



Chesapeake Bay Program

Science. Restoration. Partnership.

Forestry Workgroup Meeting Minutes

August 7th, 2024

9am-11am

[Meeting Materials](#)

Attendees

Anne Gilbert, MD DNR, USFS
Kesha Braunskill, USFS, WV
Cassandra M. Davis, NYS DEC
Ned Brockmeyer, PA DCNR
Robbie Coville, PA BOF DCNR
Rebecca Lauver, Alliance, PA
Marlin Graham, PA DCNR
Anne Gilbert, MD DNR, USFS
Katie Brownson, USFS, MD
Lorenzo Cinalli, USFS
Bay Hanson, USFS, MD
Diego Henriquez, CRC, MD
Alanna Crowley, MD DNR, USFS
Meghan Noe Fellows, Center for Inland Bays
Richard Turcotte, USFS, WV
Robert Gentry, USFS, WV
Brendan Durkin, DC DOE
Frank Rodgers, Cacapon Institute, WV
Rob Schnabel, CBF, MD

Katie Walker, Chesapeake Conservancy, MD
Alexis Dickerson, Potomac Conservancy, MD
Craig Larson, USFS
Susan Minnemeyer, Nature Plus
Caitlin Verdu, VA DOF
Patty Web, DE DNREC
Marilyn Yang, CRC
Sophie Waterman, USGS CBPO
Sushanth Gupta, CRC
Jackie Pickford, USGS CBPO
Helen Golimowski, Devereux Consulting
Ruth Cassilly, UMD CBPO
Erica Carlsson DC DOEE
Lynda Brinkley, Upper Susquehanna Coalition, NY
Matt Keefer, PA DCNR
Nancy F. Sonti, USFS

9:00 Welcome and Introductions – Anne Hairston-Strang (MD DNR)

9:10 Announcements – Katie Brownson (USFS)

- Welcome to our new staffer, Marilyn Yang!
- Potential update of meeting platform to MS Teams?
 - **Discussion:** Several members mentioned their jurisdictions already shifting towards Teams, only one member voiced preference for Zoom.
 - **Decision:** FWG meetings will move to Teams.
 - **Action:** Marilyn to send new FWG calendar invitations over Teams.
- Welcome to our new at-large member, Alexis Dickerson!
- Timber Harvest Task Force- forest harvest BMP re-evaluation – Lorenzo Cinalli
 - Recommendations for revised forest harvest BMP efficiencies will be provided to the Timber Harvest Task Force later this month and pending approval, will be brought back to the FWG for a decision in September
- Agroforestry Expert Panel Evaluation Group (EPEG)

- An EPEG group has been formed to evaluate whether and how Silvopasture and Alley Cropping could be credited towards the Chesapeake Bay TMDL. The current membership list available on calendar page for any recommended additions from the FWG
- Beyond 2025 comment period
 - On July 1st, the Beyond 2025 Steering Committee released the draft of A Critical Path Forward for the Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership Beyond 2025 for public feedback. Feedback will be accepted until 11:59 p.m. on August 30, 2024 and only via email to comments@chesapeakebay.net. A list of frequently asked questions about the process and how to comment can be found [here](#). Note: We will discuss the Beyond 2025 report and gauge interest in submitting a comment letter on behalf of the Forestry Workgroup later in the meeting.

9:20 **C-Stream Intern Presentation** – *Diego Henriquez (CRC)*

Diego presented his summer internship project, which involved conducting a literature review on the impacts of invasive knotweed on riparian forest buffers and performing a cost-benefit analysis of its removal along Rock Creek in Washington, DC. Diego highlighted that herbicide treatments represent a promising and cost-effective method for sediment control in Rock Creek. He emphasized that this approach could be applied throughout the entire Bay Watershed, particularly as knotweed significantly contributes to stream bank erosion and poses a threat to the sediment pollution goals established by the Chesapeake Bay Program.

Discussion:

Members applauded Diego for his work and congratulated him for completing the C-Stream Intern program. Some members voiced concerns on herbicide use.

Erica Carlson (in chat): Any other herbicides applicable? Cut primary shoots back and spray reshoots- up to 5 years to remove completely. Replanting can happen if you can keep tree species from getting treated with herbicides. We usually use Rodeo.

