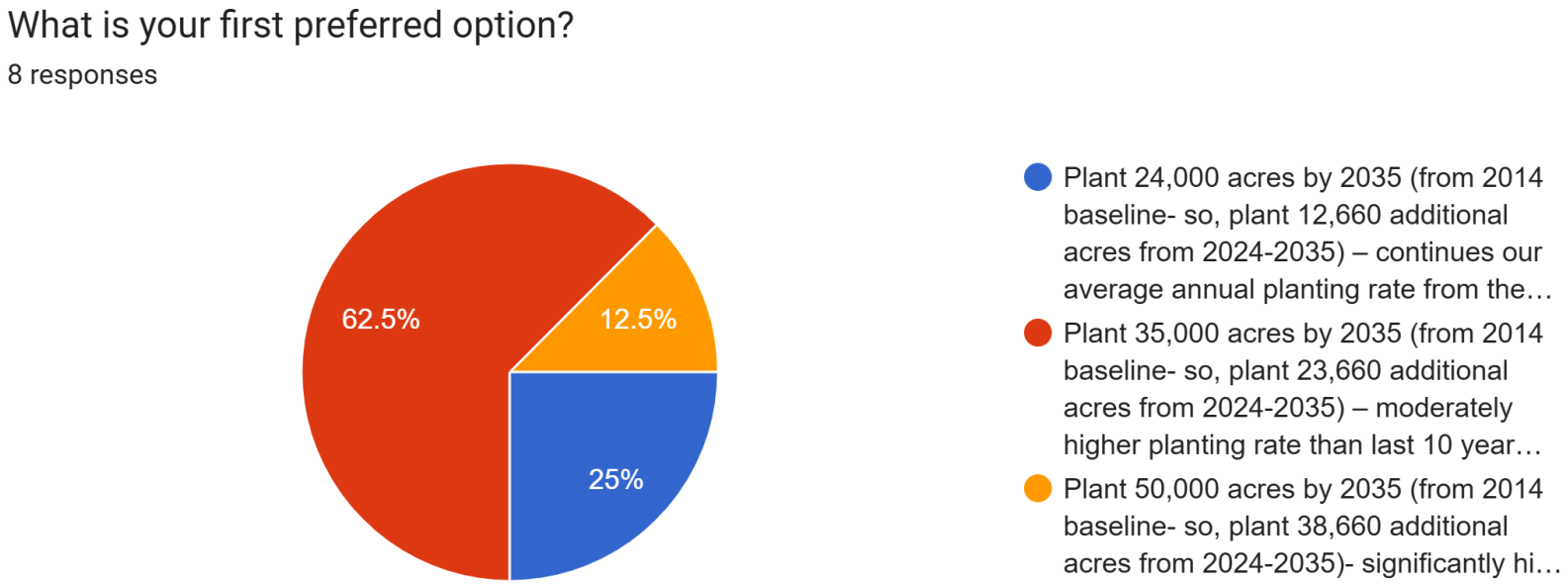
May Forestry Workgroup

Update on Beyond 2025

Recap of April meeting

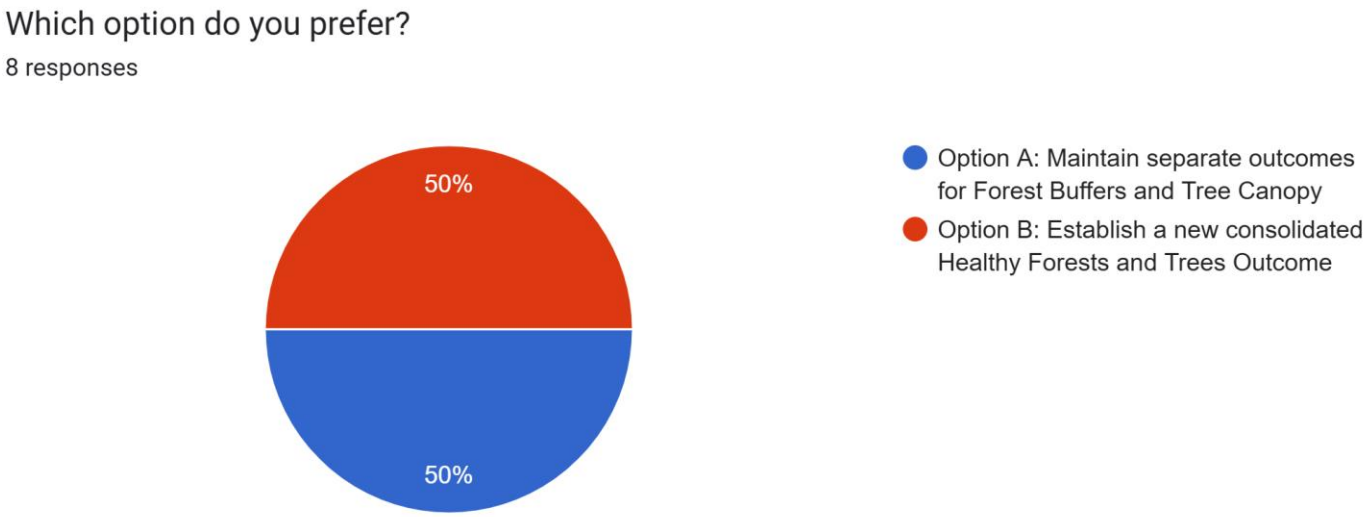
- Reviewed high-level progress towards updating the 2014 Watershed Agreement, including updates to goals and other related outcomes
- Discussed proposals to revise Forest Buffer and Tree Canopy outcomes
  - ***Forest Buffers***: *Restore and conserve forest buffers to maximize benefits for water quality, habitat, and people throughout the watershed. Working towards having 75% of riparian areas forested throughout the watershed, plant and maintain 7500 acres per year of riparian forest buffer and reduce the loss of existing forest buffers to achieve at least 71% of riparian areas forested by 2035.*
  - ***Tree Canopy***: *Conserve and expand community tree canopy to maximize air quality, water quality and public health benefits throughout the watershed. Working toward a net gain in canopy, plant and maintain ## new acres of community trees by 2035.*
- Considered pros/cons of consolidating into a more holistic “Healthy Forests and Trees” outcome

Forestry Workgroup input: Tree Canopy



- Most concerns expressed were with the 50,000 acre goal as being unattainable.
- Some concerns with 35,000 acres being too ambitious, but also interest in setting an inspiring goal

Forestry Outcomes in the amended Watershed Agreement: Workgroup Input



- 8/14 voting members responded to a quick turn-around poll
- Workgroup is split on whether to consolidate
- No one had blocking concerns with either option (no “stops” or “holds”)

Considerations for the Management Board

