



## Meeting Minutes

### Chesapeake Bay Program Forestry Workgroup Riparian Forest Buffer Management Strategy

National Park Service Conference Room (Suite 304)  
Chesapeake Bay Program Office  
410 Severn Avenue, Annapolis, MD 21403  
December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014 9 AM – 3:00 PM

#### Meeting Summary:

Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) Forestry Workgroup (FWG) members and interested stakeholders met on December 4<sup>th</sup> for a face-to-face meeting devoted to the management strategy of the Riparian Forest Buffer in the [Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement](#). Participants discussed barriers and strategic actions to address barriers.

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

#### Participants:

Rebecca Hanmer (Retired Citizens Advisory Committee), *FWG Chair*  
Sally Claggett (USFS), *FWG Coordinator*  
Julie Mawhorter (USFS), *Mid-Atlantic Urban and Community Forestry Coordinator*  
Eric Sprague (Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay)  
Tuana Phillips (Chesapeake Research Consortium)  
Anne Hairston-Strang (MD DNR)  
Beth Roessler (NY DEC, Trees for Tribes)  
David Wise (Stroud Water Research Center)  
Stephanie Eisenbise (Chesapeake Bay Foundation)  
Herb Peddicord (WV DOF)  
Eunice Padley (NRCS)  
Jessica Bassi (VA)  
Buddy Bowling (Maryland NRCS)  
Tom Ward (NRCS)  
Virginia Green (NY FSA)  
Marel King (CBC)  
Earl Bradley (Citizen, Annapolis)  
Bud Reaves (Anne Arundel County, MD)  
Paul Eriksson (Cumberland, MD)  
Colin Jones (MDA)  
Craig Highfield (Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay)

Herb Peddicord (WV DOF)  
Justin Hynicka (MD DNR)  
Jenny McGarvey (Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay)  
Rich Mason (US FWS)  
Marian Norris (NPS)  
Tracey Coulter (PA DCNR)  
Rachel Reyna (PA DCNR)  
Judy Okay (VA DOF)  
Greg Evans (VA DOF)  
Sarah Nicholas (TNC)  
Tanner Haid (WV Cacapon Institute)  
Noelle Tang (CBC)

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Rebecca Hanmer welcomed everybody to the meeting and confirmed participants.

### **The Management Strategy and Riparian Forest Buffer (RFB) State Task Forces**

Sally Claggett provided a quick overview of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement's 31 outcomes and Management Strategies, including the [timeline](#) to get them completed. She also gave a presentation that showed how the RFB Initiative and RFB Management Strategy could be integrated. For more information, please see Sally's presentation at [this link](#).

Other comments and discussion points:

- The RFB Management Strategy differs from [Buffering the Bay](#) document
- Riparian Forest Buffer Directive
- Leadership/funding from USDA and EPA
- The Riparian Forest Buffer goal involves all signatory jurisdictions, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, federal agencies, local NGO partners.
- We need the Agriculture community at the table. The FWG realized a few years ago that we could not accomplish the RFB goal without Ag partners completely involved.
- Input from the Chesapeake Bay Program's Management Board will be very important for this management strategy. The first chance to get them to weigh in will be after December 15<sup>th</sup>, which is when we are submitting the first management strategy draft.
- Our job is to look at state roles that complement the USDA program. We want to find the missing pieces and bring the focus to how the states can leverage additional federal dollars.
- Chesapeake Bay States created RFB Task Forces and developed interim reports in November. (The interim reports are posted on the [meeting calendar webpage](#).)
- States get a lot of 319 money for water quality and Clean Water Act... Why is the money not getting prioritized to RFB? We should raise this to the Management Board and EPA.
- MDE, VA DCR, and VA DGIF were added the list of partners for this Management Strategy.

- It was also pointed out that some NGOs should be represented in the list of partners, including wildlife NGOs (Wild Turkey Fdn, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited).

