



## Chesapeake Bay Program

Science. Restoration. Partnership.

## Forestry Workgroup Meeting

February 1, 2023

[Meeting Materials](#)

Joe Schell, DNREC  
Jenna Talbot, DNREC  
Katie Brownson, USFS  
Terry Lasher, VDOF  
Catlin Verdu, VDOF  
Rick Turcotte, USFS  
Frank Rodgers, Cacapon Inst.  
Collin Shepard, USFS  
Teddi Stark, PA DCNR  
Ned Brockmeyer, NRCS  
Barbra McGuinness, USFS  
Peter Hoagland, NRCD  
Gloria Van Duyne, DEC

Danielle Gift, USFS  
Anne Hairston Strang, MD DNR  
Kathy Hawes, SE partnership for forest and water  
Patti Webb, DNREC  
William Byrum, NRCS  
Rob Schnabel, CBF  
Rebecca Hanmer, Chair  
Sophie Waterman, CRC  
Jeremy McGill, WV DOF  
Rachel Felter, ACB  
Judy Okay, J&J Okay Consulting  
Emily Heller, EPA

---

### [Credit Duration for Forest Buffer Resource Improvement \(RI\) practices](#) - Vanessa Van Note, EPA

Vanessa Van Note came to the FGW to talk about two Resource Improvement Practices related to forestry: RI-9 (Forest Buffer: Exclusion Area on Watercourse) and RI-10 (Forest Buffer on Watercourse). Vanessa also came to ask the following questions:

- Are RI practices 9 and 10 equivalent to the CBP BMPs Forest Buffer with Exclusion Fencing and Riparian Forest Buffer?
- Does the FWG have the ability to alter the [Resource Improvement Practice Definitions and Verification Visual Indicators Report](#) as the practices in question pertain to forestry (report originally approved through the Agriculture Workgroup (AgWG))?
- If the answer to the questions are yes, can the credit duration of 10 years be extended to 15 years per the ["Proposed Credit Duration for Forestry BMPs"](#) proposal approved by the WQGIT?

Resource Improvement (RI) Practices were established in the by the AgWG in 2014. The practices were meant to allow practices that were being implemented **without** Federal or State financial assistance (public cost-share) to be reported through developing criteria and a definition, along with verification protocols.

RI practices get into CAST and are included in the BMP summary report as forest buffers and forest buffers with exclusion fencing.

Vanessa then went over the definitions for RI-9 and RI-10:

- RI-9 (Forest Nutrient Exclusion Area on Watercourse) = 10'-34' width exclusion area.
- RI-10 (Forest Buffer on Watercourse) = 35'+ width buffer.

Both of these practices are defined as “predominantly trees and/or shrubs established on converted cropland located adjacent to and up-gradient from streams, ditches or tidal waters to create an exclusion area, reduce excess amounts of sediment, organic material, nutrients, pesticides and other pollutants in surface runoff adjacent to streams”.

RI-9 and 10 can only qualify if applied on stable areas next to streams, ditches or tidal waters. And can only be reported to converted cropland without a fence.

You can read more about the criteria for RI-9 and R-10 and what states reported RI practices in Vanessa’s [presentation](#).

Vanessa then opened the floor for conversation and to get input on the questions she proposed.

### *Discussion*

Rob Schnabel asked in the chat: Does not include Pasture conversion to forest?

The answer to that is no. There are different RI practices that can applied to pasture, but forest establishment was not as strong compared to the ones proposed.

Anne Hairston-Strang in the chat: As long as the Resource Improvement Practices RI-10 meet the standard of the CBP riparian forest buffer (e.g., 35 ft min, 300 max, 2 species minimum), I think it should be treated the same as cost-shared buffers for credit duration. If it's 10 ft, it can do narrow buffer?

Katie Brownson: the 10ft width buffer falls into the RI-9 practice which also got extended credit duration to 15 years.

Anne then asked about what happens after the 15-year credit duration. Are we getting the credit though the land use model?

Katie noted that question is a great one to ask the CAST folks, and we are hoping to have them come to a future meeting to talk about reporting and crediting.

