Forestry Workgroup Meeting

February 2, 2022

9:00am-11:00am

Meeting Materials: Link

Attendees

Teddi Stark, DCNR Forestry, PA

Ryan Davis, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Rebecca Lauver,Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Craig Highfield, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Rachel Felver, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Lydia Brinkley, Upper Susquehanna Coalition

Gloria Van Duyne, NY DEC, Division of lands and forest

Cassie Davis, NY DEC

Julie Mawhorter, USFS

Kesha Braunskill, DE Forest Service

Taryn Davidson, DE Forest Service

Anne Hairston-Strang, MD DNR Forest Service

Iris Allen, MD DNR Forest Service

Ashley Traut, Baltimore Wilderness

Sally Claggett, USFS

Katie Brownson, USFS

Paul Emmart, MDE

Jim Woodworth, DC DOEE

Caitlin Verdu, VADOF

Matt Poirot, VADOF

Patti Webb - DE DNREC-NPS Program

Rick Turcotte, Forest Service WV

Frank Rodgers, Cacapon Inst, WV

Rosey Santerre, WV Division of Forestry

John Young , USGS

Nancy Sonti, USFS Baltimore Field Station

Planning for Riparian Forest Buffer Workshop

Back in December it was noted that this workshop needs a better name, and we should continue to think of potential names. One of the other things that came out of the December meeting was that we should better refine what we want our outcomes to be from this workshop.

The organizers of this workshop (Kate Brownson, Sally Claggett, and Emily Heller) have presented to the Management Board twice and have been contacted Sherry Witt

Sally noted that she is expanding the title to include the 2022 Leadership Workshop. Some of the refined expectations are to look at our state plans to better refine them and have them in a good place so they are ready for action and adoption following the workshop.

We are considering a series of 3 pre workshops prior to the April 27th online workshop. EPA has offered to get contract support to help with this workshop The contractor will be engaging with each state conducting interviews with state program managers and other representatives from each jurisdiction to better understand what is going on with buffer programs and help identify what the big barriers to further improving or expanding programs.

Sally ran through what the workshop will look like and actions that may be taken by the bay program or individual states. It was noted that the Management Board wants a snapshot of

buffer programs in each state. Water quality and Management Board folks could use a better understanding of what is going on in the buffer world. This synthesis can also help states to think through their buffer programs.

Action: We need to finalize the list of higher-level state representatives the contractor needs to talk to as April 27 is not far away and this process needs to start.

Katie went over the draft matrix of Riparian Forest Buffer program "best practices". The matrix is looking at successes and challenges of different programs around the watershed. There are different characteristics of programs, both in terms of the program logistics and enabling conditions. We want the contractor to be working with the state representatives to collect information on each State, looking for cases where the various criteria in the matrix are working/happening or where they need some help. The main goal here is to have an effective buffer program in each state.

We want your feedback on the themes of the three pre workshop webinars. We currently have policy and funding, technical assistance and outreach, and land conservation. We could think about bringing up climate residency in this context of forest buffers. Could we potentially add a local government focus to one of the pre workshop webinars? We should touch base with the local government folks as we start to move forward.

Discussion:
- Is this different from the outcome attainability analysis? No, this is what came out of the outcome attainability team. This is the top action as a result of the outcome attainability teams work.

- Net loss and gain: Could we maybe ask, "where in the state are we losing buffers and why are we losing the buffers"? The last two questions in the matrix help answer this question. Having data to answer this question is important and we do not know if we will have the new data in time.

- To the "Restoration contractors available to complete work" category on the matrix, we should add something about the cost-effectiveness of available contractors. There are a lot of restoration contractors out there, but not all will be able to do the work at a reasonable rate that we're expecting.

- Other programs that are available to private landowners might be competition to TREE buffer implementation. This could potentially be added to the enabling conditions category.
- In terms of the workshop we could add some background information on buffer trends. For example we could share the trends of grass BMPs vs tree BMPs.

- Leadership people: Who are they? How do we get them to listen? We have had a lot of struggles getting buffers in, who is the person who will actually listen and get the work done?
  - We should be engaging water division leaders or environmental quality people, this should not all fall on forestry folks. You might also have to talk to partners and others to really narrow down who you think are going to be a part of the change.
- State revolving loan funds: are states using SRF for buffers? (could add that in the matrix)
  - SRF is looking at a big increase in funding from the infrastructure bill and some of that new funding is going to be given out in grants and 100% forgivable loans.

