

FWG Meeting

November 6th, 2013

Participants: Sally Claggett, Julie Mawhorter, Anne Hairston-Strang, Derrick McDonald, Judy Okay, Rebecca Hanmer, Sloane Crawford, Stephanie Eisenbise, Tom Ward, Jordan Freeman, Shanita Brown, Kathleen Cullen, Craig Highfield, Eric Sprague, Lou Etgen, Tim Culbreth, Herb Peddicord, Alli Baird, Sara Nicholas, Tracey Coulter, Earl Bradley, Mike Santucci, Greg Evans, Tuana Phillips

Action Items:

- All FWG members:
 - You have one week to provide feedback on the Forest Buffer Status paper after it is posted online on Friday the 8th of November.
 - A draft of the Chesapeake Working Lands Conservation Strategy will be made available sometime in January 2014.
- Julie and Sally:
 - Send or post the Chesapeake Bay Program Modeling Team's presentation on priority BMPs in WIPs (Sweeney's watermelon slides).
- Regarding the Riparian Forest Buffer Status paper:
 - Reconnect with Delaware – make sure they are aware of this status paper.
- Contact New York to better understand the success of their wetland program.
- Look for ways to make expiring CRP/CREP contract information more easily accessible at state level.

Introductions

- Nick DiPasquale stopped by briefly to say hello and let the FWG know that he strongly believes in the work FWG is doing. He acknowledged the challenges of restoring forest buffers and encouraged the FWG to use the Bay Program office as a resource. Anne Hairston-Strang pointed out that the CREP could be better supported in Farm Bill policy.
- Congratulations to Frank Rodgers, who is the new Executive Director of the Cacapon Institute.

Riparian Forest Buffer Status Paper: Sally Claggett and Julie Mawhorter

For more information, please see Sally's PowerPoint presentation that is available on today's meeting website page. Additional notes are included below.

- Overall introduction:
 - Julie and Sally have been compiling information from recent studies and other resources; the intent of this status paper is to bring all of this information together in a coherent fashion for a broad audience.
 - The Status Paper will be posted Friday (11/08/13). Afterwards there will be a week for feedback.
- Slide 4:
 - For the “watermelon chart” on slide four: green represents agriculture, yellow represents urban, and red represents point source pollution. Note: there is also a separate chart for phosphorus.
- Slide 5:
 - Julie pointed out that the FWG should learn from the counties and local communities that achieved 75% of the buffer acres restored
- Slide 6:
 - A reminder for all states (except for Maryland) to consider the gaps between acres/year needed and 2012 CP-22 acres. Maryland – it might be a good idea to see whether USDA has moderate WIP goals that can be improved.
 - Much of EQIP and CBWI funding has gone towards projects not related to forest buffers; other practices were prioritized.
- Slide 8:
 - Sally encourages States to reach out prior to the re-enrollment period (some landowners may not be aware that their contracts are expiring, or may need to be made eligible for re-enrollment). FSA would be the best contact for this. Julie pointed out that the addresses and landowner names to these expiring contracts are available. Outreach efforts, however, may be limited by staff support within NRCS and FSA.
 - Questions:
 1. Should we ask landowners if they plan to leave the forest buffers intact over time? Are they punished if they do not keep their forest buffers intact? How can we hold their feet to the fire?
 2. How can we help FSA if they are lacking in staff support?
- Slide 9:
 - Stephanie Eisenbise spoke about the Arbor Day grants through Arbor Day Foundation: 13,000 trees were ordered for PA plantings.

- Slide 10:
 - CREP is the best tool available for forest buffers. There are a few other programs, but the point is that CREP has what we need--- it is funded, highly beneficial to the landowner, and has a longer-term commitment – but is not being used to the extent needed.
- Other ideas and suggestions:
 - Tom Ward (NRCS) spoke about Illinois, where up to 2,000 feet wide buffers were developed. A floodplain/hydrologic rational helped achieve this; it was also controversial because it required a lot of money.
 - One idea: use low, flexible shrubbery in first stretch (drainage ditch area) where equipment is used and then beyond that plant trees.
 - Suggestion: It might be worth training champions and use leadership as a tool for this.
 - Suggestion: include a summary or section in the Status Paper describing forest buffer barriers and challenges.

Riparian Forest Buffer Conservation Programs

Maryland (presented by Anne Hairston-Strang):

For more information, please see the PowerPoint presentation available online.

- Additional notes:
 - CREP easement progress – expenditures may depend on political situation.
 - Existing mature forest buffers are included in CREP easements.
 - Easement programs are permanent.
 - Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Law – only applies to tidal waters.

