



## Riparian Forest Buffer Program Best Practices Discussion Summary

### *In Preparation for Chesapeake Riparian Forest Buffer 2022 Leadership Workshop Compilation of Jurisdictional Promising Ideas and Opportunities*

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#### Overview

This document provides a brief summary of promising ideas and opportunities shared by the Chesapeake Bay watershed jurisdictions during the facilitated riparian forest buffer (RFB) discussions. More detailed information is available in the jurisdiction-specific summary documents.

#### Compilation of Promising RFB Ideas and Opportunities

A bulleted list of promising ideas and opportunities, as identified by the ERG facilitator, is provided under each jurisdiction.

##### Delaware

- It may be possible to use the existing state cost-share program as a conduit for Trees for Every Delawarean Initiative (TEDI) money, as opposed to the use-it-or-lose-it transfer-tax funding. The state cost-share program funding mechanism can fund implementation and maintenance but cannot fund annual rental payments. The state cost-share program staff would like funding to cover all costs for afforestation or RFB.
- DNREC has raised the possibility of using state land acquisition as an approach to increasing RFB acreage.
- The University of Delaware Cooperative Extension might be a partner who can provide boots-on-the-ground trained staff who have the ability develop landowner relationships and sell buffer programs. There is an opportunity to leverage this partnership and their existing work.
- NRCS cannot hire more staff but could go into a partnership agreement with other state agencies and program staff, such as Delaware's cost-share program administrator.

##### Pennsylvania

- An opportunity to integrate RFB exists through the Pennsylvania Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Program, there are 1,200 farms waiting for preservation approval. For preservation approval, a farm must have a conservation plan. There is an opportunity to include RFB into the conservation plans required under this preservation program.  
([https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Plants\\_Land\\_Water/farmland/Easement/Pages/default.aspx](https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Plants_Land_Water/farmland/Easement/Pages/default.aspx))

- The Resource Enhancement and Protection Program (REAP) has the potential to incorporate RFB, but it is a complicated program that applies to very few farmers because of the tax credit threshold. To make REAP work for RFB would require changes to REAP's eligibility criteria. ([https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Plants\\_Land\\_Water/StateConservationCommission/REAP/Pages/default.aspx](https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Plants_Land_Water/StateConservationCommission/REAP/Pages/default.aspx))
- There are efforts underway to identify opportunities for integrating RFB in-setting (v. offsetting) in agricultural supply chains.
- Having an RFB specialist per county is not feasible. Therefore, a temporary approach that is flexible, such as a strike team, could be beneficial. The strike team could deploy to an area to scale-up and ramp up support at a location. Outreach people could go into an area first, followed by the strike team.

## **Maryland**

- There is an opportunity to expand the existing partnerships with Trout Unlimited and their efforts to protect and restore cold-water streams, maybe through a new RFB focused program (e.g., Trees for Trout).
- Partners are currently developing regional trainings. Specifically, the James River Watershed Association is talking to Stroud Water Research about planning and conducting expert roundtables on improving buffer techniques.
- The Chesapeake Bay Forest Buffer website has a lot of useful resources that Maryland often uses as part of RFB training. There is an opportunity to add more robust training resources on this existing website for partners and contractors.

## **New York**

- The USC RFB coordinator has a team of stewards across the watershed to provide technical assistance and maintenance support to landowners. This team consists of 8-10 seasonal college students in addition to USC staff. This approach has increased the RFB survival rate. New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) funds the USC RFB stewardship through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outside of a traditional program. It would be beneficial to have more technicians or more stewards by replicating the USC RFB Coordinator position in a few locations across the watershed.
- New York's Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) Program administered by NYSDEC incorporates RFB into eligibility. People usually apply to the WQIP for more traditional stream bank stabilization. But stream bank projects that include RFB will score higher. With more staff capacity, it could be possible to help landowners take advantage of this funding source. (<https://www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/4774.html>)
- The issue of local government engagement to incorporate RFB in planning efforts is a question for local or regional planning boards. The USC Buffer Team could take steps to encourage this, but it is unlikely that it is currently happening.

## Virginia

- Creating flexible programs that meet landowners' needs requires a better understanding of what landowners' needs, barriers, and objections are to RFB so the appropriate programs can be identified to meet those needs. A targeted landowner survey to parcel owners might be needed to achieve this best practice.
- Consider using land use data with adequate resolution and the Bay Program stream data to identify large parcels for RFB implementation and survey landowners with identified parcels.
- Training must occur on a regular basis to keep up with staff turnover. NRCS has monthly trainings that could include RFB program training. Create opportunities for staff to exchange information and expertise.
- Need to capture privately funded RFB project information at the state level and ensure that Virginia is getting credit toward outcomes.

## West Virginia

- There is a Communi-tree program for non-agricultural public landowners. West Virginia should find a way to provide RFB funding to private urban landowners.
- West Virginia should tap into social marketing techniques and incorporate these techniques into programs, as well as program budgets. The goal would be to ask landowners what they need and use the information to help administer RFB programs and tailor services to landowner needs.
- Trout Unlimited could assemble a full-time maintenance crew to support RFB maintenance for RFB projects, but funding would be an issue
- West Virginia state agency staff could draft and sign on to a letter to local planning commissions with a request for localities to consider incorporating RFB protections in local ordinances.
- NRCS is creating a statewide organization-based inventory that identifies the name of the organization and the services provided by the organization. This inventory could be the foundation for an RFB staff inventory to determine who across the state is trained on RFB-related programs and can support projects.
- Trout Unlimited would like to find funding focused on evaluating past RFB projects with the goal of documenting lessons learned of successful projects to inform future projects. This could include identifying the frequency and type of maintenance conducted for each project, the protection methods, establishment success, etc.
- Trout Unlimited could help facilitate additional training and can secure additional staff to help supplement limited agency staff capacity. Trout Unlimited has funding to offer these services.