



## Meeting Minutes

### Chesapeake Bay Program Forestry Workgroup (FWG) November Conference Call

November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015, 10:00 AM – 2:45 PM

Chesapeake Bay Program Office (Fish Shack Conf. Room)

410 Severn Avenue, Annapolis, MD 21403

### Meeting Participants:

Rebecca Hanmer (Retired Citizens Advisory Committee), *FWG Chair*  
Sally Claggett (USFS), *FWG Coordinator*  
Julie Mawhorter (USFS), *Mid-Atlantic Urban and Community Forestry Coordinator*  
Tuana Phillips (Chesapeake Research Consortium)  
Anne Hairston-Strang (MD DNR)  
Tracey Coulter (PA Bureau of Forestry)  
Kris West (Finger Lakes Land Trust)  
Greg Evans (VA DOF)  
Herb Peddicord (WV DOF)  
Jason Bulluck (DCR Natural Heritage)  
Jessica Baylor (Aberdeen Improving Ground)  
Eric Sprague (Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay)  
Marel King (CBC)  
Lauren Townley (NY DEC)  
Barbara White (VA DOF)  
Sloan Crawford (NY DEC)  
Matt Poirot (VA DOF)  
Colin Jones (MDA)  
Earl Bradley (Sierra Club)  
Mike Santucci (VA DOF)  
Robert Farrell (VA DOF)  
Scott English (US Army Environmental Ctr.)

### Discussion on Existing Layers and Current Process

Sally Claggett and State leads reviewed the existing layers and definitions of high-value forest in each state. For more information, including an overview of the 2007 Forest Conservation Directive and forest conservation goal in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, please see Sally's PowerPoint presentation at this [link](#).

Comments and questions from the discussion:

- Comment: The hope is that acres reporting will match with the protected lands data.

- Comment: High value forest is in flux – it’s a little different for each state.
- Question: Could you (Sally) provide a write-up about the protected lands layer and how it is used?
- Comment: VA divided the forests in a dozen categories and chose the top 2 or 3 levels to be priority forests. I don’t think there is anything magical about the forests we selected as high value. If we stick to those forests I don’t think we will reach the goals. It would be more efficient if we helped your office pick what the high resolution forests are for the Bay watershed and we just report what we conserve from that. It might also be more helpful to select the lowest ranked forests and disregard those.
- Comment: We are defining high value forest for water quality purposes.
- Comment: PA looked at it as a weighted scale. Forested wetlands and streams, forests and headwaters, forests for drinking water, and sustainable managed working forests all weighed differently. 30% of bay forests are already protected. We are looking to add contiguous plants to what is already protected. The map is also broken into townships to look at a more detailed map.
- Comment: New York is not familiar with [New York’s] map, or at least the NY people currently involved with CBP are not aware of this map. It might have been a map that someone made for us. We have another stewardship and priority/not priority map. But that is not with a water quality focus. It is a 12 GIS layer ranking system with no focus on water quality. So we are familiar with priority maps but not in terms of what we are talking about today.
  - Comment: This map was developed when we were working on the Working Lands strategy. A lot of it is based on existing data layers from NY State and partners like Audubon and Nature Conservancy. NY has been reporting acres, but not mapping.
- Comment: West Virginia used a map from the Resource Lands Assessment, as well as information from a legacy effort. Honestly I like how other states have done it, i.e., how they put a broad brush on high forest. Looking at the WV map, it is hard to put a parcel on this map and figure out what color it falls under. Anything west of Berkeley county, we are pretty much calling high quality forest. Like NY I am calling around and talking to the NGOs and farmland preservation folks and each year getting my acres of conserved forests and trying to put that in the category.
  - Comment: So you are looking at it parcel by parcel.
  - Comment: It would be nice, like VA said, for the CBP to create a watershed-wide map of high-value forest.
- Comment: Maryland’s map was an outgrowth of the Strategic Lands Assessment. We had a number of layer categories with scoring from one to ten. There were three groups: important forest resources, forests for water quality/nutrients and sediments, and forests for water quality for living resources.
  - Comment: I like how MD’s map got down to the pixel layer.