- Would a consolidated (but broader) “Healthy Forests and Trees” outcome better drive the partnership to our watershed restoration goals?
- Could we achieve the intent of elevating forests/trees in the Agreement through the proposed new “Lands” goal to allow the outcomes to remain more focused?

April Management Board Summary

- Finalized the list of outcomes to include in the revised Watershed Agreement
  - 31 Outcomes -> 21 Outcomes
- Established a structure for revised outcome language
  - High-level outcome language + “SMART” outcome targets
- Decided to consolidate the Forest Buffers and Tree Canopy outcome into a single “Healthy Forests and Trees” outcome with targets for Forest Buffers and Tree Canopy
- Post MB meeting: Requested workgroup input on draft consolidated language

May Management Board summary

- Approved draft outcome language for Healthy Forests and Trees outcome (with minor revisions)
- Some outcomes are still “under development” with placeholder language or numeric targets
- Continued discussing a proposal to consolidate 10 existing Goals into 4 broader goals
  - Current proposal includes a new “Conserved Lands, Forests and Watersheds” goal
- Next steps: Revised outcome language due tomorrow (5/14) for consideration by the PSC at their 5/23 meeting
  - Complete draft Agreement revisions in June for a July 1 public release

Healthy Forests and Trees

Water Quality GIT

Forestry Workgroup

Presenter: Katie Brownson

PROPOSED DRAFT OUTCOME LANGUAGE:

Conserve and restore forests and tree cover to maximize benefits for water quality, habitat and people throughout the watershed, with a particular focus on riparian areas and communities.