Pennsylvania (presented by Derrick McDonald):

- PA Easement program started informally. DEP worked with PALTA to develop a modeled agreement. After receiving feedback from property owners, an entire website was made of tools available for easement-related topics.
- DEP is working with three partners– storm management (102) program, wetlands and mining programs – to put buffers on land and develop easements.
- In addition, PA is working with larger conservancies to figure out what they are doing in terms of conserved lands and whether it would be possible for DEP to piggy-back onto their efforts. Stewardship funds are needed, and there are some barriers due to how the program was run in the past.

- Partnership with Fish and Boat Commission – FBC is interested in public access; PA is interested in good water quality. A pilot project was established in Juniata – DEP provided 40,000 dollars and 7 miles of buffer were acquired for easements. Everyone's interests were met, and it worked really well. The project's easements widths averaged 50 feet.
 - Next month: 8 counties will begin similar projects.
 - Fish and Boat Commission stream bank work was a part of the project, too.
- Partnership with State Ag. program and its preservation projects; still young.
- DEP listed riparian buffer easements as BMP option, and counties, local municipalities, and individuals interpreted it as a requirement. PA has found that educating the people, letting them know that there is a need to do it, actually works really well in convincing them.
- Note: Fish and Boat easements require public access.
- The number of protected buffer acres is not available. This may be known in the future as data is collected.

Virginia (presented by Judy Okay):

For more information, please see the PowerPoint presentation available online.

- Additional notes:
 - The tool box mentioned on slide 4 can be found on DOF Website.
 - The Last Legacy grant in 2010 provided 2.2 million dollars for protecting acres and easements.
 - The CREP easement program's status in Virginia is not known.

West Virginia (Herb Peddicord):

- There are currently no projects or plans to protect forest buffers in West Virginia (as far as Herb knows).

New York:

- New York was not available to speak at this time, but earlier in the meeting they mentioned a Trees for Tribes program in their state that is related to forest buffer conservation.

LandScape Chesapeake: Jonathan Doherty

- <http://www.landscape.org/chesapeake/>
- History:

- A few years ago, a goal was established to support and further land conservation in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and develop a tool for doing so that would be publicly accessible.
- LandScope America system was used to achieve this goal.
- LandScope Chesapeake was launched August 2012
(<http://www.landscape.org/chesapeake>)
- LandScope America is a national resource for practitioners and land trusts; it includes various datasets and maps available and can be used for different stakeholders with different interests.
- Functions: you can turn on separate layers (e.g., high value forests, protected lands, etc.); there is also tool to identify who/what organizations are protecting the land.
- Explore Map Reports tool – only available for the Chesapeake region! You can select your county of interest, and your options are:
 - Protected vs. unprotected land
 - Protected areas by ownership type
 - Protected areas by land cover type

Chesapeake Working Lands Conservation Strategy: Julie Mawhorter

For more information, please see the PowerPoint presentation available online.

- This Strategy is an opportunity to bring more attention to conservation.
- Forest Legacy program – this is a federal and state partnership. There is a lot of room for improvement, and it is possible for states to receive funding from this after a competitive process.
- A draft will be sent out by January 2014 for feedback.

Announcements:

- Maryland:
 - Grant submittals to the US Forest Service Competitive Allocation were due last Monday. MD submitted proposals on the protection of landscapes, invasive plants, stockings in riparian buffers, wood waste, Firewise, and several others.
 - Maryland hopes to analyze the outcomes of thinning in some buffers (costs and benefits); and are working on a Parks and People community project.
- Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay:
 - Urban Tree Canopy Commitment anniversary – a chance to see what we have learned and what progress has been made in communities.

- Two other Competitive Allocation proposals were submitted: Chesapeake Forest Initiative – a way to support and enhance woodland stewards program (3 days of training for landowners).
- Real Estate program with Bureau of Forestry project in Pennsylvania will be enhanced and will include a training aspect.
- Received a lot of positive feedback from this year's Chesapeake Watershed Forum track on Forests. It was the most popular track at the Forum.
- A Climate Change conference in northern Virginia is coming up.
- VA applied for a grant to do outreach for riparian buffers. They hope to prioritize areas for this and will be using billboards.
- A representative from Virginia shared that the Bay initiative is being used as an example for Mississippi tree planting projects.
- Congratulations to the Chesapeake Restoration Forest Strategy Report Teams that won a Two Chief's Award in 2012 (we just found out). There will be a recognition ceremony at the NAASF/NA Executive Team meeting at Grey Towers later this month.
- BMP verification efforts got slowed down a bit by the government shutdown, but should be making progress again.
- The City of Annapolis may develop its first forest protection initiative after many, many years.