Rob in the chat noted: Some buffers are in permanent easements, so would be good to have a 30 yr credit. Will make buffers even more cost effective.

**Decision:** The FWG determined Resource Improvement (RI) practices 9: Exclusion Area on Watercourse and 10: Forest Buffer on Watercourse to be functionally equivalent to CBP Riparian Forest Buffers based on the visual indicators published in the CBP Resource Improvement Practice Definitions and Verifications Visual Indicators Report by the AgWG. The FWG requests that the credit durations for these practices be extended to 15 years to align with previous decisions made by the partnership on the credit durations of tree practices.

### **Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professionals (CBLP) Buffer Program-** *Beth Ginter, CCLC*

Beth Ginter, executive director of the Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council (CCLC) gave a presentation on her organization, their buffer programs, and opportunities for regional training programs to help build the capacity needed to accelerate restoration in the Chesapeake.

CCLC provides education, training, materials, and support for landscape professionals along the career pathway, from entry level to advanced professional training. They focus on collaborations, partnerships,

community, equity, and workforce development. CCLC has a program called the Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional (CBLP), which is designed to address challenges, meet the demands of Bay watershed and mid-Atlantic region stakeholders, and engage and empower the landscaping community. CBLP offers certification to professionals who design, install, and maintain sustainable landscapes. The CBLP program is steered by a consortium of partners and gets their funds from a variety of organizations.

Beth then moved onto the specifics of CBLP buffers certificate. The goals of the buffer certificate course are to:

- Define the standard of practice for landscape professionals working on riparian buffers.
- Generate interest among landscape pros in doing buffer work.
- Help connect landscape pros with NGOs, local/state government partners and landowners.

The buffers certification is broken into a three-part training:

1. Half day “Buffer Basics” online webinar- also offered as a standalone class
2. Full day field workshop on buffer planning & implementation
3. Half day field workshop on buffer management

The training is currently running in Pennsylvania and Virginia, and there is interest in adding a training in Maryland. Partner-funded scholarships are available to incentivize participation.

The program has run 3 cohorts with a total of 86 certificates granted. In order to get the certificate, you must complete all parts of the training. CBLP has other certificate courses (level 1 and Level 2) which require a test and continuing education to maintain your certification. The buffers certification is just the three sessions and then you get your certification.

Beth highlighted a GIT funding grant they received a couple years ago that allowed them to create Correctional Conservation Collaborative (CCC) with PA DCNR, DOC and the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. The CCC is a training program for incarcerated individuals that gets them experience with planting buffers. In 2021 a pilot with James River Association, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia DOC (State Farm), Hirschman Water & Environment, CCLC to expand the CCC to VA.

In June 2022 the Business of Buffers Roundtable was held to help inform small business engagement, ongoing outreach activities, contractor capacity-building, and plans for workshop and training. It was a small group of folks who attended the workshop. After the workshop a continuation of collaboration and conversation has occurred. They are finding that buffers aren’t always as appealing as sustainable landscaping programs for the private sector.

Different companies provide buffer services. Larger companies have the ability to be a one stop shop and can scale up with visa workers or subcontractors to plant large sites. Smaller companies may have the competitive edge for local work and can be better for smaller scale projects. Better understanding of Latino contractors (who were identified as a target audience) and their challenges were identified as something to better understand. Another identified need is the need to be creative and look at collaboration among businesses and to connect with certified herbicide applicators.

Capacity building was also a big theme at the roundtable. Working with organizations to help train young adults for buffer work and attending career events at colleges and universities (specifically community

colleges) are some of the ways they are trying to address that capacity need. They are working on developing a profile of the ideal buffer worker.

People care about buffers! Buffer businesses want to get buffers into the ground, but they are a business and need to make a profit. Rates for services are often already set and go to the lowest bid in a competitive market, but costs are rising across the board and it is challenging to make it profitable. The CBLP program is there to help businesses find people who are interested in doing buffer work.

Buffer training will be happening this year in the early part of fall.

#### *Discussion*

Anne Hairston-Strang commented that the MD Forest Service is very interested in offering RFB training and is interested in following up with Beth.

Katie Brownson asked about compiling of findings from the round table into a report. The private sector perspective is critical.

