdated and currently irrelevant
 - Based on the CBP's Resource Lands Assessment (circa 2006) which produced a layer of forests of high value to water quality using 1997 satellite imagery.
- Don't have "date of establishment" for protected lands so can't track "new" acres of protection
 - PA started tracking "date of establishment" and found that in the last ~25 years, there has been a big shift towards ag easements

Revising the protected lands outcome

- Set a sub-goal for the conservation of any forest land (rather than establishing a new high-priority forest layer)
 - Should this be for “forest”? Or any tree cover?
- Set another sub-goal for the conservation of riparian forest buffers

Setting a new forest conservation target

- ~3/4 (74.1%) of protected lands are in forest
- New forest conservation goal could aim to maintain 75% of the total protected lands footprint in forest
- Consider whether this should be a conserved forests vs. a conserved tree cover goal

Setting a new riparian forest buffer conservation target

- Conserved riparian forest is currently 12% of the total amount of conserved forest and 8% of the total amount of protected lands
- New riparian forest conservation goal could aim to maintain 10% of the total protected lands footprint in riparian forest



Discussion



Thank you!!