Action: Let Katie/Sally know if you have suggestions for the best practices matrix or the pre-workshop webinars.

Review FWG work plan/activities for the year

Katie ran through the 2022 draft work plan. The work plan included overarching projects, monthly meeting topics, and other potential meeting topics/ presentations. Some of the highlights include:

- The release of the new land use data
- The finalization of county level tree canopy fact sheet
- The continued work on evaluating the state of the forests using the new data
- Forest buffer workshop and forest buffer action plans
- SRS, we are asking for an extension to do it in the fall instead of May.
- Julie has been planning for a Tree Canopy summit and policy and funding round table
- Tree Canopy Indicator update
- The ongoing STAC water temperature workshop
- Maintaining Forests in Stream Restoration project to be completed in early September and we have two new GIT funding projects: Strategy Development for Innovative Finance of Riparian Forest Buffer Programs and Tree Canopy Funding and Policy Roundtable
- We are working on website updates and updating our member list and voting for at large members
- Work with the Alliance to create a vetted, virtual repository for RFB publications on the Riparian Forest Buffer Network webpage
- Work with OpinionWorks and the Alliance to finalize an assessment of forestry communications products and needs. Use the outcome of this work to evaluate whether to develop a more comprehensive communications strategy

It was noted that we could add CREP information updates. Sally noted that CREP work is ongoing and we should be seeing a report on CREP this year. Ann suggested that we strengthen our communication when it comes to CREP and maybe write a summary document to send around to National Office Managers.

A few other ideas were thrown out before the end of this topic including: Where do buffers fit into the Trillion Trees project and how does CREP fit into the next farm bill.

Action: Let **Katie know if you have any other potential meeting topics or ideas**.

STAC water temperature workshop briefing and discussion

Katie debriefed the work group on the STAC water temperature workshop. There were three session for the nontidal group:

- Session 1: Drivers of increasing water temperatures
- Session 2: Ecological impacts of increasing water temperatures
- Session 3: Management implications

The main focus of this report out is to talk about the last session, management implications. Katie went over the conceptual model used throughout the workshop that gave a good guide on what is driving the temperature change in non-tidal waters in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. We got some really good feedback from folks participating and were able to add to the model. The model is not perfect and the group talked about some of the issues with it. Different geographical areas are going to have different drivers of warming water temperatures and one model can not account for it all. When we can not provide recommendations that will be relevant for every single context, but we can zoom out slightly and focus on some of those broader drivers that are going to influence water temperatures and multiple landscapes.

As we move into the management conversations we really need to make it clear how those drivers from the model connect with management activities and making decisions.

Katie broke down some of the ways to rework some of the information from the model to really focus on centering particular **management** actions that can influence water temperature that still gets at some of the ways in which the **practices** influence water temperature but puts management at the center of the conversation.

Katie then moved into the findings from the Management implications session. During the workshop the session asked about potential landscape characteristics that could be emphasized as management targets, and forests came out as being really important (both in the riparian area and in the broader watershed). Participants of the workshop were also asked about different types of BMPs that we should be focusing on. The workshop participants identified known coolers as the top BMP category, which was surprising at the top of the list as those practices are normally used in urban areas. Participants of the workshop also identified what their biggest concerns/ focuses are with regards to rising non-tidal water temperatures. We had a brook trout heavy group, so no surprise that brook trout came out on top as the biggest area of focus. There were also conversations during the workshop about the concern of warm water systems and how extreme high temperature events are interacting with poor water quality and how that is fueling big disease outbreaks which in turn is resulting in massive die offs of fish.

Draft management recommendations from the workshop were then presented. In terms of management practices the workshop suggested that streams and rivers should get well buffered, that we have known coolers and shaders up stream, minimize the loss of forests,

discourage heating BMPs, and use habitat restoration to improve connectivity between suitable habitat patches to improve thermal refugia.

In terms of science support/needs the workshop participants identified the following: Improve understanding of the temperature impacts of BMPs, improve understanding of the ecological impacts of incorporating temperature refugia into stream restoration design, improve water temperature monitoring, and improve modeling and decision support tools. Formalizing recommendations for improving the science and recommendations for management practices and policies will be the focus of the second workshop on March 15th.

Discussion

- It is really interesting how we can tie forest buffers to public health. While we did not explore this topic in the workshop it is still something to think about.

- We should be emphasizing "follow the flow path" for water temperature and the nutrient reduction in streams.