Beth said there is a report, but she has to check with the VA coordinator before she can share widely.

Beth noted that they have lists of contractors who have taken the CBLP trainings and are happy to share that with folks to get people connected.

Anne Hairston-Strang asked if Beth could expand more on the engagement they have with the Latino community.

Beth responded by saying that they have just started doing trainings in Spanish, CBLP has a storm water BMP maintenance course that is the first class taught in Spanish. There is interest in teaching the buffers course in Spanish as well. CCLC has been working the Latin Chamber of Commerce in Virginia to help get connected with folks. CBLP is just starting connection work with the Latin community.

#### Forestry Workgroup Plans for 2023- Rebecca Hanmer and Katie Brownson, USFS

Rebecca opened the conversation on 2023 by announcing that she will be stepping down from the Chair position.

Rebecca has been chairing for 12 years, and we appreciate the guidance she has given the FWG. We will be seeking two co-chairs with one co-chair more focused on urban tree work and the other more focused on forest buffers. We will be sending out an announcement with more details in the near future. In the meantime, if you are interested in one of the co-chair positions or know someone that would be a good candidate, please email Katie Brownson ([Katherine.Brownson@usda.gov](mailto:Katherine.Brownson@usda.gov)) and Julie Mawhorter ([julie.mawhorter@usda.gov](mailto:julie.mawhorter@usda.gov)).

Katie ran through a forestry workgroup outlook for 2023 doc which highlights some of the overarching/ongoing projects that the workgroup is a part of/developing. Some projects include the State of the Forest 2.0, RFB 2-year work plan, Tree Canopy Funding & Policy Roundtable, GIT funded projects, STAC Rising Temperatures Workshop follow ups, and several communication projects (including orientation material, a possibility for a tree equity webinar series, and a newsletter for buffers).

Katie then highlighted the potential meeting topics for the year.

Input from members on the proposed meeting topics and priorities was requested. You can review the plan [here](#). **If you have thoughts on the 2023 FWG Outlook, please email Katie Brownson ([Katherine.Brownson@usda.gov](mailto:Katherine.Brownson@usda.gov)) by 2/17/23.**

### *Discussion*

The Farm Bill came up as a topic that we should be focusing on and work with the PSC to ensure that buffers are represented. Anne suggested that we create a list of things we find important and connect with groups like the Northeast/Midwest State Foresters Alliance and the National Association of State Foresters. They have active policy folks who are engaged in the Farm Bill process. There is also an opportunity for us to raise these issues within our own channels to get this work included into the Farm Bill. Rob Schnabel noted that CBF is really pushing a transformation of CREP and getting the Farm Bill to take away some of the barriers that prevent landowners from signing up. Rob offered to share the CBF Farm Bill priorities with the group. In the chat Julie Mawhorter wrote: I'm remembering that Ann Swanson was pretty keyed into supporting Farm Bill related asks from the Chesapeake Bay Commission side, so it might be good to engage the new leadership there now that Ann has retired.

Rebecca Hanmer in the chat commented: Re Communications tasks: increased attention re the county reports on forest gain and loss. Cassie Davis noted that the Watershed Technical Workgroup recently made orientation materials that the FWG could use to get started on FWG specific materials.

Anne noted that a Healthy Watersheds meeting could be useful to have them come and highlight their tools, and a meeting on MD Forest Technical Report and 5 million trees might be good topics for the group. Equity, business capacity, and regional nursery capacity were also ideas floated by Anne.

### Developing the next Riparian Forest Buffer (RFB) Workplan and Management Strategy - Katie Brownson, USFS

Katie opened this agenda item by talking about the two planning documents we use for our outcomes. The Management Strategy- Longer-term (10 year) narrative document identifying factors influencing success, current efforts and gaps, management approaches, and strategies for monitoring and assessing progress (*developed for 2015-2025*). The Logic & Action Plan – Two-year workplan identifying specific actions that will be taken to implement the Management Strategy.

After each cycle of SRS, you get an opportunity to update your management strategy if your outcome is so inclined. We have not updated ours in a while and do not have DEI and Climate change considerations in our strategy. We are very close to the 2025 expiration and will have to revisit our whole management strategy then. Katie is leaning towards waiting to update our management strategy in 2025 and just focus our energy and effort into our 2-year work plan.