### **Developing State Strategies and Summary of State Task Force Reports**

Eric Sprague presented on the Chesapeake Riparian Forest Buffer Initiative. With help from the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay and support from leadership at USDA and EPA, states have begun to develop strategies on how to plant more buffers. His presentation focused on four strategic themes: leadership (e.g. importance of local champions), outreach, financial incentives, and technical assistance. For more information, please see Eric's slides at [this link](#).

Other comments and discussion points:

- The State Task Forces final reports will be due late February 2015.
- VA has had issues when matching federal money to hire staff. In one case they wanted to hire 3 people but were only able to hire 1 person.
  - One option is to work with NGOs and have them to do the hiring.
- A participant noted that NY has "pushed back" the idea of leveraging EQIP as a strategy. PA has explored this idea, but has yet to make it work. DC is also looking into it. This is where USDA leadership comes in to see how they can give NRCS some flexibility.

### **Progress and other Relevant Data to RFB MS Development**

Sally Claggett reviewed the current data relevant to the management strategy (e.g., cumulative acres of buffers, acres of CREP grass vs. trees, expiring contracts, and geospatial data). For more information, please see Sally's slides at [this link](#).

Other comments and discussion points:

- We plan to get grass buffer information in the future.
- Data on width of buffers is not currently being collected by FSA. That information will most likely come from NRCS; negotiating through the 1619 agreements.
- Data show re-enrollment of expiring contracts in 2015-2016 will be a big issue/workload. FSA lead has the names and addresses of expiring contracts.
- Sally has been asked to submit a proposal to FSA on what the outreach needs are, bay-wide. Maybe a website, one stop-shop on buffers.
- LIDAR and hi-res data help you find streams where we don't have data.
- In PA, TNC completed a buffer analysis that specifically looked at missing buffer segments. By doing this they are zooming into hot spots that may, for instance, be good habitat for trout, and focusing efforts on these hot spots.
  - A participant noted that although prioritizing areas by identifying hot spots is useful, you may not have landowner who is willing to plant buffers.
- There is disconnect between the farmer, landowner, and operator. Outreach is needed because of misconceptions. Is the farmer renting the land? Sometimes the landowner doesn't know about these programs and the farmer says "what is in it for me?"
- We need to advocate the soil and herd health benefits of buffers.
- In a workshop in VA, a participant traveled from Illinois to see what to do about his land in VA.

- 40% of farmland in VA is incorporated, LLCs, owners in different states.
- We need to address what to do with absentee landowners.
- Our goal is 70%...what do we mean by “stream?” We need to clarify what we mean.
- Just because you have a forest buffer, doesn’t mean it is healthy. There is little focus in programs to areas that are already buffered.
- What is a functioning buffer?

## **Barriers and Gaps**

Eric Sprague facilitated the group’s discussion on barriers and gaps. The group brainstormed additional barriers/gaps that were missing from the [Barriers and Gaps document](#). Their additions are provided below.

### **Programmatic Barriers**

- Allow whole fields?
  - 10 – 15% flexibility
- Staff incentives / performance (5 million)
- Difficult to marry EQIP/CREP
- Commodity prices (risk management)
- MPL definition & opp.
- Intrastate program competition
- Timing of technical assistance – NRCS
  - & rate (EQIP vs. CREP / farm type)
- Reenrollment flexibility/incentives

### **Landowner Outreach and Customer Service**

No additional barriers/gaps were identified.

### **Establishment**

- Milestones for establishment
- Tie SRPs to crop prices?
- Compliance checks inconsistent
- Alternative sources of income in RFB?

### **Technical Assistance**

- “Swat teams” – more coordination
  - Use FSA \$5 million
- Site steward
- TSP process difficult
- Hire short-term staff

### **Conservation**

No additional barriers/gaps were identified.

## **Contract Reenrollment**

No additional barriers/gaps were identified.