- Forest buffers were not necessarily a given in some of the Bay Program policies in the past, it's not that we didn't know that they are important, but the question is we're not necessarily seeing that importance reflected in how we choose to allocate money for implementation. We count all nutrient credits equally. What we're trying to figure out is how do you incorporate some of these other things that make a difference into the reward system for the implementation dollars.

- How do we account for things beyond water quality benefits in our crediting system?

- Do we have anything that will allow us to say anything about the competitors for forest buffers like grass buffers and temperature?

- It is not too late to get involved with this workshop and project!

- Do we want to do a voluntary subset of the FWG to think about how we frame management implications around forest buffers and trees? A forestry think tank to make sure we got our recommendations right and if there is anything we can add or give nuance to before the next workshop to help managers who might not be as familiar. **Action: Let Katie/Rebecca know if you are interested in participating in this think tank or if you want to attend the second workshop.**

County Tree Cover Status & Trends Fact Sheet Template

Julie Mawhorter presented on the two pager fact sheet coming out of the new high resolution land cover/ land use data and the change data that summarized the key statistics for each county in the watershed. This will hopefully get local decision makers engaged with the data and excited to dig into it further. We want to make sure that this is friendly to non forestry people.

A question about water acres came up: does percent tree canopy tree cover also include the water acres? Julie noted that if you have a particular thought on how we capture water and the wetlands to email her.

The second page of the fact sheet will focus on the tree cover change on the developed and developing lands. Anytime that forest or tree canopy classes were lost to turf or impervious surfaces it is captured. Tree gain is also noted on the fact sheet. There is a map and summary on what is gained and lost. The end of the fact sheet has more resources for people to use.

The fact sheet is at the point where we just need fine tuning before it gets sent off to a graphic designer to make it look good to send out to folk.

As soon as the new data is ready the Chesapeake Conservancy will be auto populating the info for each county and then they will be posted and sent out. There is hope to also use the same template and automated generation for municipalities.

Discussion

- The main audience for this project are local level planners, local watershed groups, and other non forestry folks. There will be a more detailed user guide for people so they can better understand the technical details of the data presented.

- It was noted that some of the language seems to be too forestry professional heavy and that we might need to change the way things are written as your average person might not understand what is being described.

- In the second stage of this project will we be able to generate not by county, but by watershed? We could potentially do it, but we would want to make sure that there is a need.

- There were some more concerns about being able to explain this to people who might be calling forestry folks, Julie noted that there will be a user guide and what we put in there will be important to ensure that there are not tons of questions. She will be showing the workgroup the draft user guide in the future.

Round Robin

PA: Stay tuned for the PA Watershed Forestry Summit registration and agenda info, which should come out within the next week or two. Hold March 2 and 3 for the event. We'll also be posting our four new Watershed Forestry Specialist jobs within the next month.

NY: There is work being done on an Upper Susquehanna Watershed Dashboard. It is similar to what the Chesapeake Bay has, but it is specific for NY and will be updated more frequently. It will be helpful for development and communication to landowners and municipalities. The Upper Susquehanna Coalition is getting ready to hire eight to ten people for their Buffer Stewards Program. They are also working again on a State agreement to try to get a half million dollars from our state just for buffer implementation.

DE: Nothing to report on

MD: Doing a lot of work on the 5 Million Trees Program and getting ready to hire for 13 positions by summer. MD is also trying to develop some new programs, as well as expand existing ones, but we don't have program details, yet, but trying to work them out to help make it easy for anybody who wants a tree to to get one. The MD state forester position is also posted.

DC: Working on an Interagency response to spotted lantern fly. There has been a recent uptick in beaver activity and unpermitted beaver tree removal. In January DC unveiled their most recent tree canopy data set with a little bit of a loss of about 1% tree canopy, unfortunately. There is a new effort underway to strengthen DC forest legislation to increase the protection for heritage trees and to create an authority for stop work orders in the event of unpermitted tree removal.

VA: Getting ready to hire three WIP specialist stewards, still working on the name, they will be coming in the next couple months.

WV: WV is looking at a busy spring planting season. This year is the 250th anniversary for Berkeley county, there will be a planting of 250 commemorative trees around the county in addition to the normal projects this planting season. Still making inroads on riparian buffers. Division of Forestry has started work on their managed timberland audit which they are going to add a section to the stewardship plans for those audited parcels to include BMP management for riparian areas.

Chesapeake Bay Alliance: In Maryland the CBA is getting ready for their tree planting program Healthy Forests Healthy Waters. They are also getting ready for their buffer bonus program and are planting about 256 acres of buffers and upland forests this upcoming spring.