

Chesapeake Forest Restoration Strategy

The 2020 Chesapeake Forest Restoration Strategy (“Strategy”) provides the background, rationale and recommended actions to restore forests across the watershed. The Strategy and its accompanying Shared Stewardship Agreement are designed to guide and coordinate the forestry activities of Chesapeake Bay Program partners. It is a broad policy document, reflecting the latest science and innovation that provides a much-needed update to the earlier Strategy from 2012. Changes include:

- Increased emphasis on the growing suite of **agroforestry** practices, including multifunctional buffers which establish the potential for longer-term income sources through tree plantings.
- Provides the most up-to-date information on how forest restoration can be used for **climate change** mitigation and adaptation, as well as strategies for climate-resilient forest restoration.
- The latest strategies to increase **urban tree canopy**, including consideration of environmental justice issues.
- A new section on restoring existing forests through good **forest management** to improve ecosystem functions and services.
- The addition of actions to initiate innovative financing mechanisms for forest restoration.

Trees and forests are integral to every one of the 10 goals and 31 outcomes of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*. Historically, forests provided much of the land cover across the Chesapeake Bay watershed, providing essential habitat for wildlife, and providing the foundation for improved in-stream functions and clean water. Forest buffers and the overall establishment of forests and trees are important, cost-effective and long-lasting practices that not only improve water quality and habitat, but are also resilient to climate change, and provide the opportunity for community engagement and watershed stewardship.

Upcoming program and policy changes have the potential, with the leadership of state and local jurisdictions, to substantially increase rates of restoration, e.g.:

- Expanded benefits for the forest buffer practice under the 2018 Farm Bill.
- The Chesapeake Bay Program Forestry Workgroup is working with consultants to develop financing options for establishing healthy forests
- Using the strength of all Chesapeake Bay Program partners to enhance and support forest restoration activities.

The Forest Restoration Strategy is a timely, focused approach, valuing the role of trees and forests in a restored Chesapeake Bay watershed. By demonstrating that all the watershed jurisdictions (Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia) remain committed to restoring Chesapeake forests, the Shared Stewardship Agreement will help attract and leverage new partners and resources.