
Riparian Forest Buffer Outcome

*Katie Brownson, USFS
Forestry Workgroup Coordinator*

Through the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, the Chesapeake Bay Program has committed to...

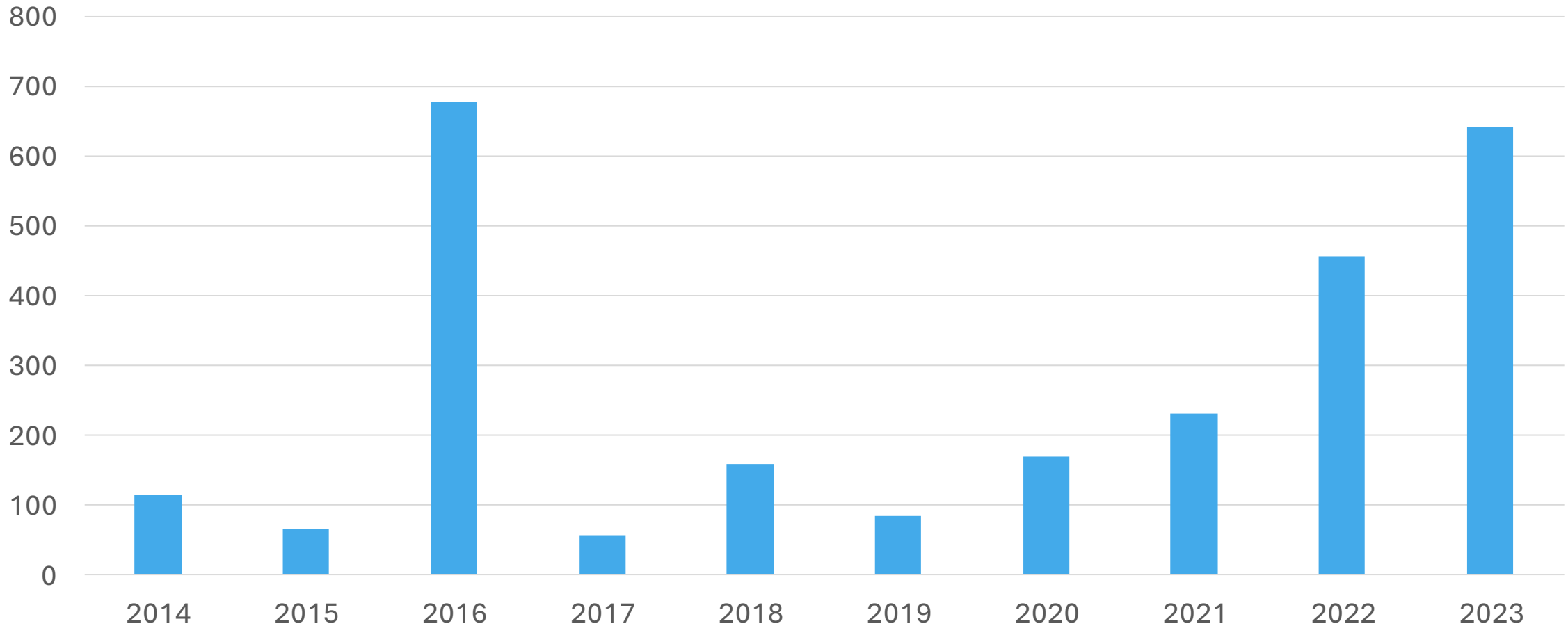


Vital Habitats Goal

Riparian Forest Buffer Outcome: *Restore 900 miles per year of riparian forest buffer and conserve existing buffers* until at least 70 percent of riparian areas throughout the watershed are forested.

457 miles planted in 2022, 640.5 miles planted in 2023!!

Miles of RFB planted since 2014 Watershed Agreement



Investments in flexible buffer programs are paying off!

