

MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Riparian Forest Buffer

GOAL: Vital Habitats

OUTCOME: Continually increase the capacity of forest buffers to provide water quality and habitat benefits throughout the watershed. Restore 900 miles of riparian forest buffer and conserve existing buffers until at least 70 percent of riparian areas throughout the watershed are forested.

CURRENT EFFORTS

- Riparian Forest Buffer Initiative.
- Aggressive commitments to implement buffers included in the jurisdictions Watershed Implementation Plans.
- Initiative Steering Committee to oversee and help guide state task forces.
- Planting buffers on private lands with strong support from USDA programs.
- Agreements with conservation organizations to provide technical assistance to landowners.
- Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania have developed supportive cost-share programs as well as rules for water quality trading that allow landowners to generate water quality credits for riparian forest buffers.

GAPS

- Not all local leaders recognize that riparian forest buffers are a priority practices.
- CREP programs are not being used to their full potential in the Bay states and should be adjusted.
- Current outreach, technical assistance, and administration should be strengthened with additional staff help, incentives and training.
- Lack of coordination with other federal, state, and private conservation funding programs.
- Lack of outcome-based performance measures to assess success (e.g. miles/acres of RFBs established).
- Limited funds for technical assistance.
- Easement programs are not active in most jurisdictions.
- Contract reenrollment problems.

MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

- Renewed leadership approach:
 - Engage federal state and local leaders with USDA and each other; appoint a high-level coordinator to work across agencies; make non-federal match available as new opportunities present for federal funding
- Improve existing programs to make the RFB practice more appealing to landowners:
 - Increase and improve technical assistance; develop programs to assist landowners with maintenance; increase flexibility and incentives in CREP agreements; support verification; conduct strategic, coordinated outreach across the watershed.
- Make new program linkages and use financial leverage to conserve and restore more buffers.
 - Look broadly to align related projects; make conservation easements more appealing and manageable; leverage federal funding; integrate buffers as part of state stormwater programs.
- Apply science and technology to improve riparian buffer practices
 - Use geographic prioritization tools and analyze for effectiveness (for brook trout and water quality); Use demographic/outreach tools and analyze for effectiveness; improve tracking using high-resolution imagery.
- Protect RFBs in local land use regulation, specifically on the conversion of agricultural lands to other land use.
- Work with local governments to make riparian buffer restoration and protection on public lands a priority.



For the full management strategy, visit: www.chesapeakebay.net/managementstrategies