Meghan Noe Fellows (in chat): And cover crops between the trees - but if you can have a whole year or two of treatment before planting trees, that can help

Diego acknowledged the comments saying there are other methods to controlling knotweed, but for the purposes of his study and its cost-effectiveness, he chose to focus on herbicide.

Erica Carlson (in chat): More money for invasive removal is needed. Maintenance is less prioritized over planting but super crucial.

Robbie Coville (in chat): Replying to Erica's previous comment: And upland management as part of an integrated watershed management approach! So, it's good to hear these needs from you as someone focused on the headwaters where we arguably need to start invasive control for the best impact!

Rick Turcotte mentioned the USFS is developing biocontrols. Knotweed is ubiquitous but we should also look at other riparian invasives and strategize to make sure we are also treating

upstream. similar working being done at the USFS by developing biocontrol methods, said this is one of those plants that is ubiquitous, but for the bigger discussion it would be nice to look at the riparian zones to see what the plant issues are to see how to strategize a solution, emphasizes that if you don't treat up stream it comes back.

9:35 [Land Use/Land Cover Data \(2024 edition\): Rule Considerations and Class Names](#) – Katie Walker (Chesapeake Conservancy)

Based on reviews of the latest version of the model, the LULC project team is proposing an additional rule change to better align with urban tree canopy research. In addition, they wanted to update the naming of our forest and tree canopy classes.

Summary of rule change for the forest classification in the 2024 edition of the LULC data:

The 2024 edition of the LULC data will include the footprint of Tree Canopy over Turf Grass (TCTG) when assessing patch size for meeting forest class requirements. While the footprint of TCTG will not change, this rule change would allow some areas that currently get classified as Tree Canopy, Other (TCOT) to be called Forest (FORE). This change was requested to better align the data with recent findings from urban tree canopy ecological studies performed by USFS and UMBC. This change does not have any water quality modeling implications, as both FORE and TCOT are treated the same in CAST.

- **FORE** - Large patches of contiguous, non-wetland tree canopy greater than or equal to one acre with a diameter of at least 36-meters throughout the area, whose understory is assumed to be undergoing natural or managed succession.
- **TCOT** - Small patches of contiguous, non-wetland tree canopy that do not meet forest area and width requirements (e.g. agricultural windbreaks, narrow riparian forest buffers, and small woodlots), whose understory is assumed to be undergoing natural or managed succession. Note this class will be renamed "Forested, Other" in the 2024 edition of the data
- **TCTG** - Tree canopy overlapping managed low vegetation in developed areas that is assumed to be turf grass or otherwise altered through compaction, removal of surface organic material, and/or fertilization.

Decision requested: Approval of a rule change to determine how "Forest (FORE)" is classified in the 2024 Edition of the high-resolution land use/land cover data: adjacent patches of "Tree Canopy Over Turf Grass (TCTG)" will be included in the food print when determining the patch size threshold for the "Forest (FORE)" class.

Discussion:

[Anne](#) says that if we assume the tree patches in developed settings are over an acre, likely having forest and not a managed understory, then we think this could be a good idea.

[Katie Brownson](#) says overall the change is minor without having water quality implications. Whether a patch is classified as Tree Canopy, Other or Forest, we are assuming an unmanaged

understory. Instead, the implications are more impactful from a habitat management perspective, if they want to identify an area as a forest rather than other.

Rob Schnabel says it would be surprising if there were no water quality implications, saying that typically with the urban forest patches the turf grass is more compact than a typical forest.

Katie Brownson clarifies that tree canopy over turf is a different loading category and re-emphasizes they aren't proposing to reclassify Tree Canopy over Turf Grass. She then asks Katie Walker to explain further.

Katie Walker references the example in Baltimore City from the slides showing aerial imagery of a small urban forested area saying in the current version it would classify as "Tree canopy, Other" and "Tree Canopy over Turf" on the edges, whereas the proposed change would classify some of the more intact areas as "Forest", with the edges still being classified as "Tree Canopy over Turf" and "Tree Canopy, Other".

Susan asks if the forest conservation easements are included in this, since those easements can dictate whether understory is managed or not, since areas deemed as forest are directed to have different management practices.

Katie Walker says they do not use protected lands data to determine the forest cover designations. She also comments in these urban environments she assumes there are less conservation easements that could be layered to compare.

