Narrative Analysis

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# **tree canopy outcome – February 11, 2021**

# The narrative analysis summarizes the findings of the logic and action plan and serves as the bridge between the logic and action plan and the quarterly progress meeting presentation. Based on what you learned over the past two years from your successes and challenges, you will describe whether the partnership should make adaptations or change course.

# Use your completed pre-quarterly logic and action plan to answer the questions below. After the quarterly progress meeting, your responses to these questions will guide your updates to your logic and action plan. Additional guidance can be found on [ChesapeakeDecisions](http://www.chesapeakebay.net/decisions/srs-guide).

# **otes**

# Examine your red/yellow/green analysis of your management actions. What lessons have you learned over the past two years of implementation?

**What Worked**

Summit Training & Follow Up

Our highest priority action in our workplan was successfully completed – the Chesapeake Tree Canopy Summit 2.0, held over two days in January 2020 at the Patuxent Wildlife Refuges in Linthicum, Maryland. The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay did an excellent job hosting the Summit, with funding support from NFWF and a highly engaged planning team consisting of each State Tree Canopy lead and the US Forest Service. Around 100 people attended the Summit, representing all of the Chesapeake states and DC, with a mix of local, state, federal and NGO participants.

The Summit helped accomplish a number of actions within our workplan, offering the opportunity to provide training in a variety of new tree canopy tools and resources that we had collaborated on with partners under our four management strategies:

* FUNDING: [Financing Urban Tree Canopy Programs: Guidebook for Local Governments in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed](https://chesapeaketrees.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/FinancingUrbanTreeCanopyPrograms_LowRes_040919.pdf) & free online UMD MOST Center Course, [Funding Urban Forestry Programs](https://mostcenter.umd.edu/resources/funding-urban-forestry-programs) (UMD Environmental Finance Center & Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay)
* POLICY: [Making your Community Forest Friendly: A Worksheet for Review of Municipal Codes and Ordinances](https://owl.cwp.org/mdocs-posts/making-your-community-forest-friendly-a-worksheet-for-review-of-municipal-codes-and-ordinances/) (Center for Watershed Protection); Stormwater Benefits of Trees for TMDL (Chesapeake Stormwater Network)
* TECHNICAL CAPACITY: [i-Tree Landscape](https://landscape.itreetools.org/), [Land Image Analyst](http://gicinc.org/land_image_analyst.htm) (Green Infrastructure Center), Urban Tree Canopy Change Analysis (UVM Spatial Analysis Lab/USFS)
* OUTREACH: [Growing Tree Canopy through Environmental Justice](https://www.vibrantcitieslab.com/resources/growing-tree-canopy-through-environmental-justice-project/) (American Forests, EcoLatinos, Baltimore Tree Trust)

In our last SRS review and subsequent workplan, we recognized the need to more broadly communicate the considerable public health impacts and other co-benefits of trees, expanding the messaging beyond just water quality. Therefore, the keynote and opening sessions of the Summit focused on the latest research and partnerships around trees and public health, with very positive feedback from participants. Later in 2020, we followed this up with Chesapeake Tree Canopy Network e-newsletters focused on public health ([spring](https://chesapeaketrees.net/newsletters/spring-2020/)), urban heat ([summer](https://chesapeaketrees.net/newsletters/summer-2020/)), and equity and community engagement ([fall](https://chesapeaketrees.net/newsletters/fall-2020/)), as well as a [Heat, Health & Trees](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwBePIVhfwQ) panel at the Chesapeake Watershed Forum, which was the second highest attended session of the conference. By the end of 2020, we are completing an update of our Chesapeake Tree Canopy Network website, including adding new *Why Tree Canopy* sub-pages focused on Health, Climate Resilience, Equity, and Stormwater.

State Partnership Accomplishments

The first action in our Tree Canopy workplans is always focused on the ongoing, critical role of State Urban and Community Forestry programs in helping to meet our Baywide tree canopy goals. Of the many accomplishments of these programs, here are a few highlights that relate to our workplan actions:

* DC – reduced barriers and focused targeted outreach to grow more canopy on *public and* private property throughout the District, including priority areas of the MS4 and areas of extreme heat.
* Maryland and Delaware – in partnership with Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, MD and DE launched new Tree Stewards programs in 2020, adeptly shifting to a virtual learning model due to the COVID pandemic
* New York – supported urban forest buffer plantings on municipal lands through the Trees for Tributary program; the Upper Susquehanna Coalition, a key partner in these efforts, was recognized with a national Arbor Day Foundation Headwaters Award in 2020
* Pennsylvania – launched a new lawn conversion program to help meet ambitious WIP goals to convert lawn areas to forest or meadow
* Virginia – developed an ArcGIS-based [tracking tool](https://arcg.is/WryDG) that captures tree planting projects completed by a variety of nonprofit and local partners; completed a GIT-funded tree/buffer planting training program and guide for volunteer groups
* West Virginia—grew “Carla Hardy WV Project CommuniTree” into the Arbor Day Foundation’s national “Headwaters Award” winner (2018) and WV’s largest tree canopy program working with schools, subdivisions, and local governments to increase tree plantings and provide hands-on educational opportunities for management and inventories.