EXISTING 2014 AGREEMENT OUTCOME LANGUAGE:

Note the new outcome is consolidating and replacing two outcomes in the 2014 Watershed Agreement.

Tree Canopy: Continually increase urban tree canopy capacity to provide air quality, water quality and habitat benefits throughout the watershed. Expand urban tree canopy by 2,400 acres by 2025.

Forest Buffers: Continually increase the capacity of forest buffers to provide water quality and habitat benefits throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Restore 900 miles of riparian forest buffers per year and conserve existing buffers until at least 70 percent of riparian areas in the watershed are forested.

Healthy Forests and Trees

Water Quality GIT

Forestry Workgroup

Presenter: Katie Brownson

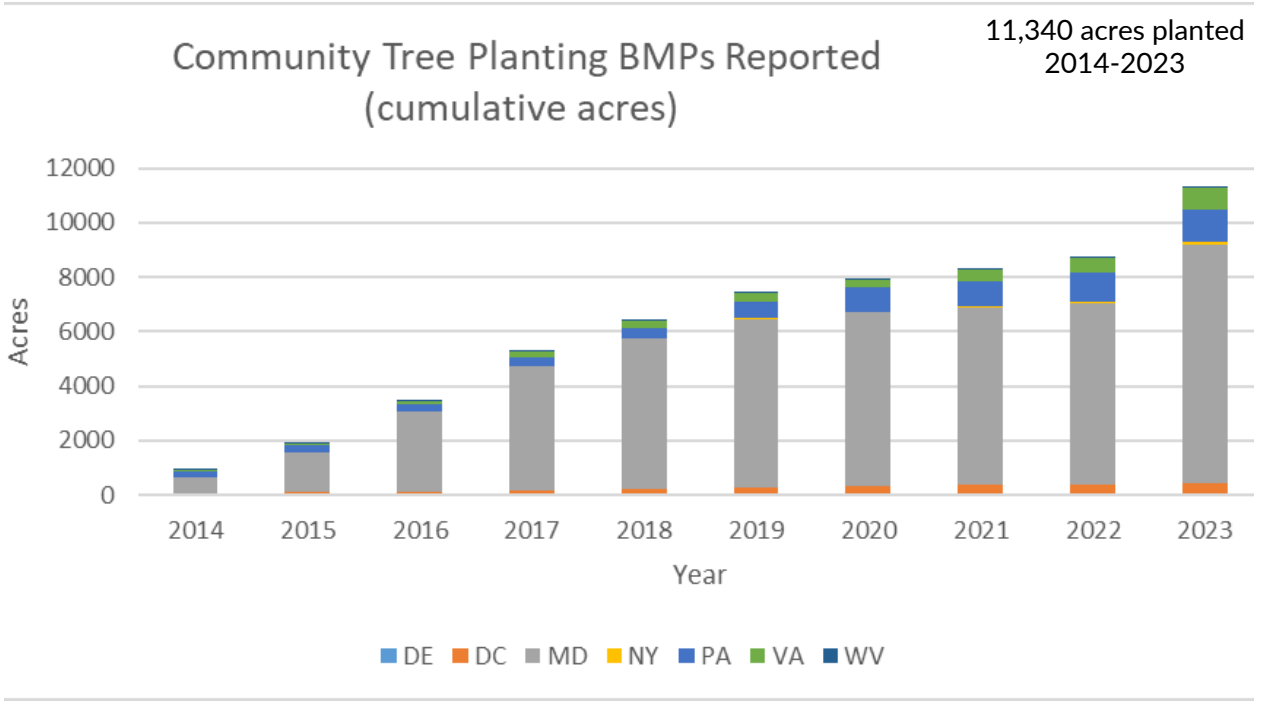
PROPOSED TARGET	New Target / Update of Existing Target	Date estimate for target being developed
Tree Canopy: Working toward a net gain in canopy, reduce the loss of existing canopy and plant and maintain 35,000 acres of community trees by 2035.	Update	Ready
Forest Buffers: Working toward having 75% of riparian areas forested throughout the watershed, plant and maintain 7,500 acres of forest buffers annually. Reduce the loss of existing buffers to achieve no less than 71% of riparian areas forested by 2035.	Update	Ready
Forest Conservation: Working toward a net gain in forests across the watershed, reduce the loss of forests to development and plant and maintain ## acres of new forests by 2035.	New	Summer 25
Forest Stewardship: Under Construction	New	2026?