Benefits

- Quick, easy landowner sign-up
- Funding available on a rolling basis
- Broad eligibility (ag and non-ag)
- Limited or no out-of-pocket costs for landowners
- Turnkey programs deliver all needed site prep and maintenance

State examples:

- DE: Buffer Incentive Program
- MD: Healthy Forests, Healthy Waters
- NY: USC Water Quality Program, Trees for Tribs
- PA: DCNR Community Conservation Partnerships Program, ACB Riparian Forest Buffer Project
- VA: James River Buffer Program (and forthcoming Riparian Forests for Landowners Program)
- WV: Potomac Conservancy Safe Water Conservation Collaborative

68.85% of the riparian area is forested

100 ft buffer	Forest Cover- Acres 2013/2014	Forest Cover- Acres 2017/2018	Forest Cover- % area 2017/18	Net Change- Acres (2013/14-2017/18)
DE (2013-2018)	30,806	30,591	55.48%	-214
DC (2013-2017)	920	909	52.33%	-11
MD (2013-2018)	407,298	405,852	58.90%	-1,445
NY (2013-2017)	209,272	209,420	63.15%	148
PA (2013-2017)	984,794	981,475	68.98%	-3,319
VA (2014-2018)	1,386,640	1,370,811	72.92%	-15,829
WV (2014-2018)	203,816	202,743	75.11%	-1,073
Total CBW	3,223,546	3,201,802	68.85%	-21,743

- Both VA and WV have >70% of the riparian area forested
- To reach 70% forested, an additional 53,334 acres needs to be restored (=~4400 miles)
- Over 21,000 acres of riparian forest was lost, with only NY showing a net gain
- Caveats: The imagery is better at detecting loss than gains, some of the losses are likely in areas (like ditches/gullies) that are not supporting aquatic life

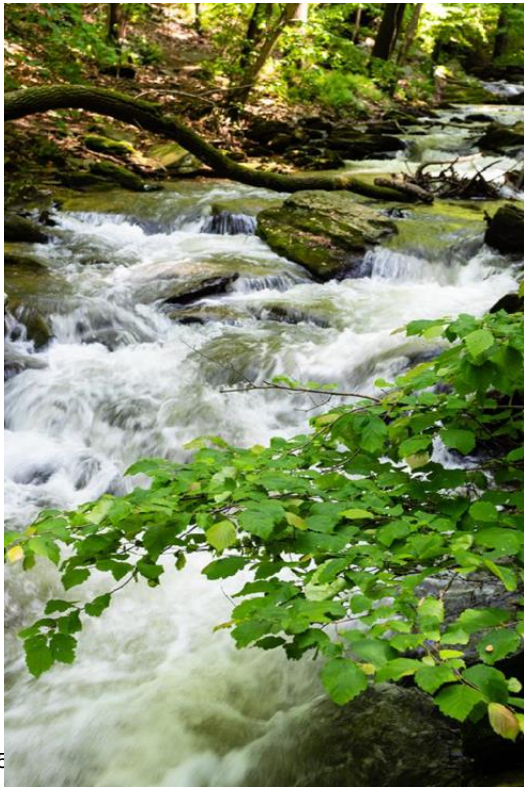
Re-focusing on Forest Buffer Conservation

- Expand availability of forest buffer easement programs and strengthen policies to reduce loss
- GIT funding proposal:
 - Identify best practices and model policies and easement programs that could be replicated
- Develop dedicated funding streams for maintenance and long-term stewardship
- Food for thought: What can the Bay Program and Management Board members do to help minimize the loss of Forest Buffers?



Decisions from the last QPM

Request: 1. Commit to a tracking and accountability framework for the state Action Strategies: a. Report on progress in 2-year programmatic milestones. b. Provide annual updates on plan implementation at MB meetings between now and 2025.



Decision: ACTION 1: Beginning February 2023, **Jurisdictions will provide annual updates to the Management Board on the implementation of their respective Forest Buffer and Wetlands action plans. The Jurisdictions will begin reporting on RFB implementation in their milestones where applicable** beginning this year or next year if possible. Logistics will be confirmed by CBPO staff who will issue reminders to the Management Board.

Decisions from the last QPM

Request: 2.a Support investments in effective standalone flexible buffer programs (existing and new programs). 2.b Improve grant and Funding Provisions to better support building capacity in staff, contractors and outreach.



Decision: ACTION 2.a/2.b: Where possible, each jurisdiction (and appropriate federal agencies) will work to support actions 2.a and 2.b and will report progress at our annual Riparian Forest Buffer / Wetland Action Plan report out to the MB each February (along with whatever other actions from State plans they want to highlight). The Management Board's subsequent discussion as part of this annual agenda item will be to **identify ways that MB members or the partnership can help support these actions and any specific items that we would like to elevate to the PSC for action** in order to improve progress.

Discussion

- How can we continue to maintain accountability for and better support implementation of the Forest Buffer Action Strategies?
- Should we move from annual presentations/discussions on progress to state-level meetings?

TREES on FARMS

