



# **West Virginia** **Riparian Forest Buffers**

**Chesapeake Bay  
RFB Forum  
February 25 & 26, 2016**

# WV Summary

- **Farm Bill programs have been the principle funding source for the creation of new RFBs in WV's Bay watershed. (89% through CREP, EQIP and WHIP)**
- **CREP has been the dominant program**
- **WV CREP enrollment authority is up to 9,160 acres**
  - approximately 6,000 acres enrolled Statewide
    - 3,400 acres within the Bay
- **Many Bay area RFBs to expire in the next 4 years**
  - Approximately 1,000 acres

# **Riparian Forested Buffers ...**

## **A Tale of 2 Strategies**

- 1. USDA RFB Initiative (task force): Strategy in response to \$5 million USDA/FSA funds pledged to Bay states for RFB implementation**
- 2. RFB strategy for State and Non-governmental agencies**



# **USDA/Task Force RFB Strategy – USDA/FSA RFB Funds**

## **(Strategy 1 of 2)**

- **First meeting of the task force September 2014 in Morgantown, WV**

<b>Farm Service Agency (FSA)</b>	<b>WV Conservation Agency (WVCA)</b> (includes Conservation Districts)
<b>Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)</b>	<b>WV Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR)</b>
<b>US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)</b>	<b>WVU Cooperative Extension Service</b>
<b>US Forest Service (USFS)</b>	<b>Trout Unlimited (TU)</b>
<b>WV Department of Agriculture (WVDA)</b>	<b>Chesapeake Bay Foundation</b>
<b>WV Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP)</b>	<b>Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay</b>
<b>WV Division of Forestry (WVDOP)</b>	

# **USDA/Task Force RFB Strategy – USDA/FSA RFB Funds**

(Strategy 1 of 2)

- **Challenges Identified:**
  - Number of CREP acres authorized
  - Staffing cuts/budgets/staffing levels
  - FSA software
  - Outreach

# USDA/FSA RFB Funds

## (Strategy 1 of 2)

- **Strategies/Recommendations:**
  - Improve interagency cooperation
  - Promote additional partnering
  - Amend CREP Agreement (add acres and add producer funding)
  - Procedural modifications (program and technical)
  - Promote compliance and re-enrollments
  - Revise/Increase Marginal Pastureland (MPL) rates
  - Increase maintenance rates
  - Modify cost share limitations



# USDA/FSA RFB Funds

## (Strategy 1 of 2)

- **Strategies/Recommendations, *Continued*:**
  - Increase staff (Circuit Rider Teams for FSA/NRCS/Forestry to increase consistency and implementation)
  - Continue to utilize USFWS and TU (Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and Trout Unlimited's unique partnership)
  - Incentives to employees (not RFB funds)
  - Improve accounting and tracking for WV Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP)
  - Perform Environmental Assessment to include WV's remaining portion of Chesapeake Bay drainage (Monroe County)
  - Train employees/partners

# **USDA/FSA RFB Funds**

## **(Strategy 1 of 2)**

- **WV's Strategy and proposal for funding has been submitted**
- **\$1 million RFB Initiative funds has been awarded to WV**
- **20% State matching funds required**



# **USDA/FSA RFB Funds**

## **(Strategy 1 of 2)**

- **20% match achieved!**
- **\$100,000 cash to be provided to producers through the WV Conservation Agency at \$20,000 per year over 5 years**
- **\$100,000 of “in-kind” contributions from various agencies’ services and inputs toward CREP Riparian Buffer contract activities, including eligible Federal contributions**

# USDA/FSA RFB Funds

## (Strategy 1 of 2)

- **Federal and State funds to be used for:**
  - Completion of a required Environmental Assessment to permit WV's remaining Chesapeake Bay drainage to be added to WV's CREP eligible area
  - Providing a special contract approval/additional signing incentives for new contracts and/or re-enrolling contracts in the Bay when RFB acres are contracted (final formula to be announced soon).

# USDA/FSA RFB Funds

## (Strategy 1 of 2)

- **Actions Underway:**

- A request for an extra 3,000 CREP acres, specific only to the Chesapeake Bay
- An Addendum to our CREP Agreement document is being developed
- A signing ceremony for the new CREP Agreement Addendum is planned. A USDA representative and the Governor will sign the new CREP Agreement Addendum, along with witness signatures from the agencies and NGO's involved with our CREP.



# USDA/FSA RFB Funds

## (Strategy 1 of 2)

- **Actions Underway, *(Continued)*:**

- CREP partners are working together to strengthen the enrollment efforts.

In addition to increasing Riparian Buffer acres, this ties directly into WV's need for reaching our Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) goals.

- FSA and NRCS (with partners) have agreed to provide multi-agency CREP trainings. All areas of the State will be trained with anticipated training dates to be during the spring of 2016.
- WV Conservation Agency has obtained grant funding to assist with expenses related to Chesapeake Bay area trainings.