Healthy Forests and Trees: Tree Canopy

Water Quality GIT
Forestry Workgroup
Presenter: Katie Brownson

Working toward a net gain in canopy, reduce the loss of existing canopy and plant and maintain 35,000 acres of community trees by 2035.

- Focuses on efforts within communities (2010 census places)
- On average, 1,134 acres planted annually
  - 2,577 new acres planted in 2023
- 28,908 total acres lost 2013/14- 2021/22
  - On average, 3,755 acres lost annually
- New 35,000 acres target is from a 2014 baseline
  - 23,660 additional acres needed 2024-2035
  - Would require 1,971 acres on average annually
- Achieving net gain will require reducing rate of loss

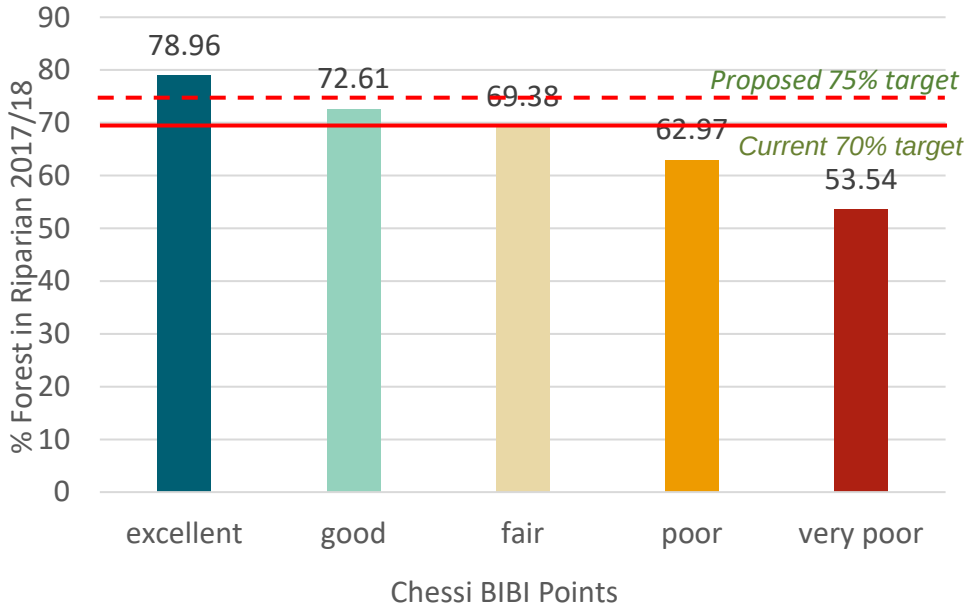


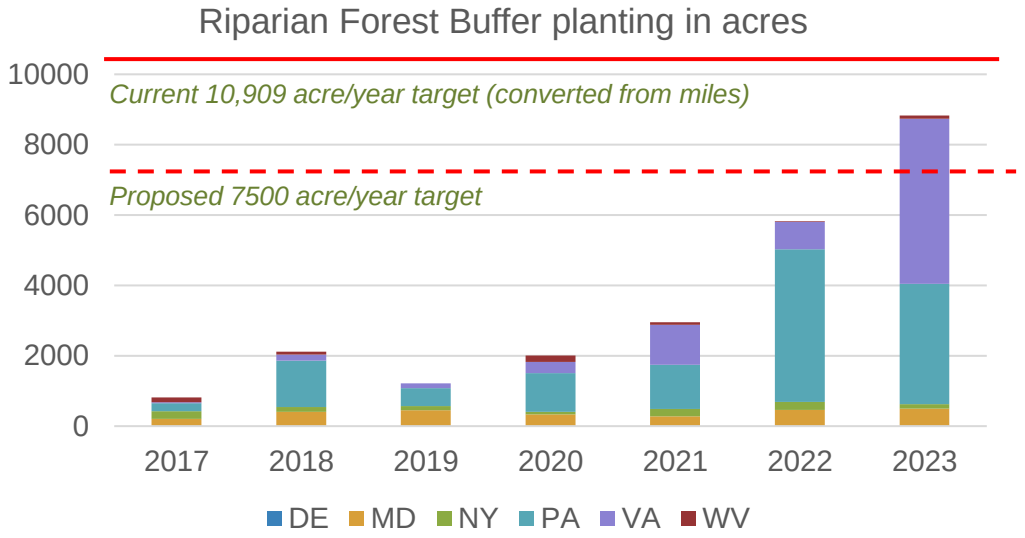
Healthy Forests and Trees: Forest Buffers

Water Quality GIT
Forestry Workgroup
Presenter: Katie Brownson

Working toward having 75% of riparian areas forested throughout the watershed, plant and maintain 7,500 acres of forest buffers annually. Reduce the loss of existing buffers to achieve no less than 71% of riparian areas forested by 2035.

- As of the 21/22 LULC data, the riparian area is 69.96% forested watershed-wide
- Average annual rate of loss: 5587 acres
- If we plant **7500 acres/year**, by 2035 we could achieve **71% forested** if we reduce the rate of loss by ~50%, putting us on a trajectory to achieve a net gain in riparian forest cover





Healthy Forests and Trees

Water Quality GIT

Forestry Workgroup

Presenter: Katie Brownson

REVISED TARGETS	New Target / Update of Existing Target	Date estimate for target being developed
Tree Canopy: Reduce the loss of existing canopy and plant and maintain 35,000 acres of community trees by 2035 to achieve a net gain in canopy over the long term.	Update	Ready
