



Background

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Chesapeake Executive Council Resolution- 2015 #1

Endorsing State Task Force Recommendations for Increasing Riparian Forest Buffers to Meet Chesapeake Bay Goals

Whereas, the Chesapeake Bay Program, an international model for ecosystem and watershed restoration and management, relies on science, innovation, strong partnerships, and shared leadership for success; and

Whereas, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is an important and significant federal partner; and

Whereas, the goal of restoring and sustaining healthy streams in the Chesapeake Bay watershed requires action on agricultural lands; and

Whereas, past Chesapeake Bay agreements have recognized that riparian forest buffers are essential for restoring water quality and habitat, and the 2014 *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* endorses new goals and outcomes; and

Whereas, although past accomplishments by the Chesapeake Bay states are noteworthy, progress on riparian forest buffer establishment on agricultural lands has not kept pace with the milestones set forth in the Watershed Agreement or State Watershed Implementation Plans for the Bay TMDL; and

Whereas, over the last year, a USDA-led, Chesapeake Riparian Forest Buffer Initiative identified ways to improve the restoration and development of riparian forest buffers and foster healthy streams; and the USDA's Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Forest Service joined state leadership to address immediate needs and identify priorities for future practice delivery and success;

Now, therefore be it resolved that:

We endorse the recommendations provided by the State Riparian Forest Buffer Task Force. We commit to work together to align our efforts and harness available resources to increase the miles of riparian forest buffers on agricultural lands in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Be it further resolved, that in recognition of this, the Chesapeake Bay Executive Council will take the following actions:

- The State Task Force Reports will be conveyed to USDA and be part of the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* Riparian Forest Buffer Management Strategy workplan where resources and responsibility to achieve those actions will be identified;

- Multi-year strategies for aligning and securing needed resources to reach riparian forest buffer goals will be developed and will include analysis of staffing and financial needs;
- We will support implementation of USDA conservation programs that develop, restore or maintain effective riparian forest buffers in the Chesapeake Bay watershed;
- A robust outreach initiative will be implemented to promote riparian forest buffers within the agricultural community; and
- Technical assistance will be enhanced to ensure that buffers are planned, implemented and maintained successfully;

And be it finally resolved, that we commend the work completed by the USDA and the States through the Initiative and Task Force process and express our thanks to all the stakeholders who provided their insight and recommendations.