



Chesapeake Bay Program

Science. Restoration. Partnership.

Forestry Workgroup Meeting

March 6, 2024

[Meeting Materials](#)

[Zoom Link](#)

Meeting ID: 840 1142 2070 Passcode: Forestry
Conference Line: 13017158592 Passcode:*66165995#

Megan Noe Fellows
Taryn Davidson
Tedi Stark
Kalaia Tripeaux
Lydia Brinkley
Alanna Crowley
Susan Minnemeyer
Katie Browson
Rob Schnabel
Catlin Verdu
Anne Hairston-Strang

Rick Turcotte
William Byrum
Kesha Braunskill
Helen Golimowski, Devereux Consulting
Judy Okay
Frank Rodgers
Patti Webb
Ruth Cassily
Caitlin Bolton from COG
Sophie Waterman
Lorenzo Cinalli

9:00 Welcome- *Anne Hairston-Strang, MD DNR, Co-Chair of FWG*

9:10 Forestry Workgroup New Members Guide- *Lorenzo Cinalli, USFS*

Lorenzo provided an overview of a new "[Forestry Workgroup New Members Guide](#)" and requested input.

Discussion

Anne noted that adding information about Bay accounting and tracking could be helpful. A note about the different BMPs that the forestry workgroup cares about and where they fall in terms of sectors (clarifying they are considered both agricultural and urban practices) could be beneficial to people who are just learning about modeling and the Bay Program.

Katie noted that a high-level overview of practices could be something to add, but don't want to provide too much detail to avoid overwhelming readers. We provide links with off-ramps for folks interested in learning more.

Catlin Verdu noted that a document like this could have extremely helpful when she first onboarded, and that it took her a long time to figure everything out.

In the chat, Susan Minnemeyer wrote:

This looks very helpful – I'll echo Caitlin that it took a long time to feel like I understood all of the places, I and uses, etc, where forests & trees help us move towards Bay Program goals.

Action- Members were requested to provide feedback to Lorenzo on the new member guide by 3/22.

9:20 Beyond 2025 Update and Discussion- *Katie Browson, USFS*

Katie provided an update on the Beyond 2025 Steering Committee activities and led a discussion on draft recommendations related to Healthy Watersheds and Climate Change small groups, as they have the most overlap with forestry initiatives.

At the end of February, the Bay Program held a two-day symposium, during which each of the small groups delivered recommendations. The recommendations are now in the revision stage. Katie sought input from the FWG.

CLIMATE RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Develop and implement a framework for a climate adaptive Bay of the future— Better integration of climate in the partnership and bay watershed as a whole.
2. Improve Resilience of Communities to Key Regional Climate Vulnerabilities- Building capacity of communities.
3. Promote Carbon Stewardship as a Holistic Approach to Climate Mitigation – Climate mitigation is not something the Bay program has historically worked with. What can the Bay program do with climate mitigation? Carbon mitigation practices include forest management (this would be a new focus for the Bay Program).
 - a. Advance the understating of carbon stewardship science.
 - b. Improve considerations of carbon in land use planning and decision-making making.
 - c. Improve regional coordination around carbon stewardship using natural climate solutions.
4. Promote Strategies for Healthy and Productive Ecosystems Under Changing Climate Conditions — Conduct additional research to understand future conditions. Use nature-based solutions, track ecosystem health and status change.
5. Promote Regenerative Agricultural Production and Regionally Based Food Systems in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed – The Bay program has historically focused on BMP implementation rather than looking at the food system as a whole. This recommendation would involve an increased focus on soil health and developing a soil health outcome. There is an opportunity for us to better collaborate with groups doing work around regenerative and regional food systems. We can help advance accounting for agricultural carbon, soil health, and the incentives, policies and practices that benefit soil health. Systemic change is needed to move towards regenerative regional food systems.

Comments on CLIMATE RECOMMENDATIONS:

Susan Minnemeyer noted that she was happy to see the word mitigation mentioned. Nature-based solutions, including agroforestry, that support climate, mitigation, adaptation, and resilience also further water quality, biodiversity, and other goals.

