

# Improved Use and Understanding of NNBF in the Mid-Atlantic

Karl Schrass

National Wildlife Federation

# Project need and objective

“To move the entire Mid-Atlantic NNBF community forward towards wider and more informed implementation of NNBF.”

- ▶ There are many state and local efforts, but regional coordination is limited
  - ▶ For this project, “region” included: NY, NJ, DE, MD, VA
- ▶ We sought to:
  - ▶ Identify the most pressing challenges that prevent their use
  - ▶ Facilitate collaboration amongst practitioners across organizations and geographies

# Methods: Interviews

- ▶ Interviewed over 50 stakeholders in all 5 states to identify common challenges at a regional level
  - ▶ Federal, state, and local government staff
  - ▶ Contractors
  - ▶ NGOs
  - ▶ Universities

# Results

- ▶ The challenges can be grouped into the following “buckets”:
  - ▶ Building the case for NNBF
  - ▶ Initial site assessment
  - ▶ Project design
  - ▶ Permitting
  - ▶ Performance monitoring

# Methods: Workshops and Webinars

- ▶ Held two in person workshops in June 2016 to identify solutions to these challenge areas
  - ▶ Moderated Break-Out Sessions
  - ▶ Short Term vs. Long Term Solutions
- ▶ Process was repeated in two webinars
- ▶ Over 200 stakeholders engaged

# Building the case for NNBF

The vast majority of coastal land in the region is privately owned, therefore there is a need to increase the demand for NNBF amongst coastal property owners.

## Top-line solutions:

- ▶ Clarify the cost & benefits of NNBF over gray infrastructure
  - ▶ Need easily accessible tools and resources
- ▶ Make it easier for property owners to find contractors
- ▶ Provide financial incentives (e.g. low- or zero-interest loans, cost sharing)
- ▶ Improved Marketing and Communication about NNBF
- ▶ Further expansion of no/low-interest loans and tax credits

# Initial Site Assessment

Proper assessment and project design are crucial for long-term success.

- ▶ Top-line solutions:

  - Address the financial burden of site assessment:

    - ▶ Incorporate assessment into regulatory requirements (to encourage funder prioritization of this step)
    - ▶ Develop low- or no-cost assessment protocols - citizen science

  - Need a standardized assessment protocol:

    - ▶ Widely distribute a habitat-specific, region
    - ▶ Create a single data-sharing platform

- ▶ Avoid the potential for ineffective project design

  - ▶ Demonstration projects
  - ▶ Suggested NNBF based on site conditions/habitat
  - ▶ A checklist of site condition requirements for various NNBF
  - ▶ Forming state-level committees to evaluate innovative strategies and proposals

# Permitting

## Top-line solutions:

- ▶ Increase the communication between applicants and regulators
  - ▶ Train applicants on permit-application requirements and process
  - ▶ Start the conversation as early as possible
  - ▶ Incorporate regular forums for applicant-regulator interaction - e.g. joint evaluation committee in Maryland
- ▶ Align design guidance with state-level policies
  - ▶ Streamline state and federal regulatory language
  - ▶ Increase transparency regarding NNBF
- ▶ Increase applicant and regulator understanding of NNBF
  - ▶ Encourage innovative practices by training hosts and other on latest science

# Performance Monitoring

More data needs to be collected and shared across the region on project successes and failures.

## **Top-line solutions:**

Citizen science methods

Pre- and post-storm monitoring

Develop standardized methods and protocols

Trainings for volunteer/citizen science groups

# Outcomes from Phase 1/2

- ▶ Report will be released March 30
  - ▶ Has an appendix of existing resources by state and topic
  - ▶ Points readers to existing solutions within the Mid-Atlantic
- ▶ Starting to address some of the “low-hanging fruit”
  - ▶ Monitoring framework

# Monitoring Framework

- ▶ Convened meeting of regional experts in NNBF monitoring from NC, VA, MD, DE, NJ, NY
- ▶ Received feedback and input from USACE
- ▶ Developed goal-based monitoring framework and initial citizen science methods across multiple types of NNBF
- ▶ Next Steps:
  - ▶ Coordinate with groups working on more detailed pieces of this monitoring framework, i.e. monitoring only wetlands or monitoring only SAV.
  - ▶ To reach out to a wider group of stakeholders who are involved in NNBF nationally to develop a more robust list of citizen science metrics.
  - ▶ Once these metrics are collected and distilled, to use a demonstration sites to test how accurate citizen science based methods are in comparison to the intensive metrics.
  - ▶ Publish the results of this project in a journal to increase uptake of this framework among practitioners.

# Next Steps

- ▶ Developing a 'product' to promote the adoption of NNBF tactics on private lands using NWF's Certified Wildlife Habitat Model
- ▶ Research needs: 1) What does NNBF look like at the scale of the private landowner? 2) What motivated people, HOAs, and municipalities to implement these measures? 3) How do we determine the effectiveness of these actions?
- ▶ Interested? [schrassk@nwf.org](mailto:schrassk@nwf.org) or 443-842-7540

Questions or Comments?

Thanks for your attention!