Sally reviewed a definition for high-value forest for participants to consider: *“Protect the Chesapeake watershed’s most ecologically and economically valuable forest land from conversion—headwater forests, riparian forests, forest blocks greater than 1,000 acres, and highly productive timber growing soils.”*

Comments and questions:

- Question: How do folks feel about the component on highly productive timber growing soils?
  - Question: From the Chesapeake Bay's perspective, why does it matter if it is a highly productive site or not? Answer: If highly productive, it is more likely that it will support forestry activities and will help keep forests around for a long time.
  - Comment: One thing the Finger Lakes Land Trust did was look at how severely erodible the soils are within our easements. Maybe erodability is something to look at to protect water quality.
- Comment: if you have small contiguous forest next to high-value forest that would still light up as high-value.
- Question: Are headwater forests and riparian forests equally important?
  - Comment: Both are important, the headwater forests category is just harder to define.
  - Comment: Perhaps the categories should be riparian floodplain/wetland, larger forest blocks and soils (erodible or highly productive).
- Question: Would forest blocks at risk of being developed be included as part of definition here?
  - Comment: That is a good point, we should think about that some more.
  - Comment: In addition to that, in the more urban regions we can look at smaller blocks as well.
- Question: When Maryland looked at forests for water quality, we looked at percentage of impervious surface. "Low" impervious was 5-10%. What about targeting areas of "middle" impervious?
  - The 1 meter resolution data that the Chesapeake Conservancy and partners are working on could be used for this.
- Comment: I was thinking about the brook trout goal under the Habitat Goal Implementation Team. We have a lot of high-value forest in headwater regions surrounding brook trout areas. I would suggest bringing in the Habitat Team's brook trout layer.
- Question: Is there a general challenge here with having the resources to develop maps to get to headwater forests?
  - Answer: There are ways to do this by such as using an elevation model.
- Comment: I (Sally) am going to go to the GIS team at the Bay Program and will see if we can put together a map to present early next year. To recap, we will be considering smaller block sizes of forest across the watershed, and within urban areas this would be at an even finer scale (an acre). It is important to keep definitions consistent with Phase 6 definitions. We will also be considering the productive timber soils and alternatively the erodible soils depending on what layers we have. We will look into forming a process to define headwaters. And further we will include wetland floodplain and riparian forest areas, as well as an impervious surfaces layer. Finally, we will also look at the brook trout layer.
  - Question: What about lands that are already protected? Answer: That is something else we need to pull out.
- Question: Back in February we talked about creating other maps, maps that would be useful at the local scale. We threw out idea of making watershed-wide maps and also county-level maps similar to how Maryland does their green infrastructure mapping. Is that something we still want to pursue? Or does that sound like too many maps?

- Comment: On the Local Leadership Team's call yesterday, one of key points we agreed on is that we want information coming out of CBP that local officials can understand. It would be useful to have maps available for local officials to look at and easily digest how it applies to their constituencies.

### **Round Robin Updates:**

#### Virginia DOF update on Healthy Watersheds Forest TMDL Project:

- We are trying to build the case for a TMDL credit for forest conservation. We started with pilot area in the Rappahannock region as a proxy for Chesapeake Bay Watershed. We worked with four counties and the City of Fredericksburg. We ran alternative scenarios; the results were very promising. We found that retaining forestland could save \$125 million in those areas. We are now starting to work with counties on Phase 2 of the project, which will be a bottom-up approach to create a toolbox that could complement forest conservation crediting in the TMDL. There was a lot of interest by EPA and the Chesapeake Bay Program to expand the partnership in Phase 2 to work with Pennsylvania. Between now and early 2016 the team will be looking at how to set up negotiations with localities. The team will host listening sessions to start brainstorming what a toolbox will look like.
- Comment: EPA will start working on new TMDL in 2017. It currently credits Best Management Practices (BMPS) that reduce nutrient and sediment runoff but not BMPs that conserve. The latter would have enormous consequences for the types of actions that states can prioritize.

#### Other Virginia updates:

- In regards to the challenge of knowing to what extent forests are managed on easements, right now our government has a 1000 acres goal of conservation or recreation treasures. We are using 14 different metrics, and two of those are related to forests; one in particular is forests for water quality.
- With the Virginia Outdoors Foundation we are digitizing and creating a database with an automated PDF and queering ability to look up about 4000 easement documents in the state and identify those easements with conservation values, one of which is forest value.

#### West Virginia:

- We have done a lot of tree plantings this fall, and still have some more left. The Forestry BMP Verification guidance document is being worked on too.

#### Maryland:

- We are finishing up the harvesting BMP assessments. We are trying to get rates for MD and DE and will be presenting our results soon at a convention.
- We are in the process of having our 5-year program review.

#### Pennsylvania:

- We are currently in a budget stall. We are having state-wide meetings for state forest management plans and we are also going around to do stakeholder meetings and get feedback.

#### New York:

- NY's Division of Water is in the beginning stages of developing a riparian buffer easement program. Will be sending an RFP within next year to get more easement properties. I think we will be opening that to both forest and grass buffers.

The next Forestry Workgroup meeting on December 2<sup>nd</sup> will be a conference call. There will be an opportunity to approve Draft Workplans for the Riparian Forest Buffer and Urban Tree Canopy Outcomes. That will also be the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CRP.

The Potomac Watershed Partnership Information Exchange will take place on December 8<sup>th</sup>. RSVP today at [www.PotomacPartnership.Org](http://www.PotomacPartnership.Org)