Other comments and discussion points:

- We have a great opportunity here with CREP and EQIP. Most management strategies do not have funding mechanisms, but forest buffers does.
- “Long-term maintenance” has to be defined. One of our selling points is that little maintenance is needed.
  - Another jargon issue: establishment vs. maintenance

## **Strategic Actions to Address Barriers**

Sally Claggett facilitated the group’s discussion on strategic actions. The group brainstormed additional actions that were missing from the [Summary of Recommended MS Actions to Date](#), and identified whether certain actions would belong to states, NGOs, or the federal government.

### Increase Financial Assistance

Comments:

- Develop awards program (1c on handout) is a state action.
- Another action is matching funding with CREP.
- States look for where states have financial leverage. Could a ranking criteria be developed?

### Improve Technical Assistance

Comments:

- Staffing and training is a state/private action.
- Actions 1c and 1d on the handout could be done by states.
- State action: work with preservation programs to have RFBs included in easements.

### Improve Outreach

Comments:

- Create a web presence – perhaps a state action?
- GIS specialist. Think would be a state GIS person.
- Data mining: graduate student interest in looking at what makes people sign up for enrollment
- Good outreach when FSA started
- 15 year anniversary, CREP rally idea
- Watershed groups and districts can help with messaging
- Clear, simple message.
- FSA 30<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of CREP
- Do “trees build better farms?”? MDA farmers feel it’s a minus to have trees.

### Improve Establishment, Maintenance, Compliance, Reenrollment

#### Comments:

- Cost-share maintenance ½ state, ½ federal
- Some states might consider matching maintenance funding. Circuit rider idea, e.g. Trout Unlimited
- Compliance – federal matter
- In some states, the state plays an important role in checking status and verification.
- There is a role for the private sector (for-profits). They can market and structure things in a way that could foster maintenance.
- States should think about making 5 years of care their role.

### Program/Policy/Leadership actions

#### Comments:

- Coordination between states and the federal government is essential.

### Conservation

#### Comments:

- Create an inventory of conservation groups – how many are there? Do the easements have or require buffers?
- Part of CREP addresses conservation; 20% of funding is flexible.
- There is a ripe opportunity to creatively work with Agriculture land conservation sector.

### Increase use of Targeting

#### Comments:

- There are different approaches; evolving
- Need: data availability
- Partnership (foresters won't be trained)
- Targeting as a way to specialize outreach activities: more positive side
- Don't use the word "targeting," use "prioritization" instead
- Use targeting for outreach.
- Yet, we also have to be opportunistic about where to plant buffers as well. We don't want to take money away from "non-targeted." Perhaps use "best opportunities" to avoid implication that non-targeted won't get funding.

#### Other comments and discussion points:

- Build in an analysis in MS that says we have all of this coming, will be assessing state-by-state feasibility. More subtle approach.
- Put these questions to decision makers (from state task forces) to set targets and be able flexible enough to maybe change in 2 years.
- Leadership is very important.
- Opportunity to tie into wetland restoration programs.
- How can we value buffers better in stormwater programs? There are environmental benefits beyond stormwater, but incorporating buffers into stormwater programs will help incentivize.
  - Coordinate with the Chesapeake Bay Program's Urban Stormwater group

- Tie this strategy to the UTC strategy
- Also tie this strategy to the local leadership strategy.
- Suburban buffers are a gap.

#### **Next steps**

- Provide Sally with any other partners either “participants” or “reviewers” that should be included in this process, including all state agencies
- By January 15, partners will send the specific strategic actions for the 2-year Work Plan to know what detail is needed. *If you do NOT expect your agency to have specific actions relative to the RFB Management Strategy*, please let Sally know ASAP and she will change your status to “reviewer”.
- The State Task Force in states will be expecting specific actions for incorporation into the RFB Initiative after January 15.
- By end of January, the FWG state forestry leads should expect to:
  - get buy-in from other state stakeholders on what the most important practices are from state government and provide this feedback to me and your Task Force
  - touch base with State Ag Preservation groups about actions to align farm conservation with RFB restoration/conservation