Forest Buffers: Plant and maintain 7,500 acres of forest buffers annually and reduce the loss of existing buffers to achieve no less than 71% riparian forest cover by 2035 and 75% riparian forest cover over the long term.	Update	Ready
Forest Conservation: Reduce the loss of forests to development and plant and maintain ## acres of new forests by 2035 to achieve a net gain in forests over the long term.	New	Summer 25

Forest Conservation Target

Considerations for the new Forest Conservation target

Opportunities:

- Better address all of the forests/trees in the watershed (outside of riparian areas and communities)
- Elevate the need for forest management and stewardship to improve/maintain forest health
- Advance priorities from the Chesapeake Bay Shared Stewardship Agreement?
  - Strategically incorporating agroforestry practices into farms to provide economic and environmental benefits.
  - Restoring forests, including early successional habitat, to improve their health and address stressors such as pests, diseases, and invasive species
  - Designing and implementing forest restoration projects that will help communities adapt to changing environmental conditions

Considerations for the new Forest Conservation target

Constraints

- Aiming to develop an initial target that is SMART and straightforward to track

- Can consider developing additional indicators or targets **later** to capture forest management and stewardship activities, forest health status & trends, etc. (and/or capture this in our new Management Strategy)

Draft outcome target

Forest Conservation: *Reduce the loss of forests to development and plant and maintain ## acres of new forests by 2035 to achieve a net gain in forests over the long term*

Two components:

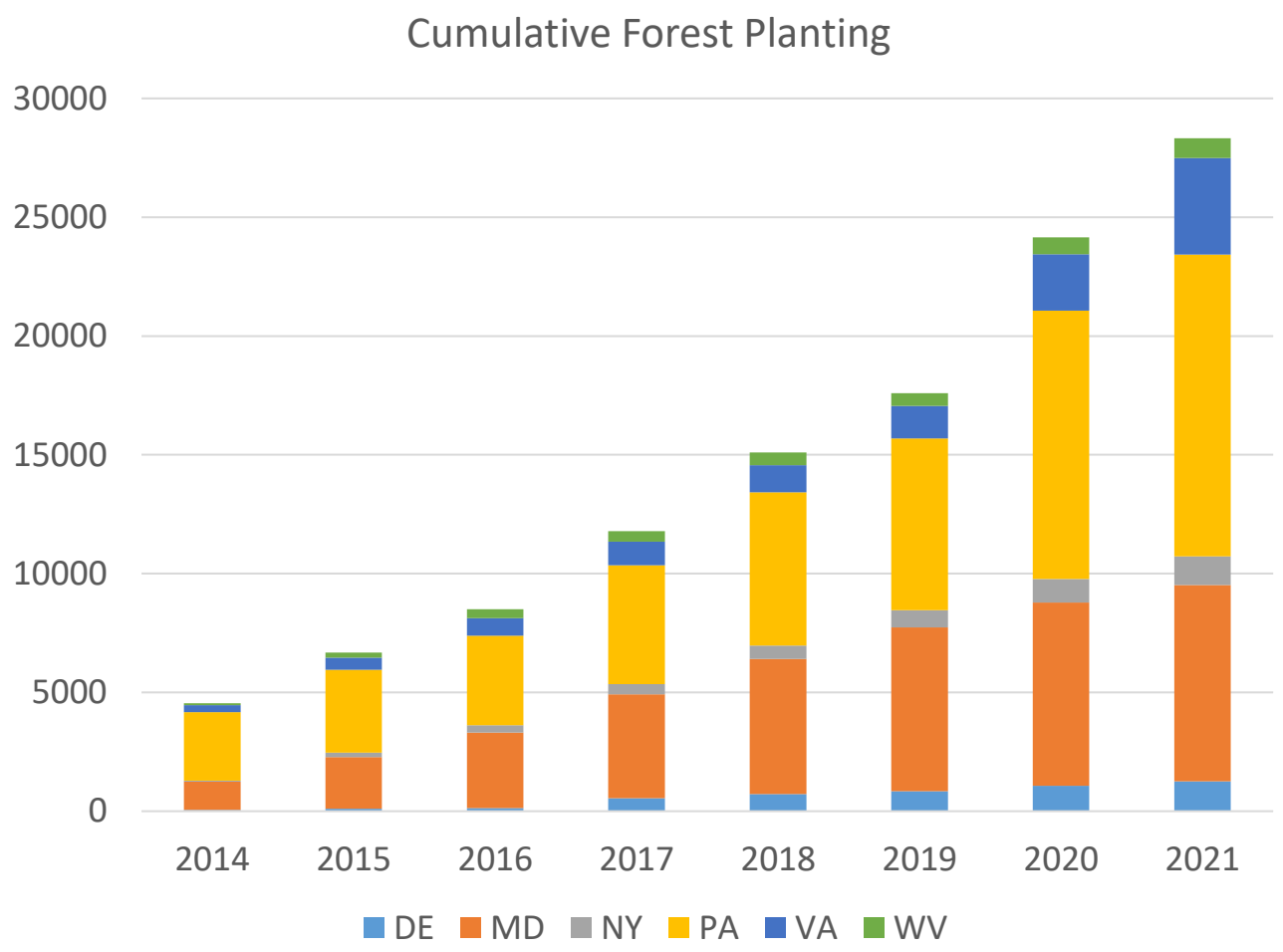
- Forest loss to development
  - Use land use data to evaluate forest loss (focusing on forested classes, not developed tree canopy classes)
  - Focus on loss to developed classes that reflect a more permanent loss
- Forest planting and maintenance
  - Track “forest planting” BMPs reported by the states every year (Agricultural tree planting, Riparian forest buffers, Urban forest planting)

Recent progress

Forest loss to development: 2013/14-2021/22

	Acres
DE	(692.45)
DC	(84.29)
MD	(19,741.24)
NY	(7,378.85)
PA	(28,841.97)
VA	(48,813.33)
WV	(3,661.93)
CBW	(109,214.06)

Forest planting 2014-2021



Questions to consider

Should we set an annual or a cumulative planting goal?

Interest in meeting as a small group to develop a proposed numeric target?

Any other input on proposed forest conservation outcome target?