



## Chesapeake Bay Program

*Science. Restoration. Partnership.*

Forestry Workgroup Meeting  
August 2nd, 2023  
[Meeting Materials](#)

Rob Feldt, MD DNR

Craig Highfield, ACB

Rachel Felver, ACB

Katie Brownson, USFS

Susan Minnemeyer

Dexter Locke, USFS

Steven Guinn, CC

Catlin Verdu, VDOF

Meghan Noe Fellows

Joe Schell, DNREC

Ned Brockmeyer, PA BOF

Celine Colbert, PA BOF

Robbie Coville, PA BOF

Teddi Stark, PA BOF

Cassie Davis, NYDEC

Lydia Brinkley, USC

Frank Rodgers, Cacpon inst.

Rick Turcotte, USFS

Kesha Braunskill, USFS

Sarah Weigland, MD DNR

Emily Heller, EPA

Patti Webb DNREC

Sophie Waterman, CRC

Will McGrath, CRC

Sarah McDonald, USGS

Phobe Higgins, EPIC

Kavita Kapur Macleod, EPIC

Grace Edinger, EPIC

Harry Huntley, EPIC

**Announcements-** *Katie Brownson, USFS, Coordinator*

### **Nominations for Forestry Workgroup Co-Chairs**

Rebecca Hanmer will be transitioning out of her role as chair after many years of service. We will be restructuring the workgroup to have two co-chairs- one focused on urban and community forestry and one focused on rural watershed forestry. Katie Brownson announced the two nominations to fill the new co-chair positions. Kesha Braunskill of the USFS has been nominated to the Urban and Community Forestry Co-Chair position. Anne Hairston Strange of MD DNR has been nominated to the Rural Watershed Forestry Co-Chair Position. To read their resumes, please head to the meeting website. Voting members will be getting an email asking for concurrence on the nominations.

### **Update on Reaching 25 and Beyond 25**

Katie talked about the Bay programs Reaching 2025 and Beyond 2025 initiatives. The EC has split the initiative into two groups, one focused on reaching 2025 and another on what needs to be done beyond 2025. A [draft report](#) from the Reaching 2025 team has been sent around for review. There is a section that focuses on forest buffers and wetlands, and members were requested to focus on that section especially.

**Update on new GIT funding project: Optimizing Riparian Forest Buffer Implementation for Climate**

Katie discussed the GIT funding project Optimizing Riparian Forest Buffer Implementation for Climate Adaptation and Resilience. The Chesapeake Conservancy is the contractor for that project and has started to put together a steering committee. If you are interested in joining the steering committee or want to learn more about the project, please email Katie ([Katherine.Brownson@usda.gov](mailto:Katherine.Brownson@usda.gov))

### Land Use/Land Cover Tree Canopy Planned Updates- Sarah McDonald, USGS

Sarah opened her presentation by reminding the workgroup about previous decisions made back in December and January. The reason for these new planned updates are because the Land Use Data Team talked with FIA and got a better idea of how they classify forests. The Land Use Data Team is now trying to make rules that are similar to how FIA classifies things. There was one non-FIA proposed rule within the list of new rules. The workgroup then talked about each of the proposed rules:

- Non-FIA Proposed Rule: Do not buffer Turf Grass in large parcels (>1-acre) to map Tree Canopy over Turf
- FIA Proposed Rule: Remove Tree Canopy over Turf Grass before assessing for Forest.
- FIA Proposed Rule: If the diameter is < 120-feet (36-meters), it is Tree Canopy, Other (not forest).
- FIA Proposed Rule (Option 1): Patch of natural succession (> an acre, >= 36-meter diameter) with >= 10% Tree Canopy, the Tree Canopy is Forest. Proposed Rule (Option 2): Any Tree Canopy within a regenerative patch (Natural Succession or harvested forest) that meets forest patch metrics (1-acre, 36-meters) is Forest, regardless of the percentage of Tree Canopy.