Rob Schnabel noted that it is excellent to see Regenerative Agriculture! 5 soil principles are key. Trees play an important role with Regenerative Agriculture.

Rick Turcotte noted that forest health research has not really touched on soil health, and it's terrific to see that this is a priority. We need to better understand how our soils are changing and what the

implications will be for forest health. Putting this as a priority to help with funding and research into soils is important and exciting.

HEALTHY WATERSHEDS RECOMMENDATIONS

Vanguard idea: Integrate a more holistic and people-centric approach to improving and maintaining watershed health as a foundational goal of the partnership.

1. Use **monitoring data, assessment, and tools**, to characterize and track watershed health at various scales to inform and increase implementation. Calling on us to use a multi-dimensional indicator of how well a watershed is supporting healthy and climate-resilient ecosystems and communities.
2. Support **strategic green infrastructure planning for watershed health** at multiple scales. Integrate land conservation and stewardship into the goals of the Bay program and create a comprehensive plan for the Bay Program. There are also opportunities to integrate other state-level plans, including State Forest Action Plans.

ACTION: With states updating their State Forest Action Plans in 2025, we should look at potential changes needed to the Chesapeake Multi-state priority area section to better address current Bay Program priorities.

3. Increase the reach and effectiveness of **local community and partner engagement** through capacity building.
4. Integrate **land conservation and stewardship** more explicitly into the goals of the Bay Program.
 - Land conservation and protection is cheaper than restoration in reducing pollution and avoiding impacts to waterways. Conservation could be elevated as a key pillar of the partnership alongside restoration, science and partnership.
 - Stewardship – expand goals to include long-term maintenance and management of protected and restored areas to maintain ecosystem function.
5. Revise the Bay Program’s **accountability framework** to promote protecting, restoring, and maintaining watershed health.
 - Accountability framework — created to provide reasonable assurance that states would meet the requirements of the TMDL. A revision could include shifting towards counting outcomes rather than practices.

Comments on HEALTHY WATERSHEDS RECOMMENDATIONS

Rob noted that we should add language to the prevention of pollution bullet and clarify that we mean prevention of pollution at the source.

Susan Minnemeyer liked the inclusion of conservation as a low-cost way to achieve investment. Prevention and avoiding land conversion focusing in areas that we see high levels of conversion.

WRAP UP:

The recommendations are getting finalized in March. In June, the full report draft will be out for public comment, and in October, the final report will be complete.

Anne mentioned that we should consider how the implementation of these recommendations would get funded. With forestry, if there are good markets, these stewardship practices could help pay for themselves.

Katie responded that funding will likely be more of a focus for phase 2, but as we are setting priorities in phase 1, we can call out the importance of markets in providing financial support for some practices.

9:50 Forestry BMPs for Phase 7- Katie Brownson, USFS; Lorenzo Cinalli, USFS; and Ruth Cassilly, UMD

The Bay Program is currently working on developing a new version of the watershed model ([Phase 7](#)). Katie, Lorenzo, and Ruth identified potential updates or additions needed to our current suite of Forestry BMPs and request input from the group on priorities to pursue further.

The BMP recommendations included:

- Eliminating/extending the credit duration for forest buffers under permanent conservation easement:
 - Establish a separate “Conservation Riparian Forest Buffer” BMP that does not have a credit duration (i.e. the credit never expires) and/or has a longer credit duration than the current 15 years.
 - Comments:
 - Anne Hairston-Strang: In MD, some permanent conservation easements have protections for forest cover, and others (for example some agricultural easements) are not protective of forest cover. This may be something we look at with a fine-tooth comb.
 - Katie: We would need to specify that it would be for easements that maintain forest cover.
 - Patti Webb: CREP- Those who are not re-enrolled in CREP still have standing buffers, and they will not be accounted for in the model because they aren’t getting verified. Katie: This is a more significant issue that goes beyond the model that the Bay Program is trying to address through an EPA/USDA task force. Anne also noted that the CREP trees will get picked up in the land use model but will just use the efficiency credit.
 - Katie: A CREP Easements topic could be a future meeting topic.
- Expanding crediting of agroforestry practices:
 - Current Agricultural Tree Planting BMP: Tree plantings includes any tree planting, except those used to establish riparian forest buffers, targeting lands that are highly erodible or identified as critical resource areas.
 - Opportunity to better communicate practices that could fall under this BMP. There is a need to be clearer about what falls under the BMP.

