



Riparian Forest Buffers

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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.

History of RFB goals in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed

- 1993/94: CBC Resolution and EC Directive on riparian forests: Directive 94-1 called to develop a set of goals and actions to increase the focus on riparian stewardship and enhance efforts to conserve and restore riparian forest buffers.
- 1996: First goal set for riparian forest buffers- “2,010 miles by 2010”
- 2000: Chesapeake 2000 Agreement
- 2003: EC Directive to restore 10,000 miles by 2010 and to conserve and **restore forests along at least 70% of all streams and shorelines**
- 2007: EC Directive on Forest Conservation set a goal **to restore 900 miles/year of RFBs**
- 2009: Federal Strategy set a goal to restore 63% of the total riparian miles (stream bank and shoreline) by 2025
- 2014: Current goal set in 2014 Watershed Agreement

How was the 2014 RFB Outcome established?

- Grounded in 2007 EC Forest Conservation Directive
- Estimating 55% of riparian area was forested, 900 miles/year would be needed through 2036 to reach 70% threshold
- During the most productive five years (between 1996-2012), an average 830 miles/year was planted
- When developing the WIPs, states estimated a need for an additional 185,000 acres of forest buffers over 13 years (~1,400 miles/year through 2025)

How do we measure progress?

Annual planting numbers

- States report BMP progress annually to CBP (usually by county)
- Progress numbers get compiled into cumulative progress scenarios that do not expire BMPs
- FWG calculates annual planting acreages using “no expiration” scenarios for the current year and the previous year
- Annual acreages get converted to miles using state-reported average buffer widths

Riparian Land Use

- Calculate amount and % of riparian forest in the 100 ft buffer (1:24K) using high-resolution land use data every 4-5 years
- Forest= Forest + Forested, Other



What is our Outlook and Recent Progress?

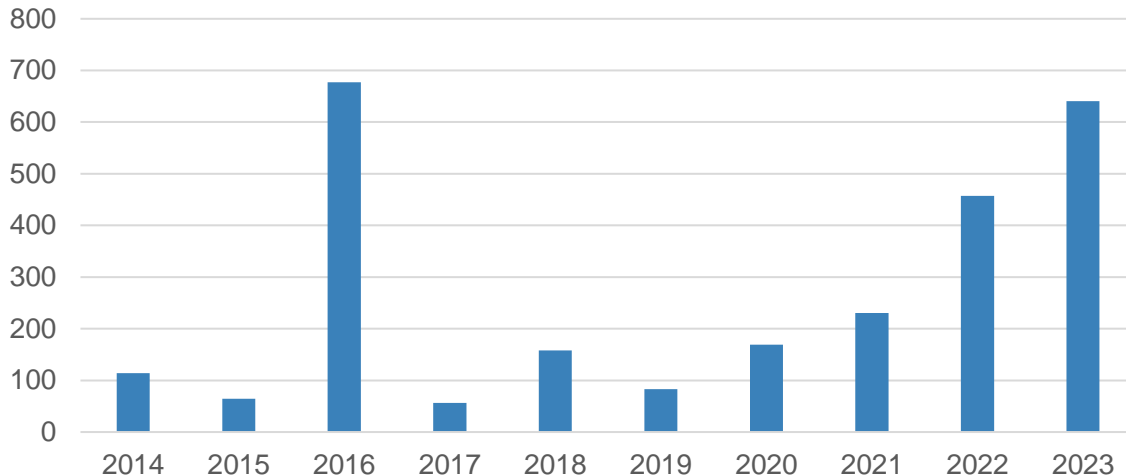


RECENT PROGRESS
INCREASE



OUTLOOK
OFF COURSE

Miles of RFB planted since 2014 Watershed Agreement



Forest Cover- % area

2017/18

DE- 55.48%

DC- 52.33%

MD- 58.90%

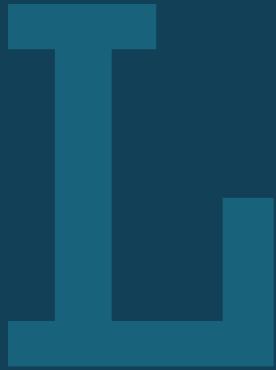
NY- 63.15%

PA- 68.98%

VA- 72.92%

WV- 75.11%

Total CBW- 68.85%



Learn

What have we learned in the last ten years?



Successes

- Increased federal and state funding for RFB planting and maintenance
- Technical Assistance support increased
- Some improvements with CREP
- Recent increases in planting rates
- Better data for understanding trends and targeting
- Leadership workshops/engagement
- State strategies and task force reports

Challenges

- Riparian forest loss
- Funding for long-term maintenance and stewardship
- Capacity!
- Sustaining momentum and funding once BIL/IRA funds expire
- Maintaining leadership engagement
- Limitations with CREP
- Climate change



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**What is the
value-add of
having this as
a Chesapeake
Bay Program
outcome?**

A large, stylized, blue letter 'A' is positioned on the left side of the slide. The background behind it is a dark blue gradient, which transitions into a lighter blue and then a green gradient at the bottom of the slide.

Adapt

Should we modify our outcome in an amended agreement? If so, how?



Is this outcome SMART (or SMARTIE)?

- Specific- Yes
- Measurable- Yes
- Achievable- ???
- Realistic- ???
- Time-bound- Yes

- Inclusive and Equitable?

Outputs vs. Outcomes

- Outcome: At least 70% of riparian areas throughout the watershed are forested
- Output or short-term outcome: Planting/conservation/stewardship targets to meet the outcome
- Should we maintain planting goals as part of our outcome? Or should we consider these to be outputs that we address in our Management Strategy?

Is the outcome appropriate for meeting restoration goals?

- 70% established by the partnership as the amount of riparian forest needed to maintain watershed health
- To achieve 70% forested from 2017/18, an additional 53,334 acres needs to be restored (=~4400 miles), assuming no additional loss occurs

Achievability and realistic-ness

- Since 2014, on average, watershed-wide, 265 miles/year have been planted
- At this rate, it would take 16.6 years to reach 70% forested (assuming no further loss)

- In the last 3 years, on average, 443 miles/year have been planted
- At this rate it would take 10 years to reach 70% forested

Timeframes and units of measure

- What is the timescale for completing the outcome? Is a 10-year target appropriate for achieving 70% of the watershed forested?
- Do we need interim annual goals?

Considerations for improving outcomes

Could/should the outcome be modified to:

- Better meet the goals and vision in the watershed agreement?
- Better address emerging challenges, including climate change and land use change?
- Better integrate conservation?
- Be more inclusive and equitable?



Recommendation options

- **Update:** Outcome intent is largely kept intact. Unique language may be necessary if it is more than just a SMART update. Key principle is maintaining the intent.
- **Consolidate** (i.e., Combine): Multiple Outcomes would be combined in a single Outcome, or activities contributing to an Outcome are dispersed across others
- **Remove:** The Outcome is removed from the 2014 Agreement.
- **Replace:** This language suggests that a novel Outcome replaces a current one and that it relates in its intent or subject area.

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**What should we
recommend to the
Management
Board for this
outcome in a
revised watershed
agreement?**

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**Could this
outcome be
improved? If so,
how?**



Discussion

Miles of Riparian Forest Buffers Planted in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, 1996-2021