#### *Feedback on Non-FIA Proposed Rule: Do not buffer Turf Grass in large parcels (>1-acre) to map Tree Canopy over Turf:*

Katie Brownson asked what the why was behind this proposed rule. Sarah said that some feedback they got is that they are mapping too much tree canopy over turf grass. The data team might be overestimating the TCOTC class. The thought is that a landowner with over an acre of TCOTC might not be mowing the turf grass. This change is to help be more reflective of understory.

Dexter noted that this is a classic land use problem and asked if the new rules would be applied to previous iterations of the LU/LC data. Sarah responded Yes, the current two dates that have been mapped will also get these rules applied. When the new 2024 data is released, there will be a re-release of the old data with new rules.

Susan Minnemeyer agreed with the idea of changing the tree canopy over turf grass, especially on larger lots that might have forest fragments. She mentioned the Maryland Forest Conservation Act, which protects forests from non-natural vegetation and development, making it a reason for the change. Susan also raised a question about changing the width definition of a forest from 240 feet to 120 feet and how that might increase the total amount of forested land. Susan also wanted to know if the gaps in the forest cover are being mapped incorrectly by high-resolution data and if they might be incorrectly categorized as non-forest areas.

Sarah noted that the changes are likely to increase forest numbers and decrease tree canopy over turf numbers. She also noted that the new rules will serve as the baseline for future mapping phases. Sarah explained that they are working on defining rules for small vegetative patches surrounded by forest to

account for natural succession. She also clarified that the changes they made only focused on the tree canopy classes for consistency.

Rob Feldt noted that this rule looks really good.

#### **There were no objections to this rule change.**

*Feedback on FIA Proposed Rule: Remove Tree Canopy over Turf Grass before assessing for Forest:*

Robbie Coville asked what the difference between tree canopy other and tree canopy over turf grass or forest and how would this data be used. The answer is there is a difference in function.

Robbie also noted that this rule makes sense, and could see arguments either way but it looks reasonable. However, consistency with FIA is a good deciding factor!

Susan Minnemeyer also agreed with the change and saw it as an improvement.

#### **There were no objections to this rule change.**

*Discussion on FIA Proposed Rule: If the diameter is < 120-feet (36-meters), it is Tree Canopy, Other (not forest):*

Susan Minnemeyer noted that the rule made sense, and it is good to be consistent with FIA. This rule will impact forest buffers, Sarah will be back in future meetings to discuss those implications.

Rob Feldt noted that he is in favor of using FIA methodology.

#### **There were no objections to this rule change.**

*Discussion on FIA Proposed Rule (Option 1): Patch of natural succession (> an acre, >= 36-meter diameter) with >= 10% Tree Canopy, the Tree Canopy is Forest. Proposed Rule (Option 2): Any Tree Canopy within a regenerative patch (Natural Succession or harvested forest) that meets forest patch metrics (1-acre, 36-meters) is Forest, regardless of the percentage of Tree Canopy.*

Susan Minnemeyer noted that she likes option two better. From a land use perspective, if it is a managed forest, the tree canopy would be considered forest regardless of where it is in the harvest cycle. In terms of land use change, is natural succession one of the categories of forest?

Sarah noted that it is dependent on the use case and questions being asked.

Katie noted that she liked option one rather than option two.

Rob Feldt noted that he would like to see more examples before deciding.

#### **This rule change will be taken to the Timber Harvest Task Force for further discussion and decision-making.**

[Accelerating Progress on Riparian Forest Buffer Goals: Financial and Human Capacity Factors](#)- Will McGrath, CRC (C-StREAM intern)

Will McGrath spent his summer gathering data and accounts from various partners around the Bay about the staffing and financial capacity of their organizations. He has analyzed this information to find ways to increase Riparian Forest Buffers in the Bay Watershed.

Will was tasked with evaluating the financial and human capacity needed for accelerating RFB planting. He did this through interviews with partners and asked questions relating staffing, funding sources and programs.