Susan agrees saying conservation easements would more likely be seen in suburban areas and recognizes this is complex but reemphasizes that looking at these areas could help with identifying whether the understory is managed or not.

Matt Keefer (in chat): I'm confused about the understory. If it's tree canopy over turf, doesn't that imply mowing/management? How can we assume an unmanaged understory?

Katie Brownson (in chat): Matt we don't assume an unmanaged understory for tree canopy over turf (that assumption just applies to tree canopy, other)

Robbie Coville (in chat): Seems like the question is about Tree Canopy, Other being interpreted differently, right?

Katie Brownson (in chat): You got it Robbie

Matt Keefer (in chat): I would also like to see a direct comparison to USFS FIA definitions of forest. FIA generates forest loss/gain reports for all states generally on an annual schedule. Will this produce different results than FIA for forest loss/gain?

Rob Schnabel comments from his experience in hydrology modeling of urban forests that it really comes down to the leaf area index or the density of leaves in a given site, so the

understory does affect that, but overall, you will have a forest like density of leaves. So he supports the rule change, but echoes Matt's previous comment in the chat.

[Katie Walker](#) clarifies that the rule change would stay in alignment for FIA's definition in size threshold, it would only effect whether the edges classified as "Tree Canopy over Turf Grass" could be included in the footprint when determining the core forest areas. It does not change how they define forest.

[Erica Carlsson \(in chat\)](#): Just as an FYI, I've been managing an acre plot adjacent to a DC Park in DC that was previously mowed by a residence for reforestation

[Judy Okay \(in chat\)](#): Should the amount of leaf litter under the canopy be considered? Also is there a woody understory or just herbaceous?

[Robbie Coville \(in chat\)](#): My point being that these edge areas offer forest like LAI and are worth including as part of the broader urban forest.

[Anne](#) agrees with Katie Walker's clarification, but references the questions in the chat, asking the commenters whether there needs to be further explanation.

[Katie Brownson](#) clarifies again that this wouldn't change assumptions about management understory at all, it just forest vs. tree canopy other, both of which we assume have an unmanaged understory.

[Anne](#) references Erica's comments that in DC they have larger forest patches with managed understory and asks if the proposed change would affect that.

[Katie Brownson](#) says the assumptions are being made to the best of their ability with aerial imagery. This rule change wouldn't affect any determination of understory management, just whether a core area can be determined as forest with that habitat value because of that buffering of the edge tree canopy.

[Anne](#) suggests looking at the Baltimore Green Space on their forest patch functions, but also echoes Erica's comment that in DC there are manicured systems.

[Nancy](#) says there will always be areas of long continuous trees that are mowed underneath once in a while that aerial imagery cannot detect, it's never going to be perfect, but overall agrees that this rule can be applied across the watershed and will get a more accurate classification.

[Erica Carlsson \(in chat\)](#): Non federal props are mowed. Thanks for adding the wildlife part!

[Frank Rodgers](#) chimes in saying we are adding a bit of uncertainty to pick up extra forests. He appreciates the interest in valuing these spots, but suggests we find those patches that are almost forest and then we put a deer exclusion fence in there to change that edge from turf to forest and then we get the acre, make a real-world change.

Anne says we are changing it because we are looking at patches that are called Tree Canopy, Other but look like forests to others.

Rob Schnabel chimes in saying certain patch sizes must relate to different levels of forest health and regenerative sustainability and expresses concern towards allowing a smaller island size to count as forest and questions if that's long term sustainable. He also seconds Franks comments saying it would be nice to reforest the turf areas so there is less encroachment into our healthy forests.

Anne clarifies there already is a conservative approach right now where we are assuming there is turf grass in many places where its not.

Julie Mawhorter seconds Anne's comment saying this already using a conservative approach and certainly in Baltimore City when they use the forest patch maps, we would consider that canopy over turf grass adjacent to the forests as whole forests.

Katie Brownson agrees that focusing in on that real world change and reforesting these areas over turf is important, but regardless because of the rules the areas on the edge of these patches will always be called tree canopy over turf grass because they are so close to houses, so the question is whether we want to have flexibility over whether some of these core areas can be considered as forests.