- Ruth Cassilly went over the current USDA/NRCS practices and how they fit into CAST. There are 3 NRCS practices that do not currently fit into CAST but have the potential to be: Silvopasture, alleycropping, and forest farming. Ruth went into detail on silvopasture. There is a need to track silvopasture, whether that is asking, “Are these trees being planted in a pasture?” or “Was this tree stand converted to pasture?”
- Alternative crops and land retirement were also brought up as BMPs that could potentially be used to credit agroforestry practices.
- Comments
 - Rob Schnabel (in chat): For silvopasture one of the variables that changes is tree density. On average it is 50 trees per acre.
 - William Byrum (in chat): Many states in your area don't offer silvopasture when going from trees to a silvopasture system on the NRCS side. We [NRCS] are working to change silvopasture to a management practice and not establishment, to use practice 612 for establishment.
 - Anne asked for a deep dive into the specifics for these BMPs to better communicate to the need.
- Exploring potential pathways to incorporate forest health into BMPs.
 - Linking Knotweed control (invasive species) and a reduction of sediment. Lorenzo gave a short presentation on knotweed biology, its range throughout the CBW, and it's erosive potential on streambanks. A study in Quebec showed that streambank erosion was significant when comparing infested banks to non-infested banks. Establishing a practice for knotweed removal in riparian zones could be a way to incentivize forest health while also achieving significant sediment reductions. Lorenzo wanted to consult with the FWG to determine if this was of interest to FWG members and worth looking into.
 - Comments:
 - Lydia Brinkley: Would love to see a merge getting rid of invasives with the tree planting work. Worth exploring further.
 - Rick Turcotte: Tip of the iceberg of invasive plants and forest planting. Worth the exploration. We know it is a problem and documenting it and raising awareness can help focus limited dollars.
 - Rob Schnabel (in chat): Could all invasives be managed through this? bush honeysuckle, callery pear are a couple other critical ones
 - Meghan Noe Fellows (in chat): there's research out of the mid-west on the bush honeysuckles and benthics.

10:20 Riparian Forest Buffer Indicator Update- Katie Brownson, USFS

This spring, we will be updating our riparian forest buffer indicator on Chesapeake Progress and adding information on riparian land use. Katie shared the draft riparian land use data. Additional analyses are needed to better understand the drivers of riparian land use change and to inform restoration targeting. Once the indicator is published the workgroup will have more conversations on what we can do with the data.

10:45 Round Robin and Closing

Virginia: There are Sentential landscape coordinator positions are open and VA is hiring. The RFFL (Riparian Forests for Landowners) program is getting started. It will provide flexible, no-cost forest buffer installation and one year of maintenance to a variety of landowners across the state.

DE: Spring tree planting projects are underway. Annual competitive grant is now open for projects taking place in the fall.

PA: Working on filling a watershed regional position, and urban position. The annual Watershed Summit will be held September 17-19. More information to come soon.

MD: NRCS and RCPP grant for 7 million dollars that is focused on buffers and tree plantings. There is a new staff member leading the 5 million Trees Program, and the Urban and Community Tree Program. Ashley Triplett- Peltzman is leading 5 million trees, and Dan Coy is leading the Urban and Community Tree program. Francis Smith is currently in the process of setting up a class related to agroforestry at Frederick community college. DC: There will be Urban forestry meetings this summer
<https://doee.dc.gov/service/urban-forestry-advisory-council>

NY: The NY Climate Leadership Community Protection Act was passed in 2022, within it there are goals for large tree planting. Working with partnerships to help create more programs and get more trees in the ground. The State Practice Incentive payment NY was offering through CREP has expired in New York, this will lead to a huge decrease in NY. Looking for contractors to do maintenance. Over 200 acres were planted this spring.