

# DRAFT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

## LAND CONSERVATION

Estimated Percent Complete: 98%

**OUTCOME:** By 2025, protect an additional two million acres of lands throughout the watershed—currently identified as high-conservation priorities at the federal, state or local level—including 225,000 acres of wetlands and 695,000 acres of forest land of highest value for maintaining water quality.

### FACTORS INFLUENCING

- **Changes in Land Use-** New development pressures, including transportation and energy infrastructure as well as new housing and commercial development, are dramatically changing the landscape in some areas.
- **Public Support for Conservation-** Land conservation faces a lack of understanding of the value of protected land to improved water quality, outdoor recreation, and economic development.
- **Funding and Incentives for Conservation-** Competition for limited federal and state funding for land conservation has increased in recent years.
- **Private Ownership and Fragmentation-** As competition for economically viable use of the land intensifies, the incentives and pressures to develop compete with the values that support conservation.
- **Managing Protected Areas-** As land is conserved managers and funders must address strategies for supporting long-term land management. Funding for maintenance of existing publicly owned lands is often limited.
- **Climate Change-** Climate change impacts land conservation by changing the viability of some shoreline or low elevation parcels for protection and development.

### GAPS

- Quantity and Accessibility of Conservation Priority Data
- Alignment of Land Conservation Priorities with Funding Opportunities
- Need for a Land Conservation Community
- Capacity and Tools for Restoring, Protecting and Managing Landscapes
- Federal, State and Local Funding and Incentives for Conservation
- Public Support for Land Conservation including Youth Engagement and Citizen Stewardship

### MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

- **Collaboratively identify and align strategic conservation priorities.**
  - ◊ Identify broad geographic conservation priorities and focal areas.
  - ◊ Prioritize areas with multiple high resource values
  - ◊ Align priorities in a way that supports collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries.
- **Identify, fund, and implement creative and inclusive ways to acquire data and connect systems.**
  - ◊ Identify and fill data gaps and connect LandScope Chesapeake and other separate data and priority systems to provide optimal cross-integration.
  - ◊ Expand cultural resource documentation and the availability of high-resolution data.
  - ◊ Ensure that land protection data is included in Bay Program modeling.
- **Increase funding, incentives, and mechanisms for protecting conservation priorities.**
  - ◊ Use GIS prioritization tools to maximize investments by aligning multiple conservation values and funding sources.
  - ◊ Explore options to create a dedicated mitigation fund.
  - ◊ Strengthen and expand existing financial incentives for conservation and work to credit land conservation in the Bay Model.
  - ◊ Sustain and enhance dedicated funding mechanisms. (appropriations for existing local, state and federal land conservation funding programs.
  - ◊ Pursue new funding opportunities, specifically for local and state ballot measures that dedicate funding to specific conservation initiatives.
- **Increase public support for and engagement in land conservation.**
  - ◊ Conduct research or survey stakeholders to understand how diverse populations value conserved lands.
  - ◊ Develop communications strategy to communicate value of conservation to a broader and more diverse local audience, including urban residents, youth, and diverse ethnic and racial communities.
  - ◊ Provide consistent outreach to legislators and local government officials and social and economic benefits of conservation.
- **Build an active community of practice around land conservation in the Chesapeake.**
  - ◊ Build capacity of the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership and its network of partnerships to advocate for and leverage funds and support for land conservation.
  - ◊ Highlight success stories from around the watershed to bring in new participants.
  - ◊ Through dedicated work groups, focus efforts to meet targets for protecting forest land (695,000 acres) and wetlands (225,000 acres).
- **Increase the capacity and effectiveness of land trusts.**
  - ◊ Complete a capacity needs assessment.
  - ◊ Invest in land trust capacity building, such as training, networking, and creative solutions