Susan supports making the rule change because it appears the model is underestimating forest right now. If we have an acre of continuous tree canopy and if we already are conservatively assuming the areas around the edges are tree canopy over grass, then it's a valid assumption that there are core forest areas, even if they aren't high quality.

Judy Okay (in chat): It seems like a lot of assumption being determined by imagery, when we really cannot see what is under the canopy. A more in depth look at this would be good...do we have serious ground truth information?

Rob Schnabel (in chat): If this definition change would provide more protection for these small patches, then I am for but not sure it does. Can go with the flow

Julie Mawhorter (in chat): I support the change - the partners that have been working on restoring and stewarding these forest patches in Baltimore have done a great job documenting the ecological values of these areas and have been asking for years for us to acknowledge them better in our mapping.

Nancy F. Sonti (in chat): Distinguishing forest interior from edge is important for many applications but is beyond the scope of the LULC map as far as I understand

Anne says that she is generally seeing agreement, given that we likely are overestimating tree canopy over grass, and this is kind of a counterbalance to that. She also asks Erica, given her

previous comments about the instances of understory management in forest patches in DC, if she would still agree with the proposed changes.

Erica Carlsson (in chat): yes

Anne asks if there are any more outstanding questions but otherwise feels the group has come to a consensus and can move forward with approval.

Frank asks if a layer could be shared that points out all the areas that would be classified as forest in the new change.

Katie Walker says she will work with Sarah McDonald to develop something.

Decision: The FWG moved forward the proposed rule changes and class names for the 2024 edition of the LULC data.

- Rule change: adjacent patches of "Tree Canopy Over Turf Grass (TCTG)" will be included in the footprint when determining the patch size threshold for the "Forest (FORE)" class. In response to questions and comments, Katie Walker has provided a more detailed summary of the rule change, which is included at the bottom of this email.
- Class name change: "Tree Canopy, Other" (TCOT) will be renamed "Forested, Other" to better reflect the value of these smaller forested patches

9:50 State of Chesapeake Forests 2.0 Update – Katie Brownson (USFS)

Due to time running over from the Proposed Rule Change discussion, this presentation was postponed to the September 2024 FWG meeting.

10:05 State of Chesapeake Forests 2.0- Plantable Areas and Fragmentation Analyses – Katie Walker (Chesapeake Conservancy)

Due to time running over from the Proposed Rule Change discussion, this presentation was postponed to the September 2024 FWG meeting.

10:25 Beyond 2025 Update – Katie Brownson (USFS)

Katie provided an overview of the draft recommendations from the Beyond 2025 Steering Committee Report and led a discussion to gauge interest in submitting a comment letter on behalf of the Forestry Workgroup.

Discussion:

Rob Schnabel thinks giving examples on how to meet our goals with models is important for higher ups in the policy world.

[Frank Rodgers](#) mentioned that the Education Workgroup has been holding listening and engagement sessions to see how the community views the partnership to help with restricting efforts to make it more digestible to those outside of upper-level policy.

[Lydia Brinkley](#) comments that the report is so broad and vague that she feels it would be difficult to provide comments on something this large and questions if it would be worth commenting or focusing on one aspect.

[Anne](#) says that from a perspective of having experience doing this for decades that even if its vague, the focus on conservation is a big deal and anything we can do to enforce that is important.

[Judy Okay \(in chat\)](#): Glad to see a conservation focus and CC emphasis, because both of these factors are having a considerable impact on the success for Bay restoration on the forestry side of the big picture.

[Anne](#) says we have a chance for restoration, which is why the working lands approach is so important. Says we can BMP in developed areas all we want, but without conserving healthy intact areas we cannot reach our goals.

[Katie Brownson](#) shares a slide with initial ideas on FWG feedback that suggest elevating conservation as a key part of the program, expanding the consideration of changing environmental conditions to also consider the impacts of changing social conditions, and better accounting for the impacts of climate change and land use change.

[Anne](#) follows by suggesting to include an urbanization and climate change focus.

[Katie Brownson](#) agrees and says the FWG could voice support for the report's climate change elements. She shares a final slide of ideas that include adding more nuance to the recommendations to streamline the program due to the need to address emerging challenges and gives the examples of the invasive species issue, which is not currently well addressed in the Bay Program. The streamlining effort shouldn't limit our ability to be more holistic and include a broader focus.

