

## Forestry Workgroup 2017 -- Retrospective

December 2017

In 2017, our FWG work was again dominated by preparations for the mid-point assessment of the TMDL which was pushed back into 2018 by Bay Partners. Bay Partners are working with an entirely new model (Phase 6 or CAST), backed by new science and is applicable to the local level where planning and zoning are felt. The FWG spent some time looking at the new forest data associated with the Phase 6 Land Use model which uses the new high-resolution imagery.

Here's a recap of what we accomplished starting with significant ongoing work.

### Ongoing Work:

- The new riparian forester positions—funding to states from the Farm Services Agency through the US Forest Service—expanded beyond Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania and West Virginia to include New York and Delaware (DE riparian forester to be hired in 2018). This gives us a total of 11 additional technical assistants for riparian forest buffers on the landscape of the Bay watershed.
- Progress toward the [Riparian Forest Buffer \(RFB\)](#) and [Urban Tree Canopy \(UTC\)](#) 2-Year Workplans. These watershed-wide workplans incorporate work specified in separate state workplans. This was work agreed to collectively, but many actions are occurring at the state level, and are not always discussed at the FWG forums.
  - FWG strategies will undergo the Biennial Strategy Review System (SRS), the Partnership's adaptive management review process, in 2018 (RFB in April, and Tree Canopy in October). The SRS process demarks the need to update our 2-year Workplans.
- Forests for the Bay (FFB), our forest landowners outreach and education program administered by the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, works with the states on programs such as Welcome to your Woods, Your Woods and Your Wallet, Woods and Wildlife, The Woods in Your Backyard, and Legacy Planning.

### Winter-Spring:

- Virginia became the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bay state to have their CREP amendment approved allowing them to spend they could begin to spend the ~\$1 million award from Farm Service Agency (originally apportioned in FY14).
- At the February 8-9 Management Board meeting in Cambridge MD, CBP Director Nick DiPasquale honored Rebecca Hanmer with a Bay Champion "Crown Achievement" award for her work on Verification and long-term service to the WQGIT.
- Worked to get Forest Planting Credit defined and recognized in Phase 6. The Urban Forest Planting is distinct from Tree Canopy Expansion primarily in that the understory will not be managed and the Urban Forest will be allowed to regenerate, forming natural understory layers.
- Roll-out new websites: Development of the websites [ChesapeakeForestBuffers.net](#) and [ChesapeakeTrees.net](#) began in 2016 and were released for public viewing in March 2017. Practitioners are the target audience for these two networks/sources of information.

- The 2nd annual Riparian Forest Buffer Forum in Buckeystown MD was held March 2-3. Approximately 100 buffer people attended from across the watershed. One of the topics brought up by FSA at the Forum, was the potential availability of \$20 million for buffers in the Chesapeake. This funding became a focus for the rest of 2017 as we are waiting for the placement of high level USDA officials in the new administration who can make a final decision on these funds.

#### Spring-Summer:

- In May, the Chesapeake USFS office learned of steep budget cuts to FWG partners. Some of these funds were restored using year-end funds, but several states did not receive USFS funds in fy17. The final amount given as grants was \$265K, down from nearly 600K in fy16. Unfortunately, the fy17 amount may be the new normal going into fy18.
- Our Chesapeake Watershed Forestry office hosted 2 summer interns. One was a Thurgood Marshall intern from a historically black college and university (HBCU).
- Reviewed high resolution land use data (v. 2) breakouts by county. These data, produced by Lindsey Gordon of the Land Use Workgroup, gave us number of acres of forested riparian buffer within 10M and 30M buffer widths in each county in the watershed. It also showed us amount of Tree Canopy over turf and over impervious. Alternately, these data show the acres of opportunity for tree planting which is helpful for setting goals in WIPs.
- Developed a Draft WIP III Guide for Forest BMP's--This Guide summarizes basics about forests and forest BMPs in the watershed model, and what we have learned about Phase 6/CAST. The Guide shows how the high-resolution land use layer (see bullet above) can be used as well as the 2025 forecast data.
- The FWG held a CAST training in June at the MD DNR computer lab and a second training in November in the Fish Shack.
- A 2-day environmental justice workshop "Trees for All" was held in August for people who want to promote tree planting in underserved, developed areas of the Bay watershed.
- Chesapeake Bay Accountability and Recovery Act (CBARA) - Annual accounting of federal and state projects and funds due to OMB in September. For forestry, this has been an exercise within the federal FS and on FS lands (State participation has been optional to date).

#### Fall:

- In September we heard about some Conservation Finance projects—one from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and another from the USFS Washington Office. Several possibilities for future Conservation Finance projects that directly benefit forests were brought forward.
- Chesapeake Forest Champions were proposed, selected and recognized at the annual Chesapeake Watershed Forum in November.
- Also at the Forum, there was a 2-day Forestry Track sponsored by the Alliance.
- The Healthy Watersheds for TMDLs Project received its 3<sup>rd</sup> year of funding. Greg Evans, DOF, is the lead on the project. A possible outcome from this Phase will be how to Credit Conservation and also innovative ways to fund it (Conservation Finance).
- Forecasting Growth was a topic brought to the FWG by Peter Claggett, USGS, in October and December. The Water Quality GIT recommended using the 2025 Forecasting as a base layer in

the TMDL. Several growth scenarios will be presented to the partnership including a 'Trends and Zoning' option and a 'Conservation Plus' option.

- In November, we discussed our process for Riparian Forest Buffer progress reporting as part of the annual indicator. Beginning this year, we agreed to get the official progress results for RFB from what has been reported to the model since this information has improved and is readily available now. This will absolve the states from reporting separately to the FWG, however they would still need to report average width which is not included in the model information.
- Updates to the 2015 Forestry Verification Guidance were initially discussed in June and then in December the edits were presented to the FWG. Once approved, this version will officially update the previous Guidance.