Anne chimed in and said that waiting is appropriate, but we want to have our ducks in a row prior to 2025 so we can hit the ground running with a new management strategy. We want to be proactive about our thoughts. Katie noted that we will probably get more guidance on what and how we should be incorporating things into our management strategy. Rebecca chimed in and said that our work plan ought to be reflected in our strategy but understands that it takes a lot of effort to re write. Is there any way for us to just simply put things into our management strategy that would align us with our current

workplan. Katie said she will talk to the SRS team and see if there is way for us to submit our work plan and management strategy separately. The strategy is for us, so we could potentially just do an internal edit that aligns the two together, and then wait until 2025 to do the holistic update and edits.

Katie then suggested that we add an item into the 2-year work plan that we start to think about what we need to do to get ready for 2025 and then to write our 2025 management strategy. Terry noted in the chat: It seems like we should have Rebecca's replacement(s) in place prior to engaging on a strategic plan.

Katie then moved onto the specifics of the logic and action plan. Katie is proposing that we update our factors influencing success to be leadership, capacity, funding, and policy. She also proposed that we add some more context to our management approaches. She then ran through each of the proposed new actions. You can read the specifics in Katie's presentation which can be found on the meeting [page](#).

**If you would like to add thoughts or suggestions for the next RFB Workplan, please utilize the [Jamboard](#) until 2/8. Katie will aim to have a revised Workplan Plan sent out to group for a short review by 2/15.**

#### *Discussion*

Anne noted that we should be making sure we are clearly calling out things like climate adaptation.

#### **Round-Robin**

**Maryland Anne Hairston-Strang** There is a new acting Secretary of Maryland DNR, Josh Kurtz, who previously was Maryland Director of Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and previously MD had worked with him at the Nature Conservancy. Anne noted that DNR is thrilled and very hopeful of that nomination being confirmed. Maryland's new governor's policy agenda has lots of opportunities for engagement especially for things like workforce development. Marian Honecny is the new the new associate director for policy and external relations. She is the lead for 5 million trees and all things urban forestry.

**West Virginia, Jeremy McGill:** West Virginia Division Forestry is still without a director, the WV Chesapeake Forester is resigning at the end of February. The Chesapeake Forester position should be posted soon.

**CBF, Rob Schnable:** CBF will be starting their volunteer plantings in late March and end on Earth Day in April. If you need any feel-good media stories these events are a great way to get them. Most events have about 80 volunteers and roughly 1,000 trees in the ground. More info on these plantings will be posted on the CBF website on the second week of February. The Bay foundations Claggett Farm, which is an Upper Marlboro, has a large tree nursery with about 15,000 trees. CBF has about 8,000 to 10,000 trees available that are in 1 to 2-gallon container. If anybody's looking for larger stock material as opposed to seedlings, please reach out to Rob.

**Virginia, Caitlin Verdu:** VDOF are deeply involved with the CBLP buffer program that was talked about today. VDOF will be sending people to the level 1 course this year as well. Take advantage of it if you can! VDOF is working on spending down 2 additional flexible funding programs. In addition to VDOF James River buffer program, there are some nice opportunities to get buffers planted outside of those traditional funding structures. VDOF just finished the department of Forestry action plan, which includes the work of 2023. It is robust and comprehensive with lots and lots of good things. VDOF is coming out

with an outreach plan for this year, it is a way to communicate with the folks who already work with VDOF and people who have land in Virginia who have maybe have never worked with VDOF and would like a buffer.

**USFS**, Julie Mawhorter: The Tree Canopy SRS review with the Management Board will be on February 9, and you're welcome to tune in and listen. We'll be presenting in the 10 to 12 window along with the local leadership outcome.

State Leads were all in agreement to use the 2010 census places as the footprint and not the urbanized areas for the Tree Canopy Indicator methods. In late January Julie was able to present to the WQGIT and we are going to be going ahead with the indicator.

**Next Meeting will be in person field trip at the Casey Tree Farms in Berryville VA on March 8<sup>th</sup>.**