[Anne](#) suggests emphasizing the need to more effectively convey and communicate the partnership to local governments and communities

[Susan Minnemeyer](#) suggests convening a sub-group to further discuss potential recommendations from the FWG, including a better focus on nature-based climate solutions and better informing our processes and decisions using data and tools.

[Rob Schnabel \(in chat\)](#): Providing a Case Study, Maryland example of how we are incentivizing new buffers while also protecting existing forest, MD CREP permanent easement program and expand to MDA CBI program. All states have Ag Preservation programs BUT do not protect

existing forest on these protected lands. While there are waiting lists for these programs adding this makes sense to get net gains.

Anne highlights Rob's points on how to incentive and protect buffers and links to ag preservation programs that don't necessarily require a commitment to protecting a forest

Rob mentions the CBF's comment letter is focusing a lot on current ag preservation programs across the watershed and is suggesting adding that as an eligibility requirement.

Anne mentions the comment letter from the Chesapeake Conservancy as a reference the FWG can compare when drafting the FWG comment letter.

Katie Brownson finished discussing the ideas on her final slide saying the report could include a clearer connection on how to reach the recommendations of strengthening forest buffers and tree canopy restoration efforts. She suggests having the recent tree canopy data included in the initial progress statistics in the first section, since it was left out. In her final suggestion, she mentions there was a lot of reference to watershed health, but no definition, so she recommends defining the term to include whole watershed, not just stream health.

Diego Henriquez (in chat): An integrated watershed management approach to invasive species management is important as well. Watersheds are interconnected systems, meaning control of invasives like knotweed would have to be systemic. The presence of dense urbanization also complicates management by fragmenting environments. There definitely needs to be more emphasis and scrutiny on the roles invasives play in slowing down progress towards multiple pollution goals.

Katie Brownson encourages more ideas and closes out the discussion by asking people to indicate their interest in a sub-group (Susan, Frank, Rob, and Alanna voice their interest in participating).

Decision: The FWG is interested in submitting a public comment letter to the Beyond 2025 Steering Committee on the draft recommendations.

Action: Convene a sub-group to further discuss and finalize a FWG comment letter on the Beyond 2025 Steering Committee recommendations. The draft will be shared with the FWG before submitting officially to the Steering Committee.

10:45 Round Robin

[Lorenzo Cinalli](#) informs everyone that he will be on a temporary 6-month assignment at the White House's Council on Environmental Quality, so his participation with the FWG will be sparse for a few months, but that he will be back in a few months.

[Alexis Dickerson](#) mentions the Potomac Conservancy will be writing a grant due in November and they are interested in helping to fund tree planting work, but they do not have tree planting infrastructure. She puts out a call for people working in the Potomac Watershed saying if they are interested in funding opportunities, reach out to her.

[Anne](#) suggests reaching out to Isaac Whitmore from 5 Million Trees.

[Frank Rodgers \(in chat\)](#): Kudos to Potomac Conservancy for the Safe Water Conservation Collaborative planting riparian buffers in WV's E. Panhandle.

[Rob Schnabel](#) mentions the CBF will be doing a GIS study looking at Frederick County. They are going to wait for the new LULC data to come out, but they want to figure to what extent they are losing forests on preserved lands by using Frederick County as an example to hopefully inform future decisions when agricultural lands are put under protection.

[Ned Brockmeyer \(in chat\)](#): I'll do Pennsylvania updates here as I'm having some connection issues. We're postponing the Watershed Forestry Summit to early 2025, we should have a date soon, and we'll keep everyone posted. We received a \$2M NFWF INSR-implementation grant that will go 100% towards planting buffers and lawn-to-habitat projects within PA's Bay Watershed. And we are waiting on Commonwealth HR to approve the hires of our two Chesapeake Bay Community Forestry Specialist positions to help our UCF staff expand our work in the Bay region.

[Katie Brownson](#) mentions three announcements:

- The STAC Committee (Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee) just put out an RFP to support a science synthesis project related to effectively managing for climate change at the intersection impacts to water quality, people, and living resources in the Bay Watershed, which can be up to \$25,000.

The USFS IRA funding for the forest landowner support program and the normal landscape scale restoration grant program, which is their normal competitive grant program that funds collaborative restoration in rural landscapes, she anticipates it will be on similar timeline with a due date near November.

11:00 Adjourn