# **WV RFB Strategy – State & Non-government**

## **(Strategy 2 of 2)**

- **WV Buffer work group has met since 2011. Many similar partners as strategy 1 but includes more NGO's**
- **Two new CREP forester positions are in the process of being hired. One in each Conservation District of the Potomac River drainage. They will be doing outreach and utilizing the CREP targeting tool developed by Maryland. These positions are funded through:**
  - EPA Bay funds to WV DEP
  - USFS funding for a position through Alliance for the Bay

# **CBIG Objective 23 – RFB and Afforestation**

## **(Strategy 2 of 2)**

- **Most successful non-farm bill RFB program is CBIG.**
- **30 riparian plantings on 23,000 stream feet with over 1,500 volunteer hours from 2008-2015.**
- **Expand on this success through partner collaboration**



# Buffer Partner Collaboration/Education

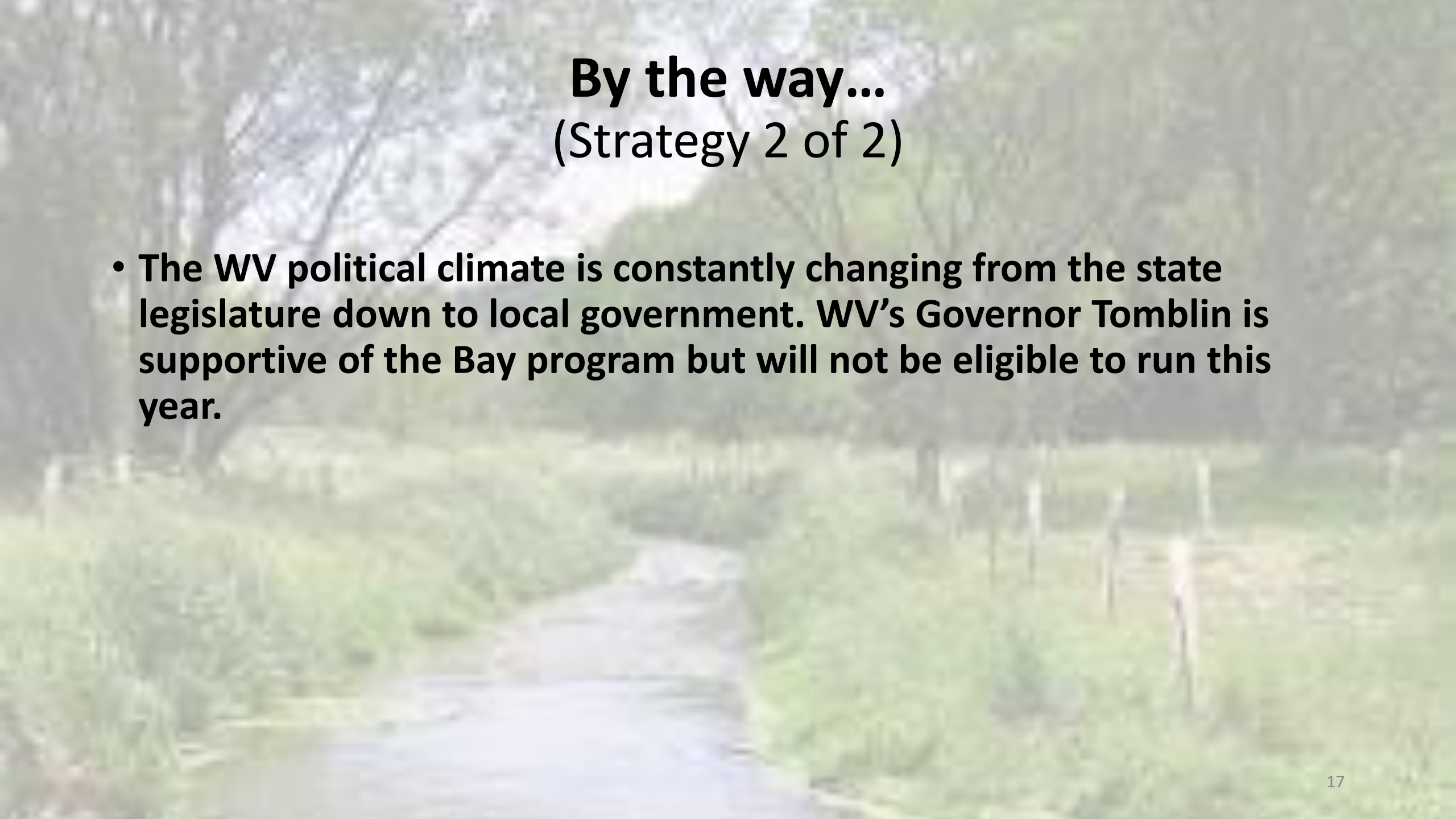
- Many private Landowners
- 6 watershed organizations
- 6 businesses
- 7 schools
- 4H, Boy/Girl Scouts
- Master Gardeners/Naturalists
- Potomac Valley AS
- 4 HOA's
- County Governments
- USFWS
- 3 city Governments
- WV Conservation Agency
- EP Conservation District
- Craftworks
- Cacapon Institute
- The Mountain Institute
- Canaan Valley Institute
- WV EP Beekeepers

# **RFB's through Non Farm Bill Type Funding**

## **(Strategy 2 of 2)**

### **Other RFB funding sources:**

- **319 programs**
- **Stream Partners grant**
- **NFWF, Communitree, Lowes, Toyota, CBF**



## **By the way...**

(Strategy 2 of 2)

- **The WV political climate is constantly changing from the state legislature down to local government. WV's Governor Tomblin is supportive of the Bay program but will not be eligible to run this year.**