Will found that one full-time staff member provides coordination and project planning (among other things) for about 20-35 acres. Planting and maintenance are typically done by contractors or volunteers. Utilizing partnerships and programs also impacts the number of acres a full-time staffer can manage. The location of the plantings, contractor availability, and yearly fluctuation in projects also impact the numbers.

Staffing is needed! Will found that 311-397 more full-time employees need to be hired to meet the forest buffer goals. This amount of staff would require a large increase in contractor capacity and internal capacities. Will ran through some case studies, talked about challenges and opportunities, recommendations, and next steps/future research.

### *Discussion*

Sophie asked how Will came up with the 311-397 range. What research led to that range?

Will took the 20-35 acres pre-staff person and how many people are already working full time and compared it to the overall goal of needing to plant 900 acres to come up with the 311-397 range to fill the gap. Katie noted that this “back of the napkin” number is useful to help convey the need.

Rob Schnabel asked about what it took landowners to voluntarily put a buffer on their land. Was it enough for them to just have funds for implementation and maintenance, or was there any talk about the need for incentives?

If the Buffers are paid for and maintenance is done, landowners are pretty receptive to having them planted. There is such a high demand for them, that additional incentives are not really impacting the demand.

### **Developing and initiating a Riparian Forest Buffer Outcomes Purchase Fund in the Chesapeake Bay Region- - Phobe Higgins, Kavita Kapur Macleod, Grace Edinger, Harry Huntley, The Environmental Policy Innovation Center (EPIC)**

EPIC has been working on a GIT-funded project to develop and initiate a Riparian Forest Buffer Outcomes Purchase Fund. The plan works to deeply understand current barriers and create an approach that mitigates them using a strong understanding of conservation finance and business plan development.

The EPIC team talked about the Pay for Success Model, provided an overview of the proposed fund, and talked about buyers, outreach agreements, and contracting.

Pay for Success is a payment for OUTCOMES, not activities. At the beginning of a project, there is a contracted price for an outcome, so there is no need for itemized budgets/receipts. This system is easier to put up as the up front process is smoother than traditional models.

Maryland’s Clean Water Commerce Program is an example of what pay for success looks like in action.

The proposed Chesapeake Bay Riparian Forest Buffer Outcomes Fund would be a fund that capitalized from various funding sources (such as State Revolving Funds). RFB projects would be funded, and the

outcome would be that acres of riparian forest buffers would be established. Contractors would be selected based on scoring criteria. The fund would select bids and complete P4S contracts with selected bidders. Projects are then completed and verified, and the outcomes are purchased by Fund, OR bought by another willing buyer.

### *Discussion*

Lydia Brinkley asked if there is a timeframe for when a buffer is “established”?

1 to 5 years, but open to other thoughts. Lydia noted that she is located in NY and it can take up to 7 years for establishment.

Lydia also asked if a group that puts the buffer in would have to wait until establishment, and the answer is no. 20% of the funds are released at planting, 30% at three years of maintenance, and the last 50% at five years of maintenance.

Susan Minnemeyer noted that the Family Forest Carbon Program would be an interesting model for this, especially for aggregating outcomes from many small landowners. I also agree on not limiting the width - if it is a property with a riparian boundary, expanding the forest up to the whole property would likely deliver a lot of benefits, and then the property could also count towards forest mitigation (like Maryland Forest Conservation Act requirements).

Patti Webb asked why you would limit the width to 100 ft? CRP/CREP goes to 180 ft.

Phobe responded by saying we have also discussed how you might use additional scoring criteria to rate larger buffers higher.

Jermey Hanson asked if this could be a good candidate for sandboxing.

EPIC has yet to figure out which pieces would be able to be in a sandbox.

Frank asked about how this fund could help with a capacity gap that was brought up earlier in the meeting. More prototyping is needed to see how funding positions could be possible.

**No Round Robin**