In addition, in the last two years, state forestry agencies have been hard at work doing a 10-year update of their State Forest Action Plans, as required by the Farm Bill. Urban and Community Forestry strategies are an important part of these plans. Collectively, the Chesapeake state forestry agencies worked with the USDA Forest Service to do a major update to the 2014 Chesapeake Forest Restoration Strategy and sign a Shared Stewardship agreement in 2020. A section of this Strategy focuses on urban and community forestry strategies to advance our tree canopy goals.

Cross Outcome/CBP Collaboration

Local Leadership – We collaborated with the Local Leadership Workgroup (LLWG) on the Tree Canopy module in the new watershed education curriculum, to be finished in 2021. LLWG completed a review of our tree canopy resources to help prioritize and disseminate through trusted sources and at conferences in the future. We look forward to building on this collaboration in the next cycle and working closely on the GIT-funded workshop for land use planners.

Communications – We worked with the CBP Communications team on a Communication Plan outline, social marketing idea scoping, and a 2020 GIT funding proposal focused on effective tree planting communication strategies and gaps/needs. Although it was not selected in the GIT funding process, we are persevering to identify other options to get this important work done.

Schools – Through the unanticipated opportunity of a US Forest Service volunteer summer intern in 2020, a draft Trees and Schools Resource Guide was developed to help strengthen the connections between environmental literacy, sustainable schools and tree canopy efforts. We are inviting stakeholder input through March 2021 and will work closely with the Education Workgroup to refine and disseminate the guide. We anticipate it being a springboard for future collaboration around training and capacity building with schools and partners.

Stormwater – To increase the dialogue between tree and stormwater professionals, we collaborated with Chesapeake Stormwater Network to offer Trees & Stormwater sessions at the 2019 Chesapeake Stormwater Retreat and at the 2020 Chesapeake Tree Canopy Summit. We helped with the planning of three CSN webcasts focused on tree BMPs: [Part 1: Reforestation](https://chesapeakestormwater.net/events/stormwater-roots-part-1-reforestation/), [Part 2: Big Trees, Small Spaces](https://chesapeakestormwater.net/events/stormwater-roots-part-2-design/), and [Part 3: Finding the Right Tree BMP](https://chesapeakestormwater.net/events/trees-in-sw-programs/).

**Challenges & Lessons Learned**

The COVID pandemic has undoubtedly been the topmost factor impacting the efforts of tree canopy partners working on the ground. Agencies and nonprofits have had to adapt and limit their typical planting, volunteer engagement and community involvement methods to accommodate social distancing and keep everyone safe. The resourcefulness of these many groups to keep the work going at a feasible scale, despite the formidable challenges, is awe-inspiring. Nonetheless, COVID has impacted and will continue to impact organizations, budgets and priorities in varied and unforeseen ways.

In terms of our Workplan actions, one of our top priorities coming out of the last SRS Review was to **Build state and local capacity through new funding and policy strategies.** Maintaining tree canopy in the face of growth and development pressures and ever-expanding forest health threats (e.g. emerald ash borer, spotted lanternfly) requires local government support.  Specifically, local governments need to use their powers governing development in such a way that protects their canopy.  They need to have policies and sustainable programs that support tree planting and long-term maintenance. Local governments are the bedrock, and the state and federal programs, nonprofits, and volunteers all operate to help localities do this job. One thing we have learned from engagement with localities through the Summit and other channels is how weak the incentive still is, in most places, for local governments to maintain tree canopy and increase planting - especially on private lands.  Finding those incentives, and continuing to improve communication with local governments about the incentives, is still urgent.

We had a lot of positive momentum and partner contribution preparing for the Tree Canopy Summit held in January 2020. Following our workplan, we still plan to follow up with a Funding & Policy Roundtable. It will engage high-level leadership and subject-matter experts in charting a set of forward-thinking strategies and recommendations to advance Bay-wide and state-level Tree Canopy efforts. This work is marked red on the workplan because COVID pandemic disruptions put planning for the Funding & Policy Roundtable on hold until partners have the resources and time to engage in this bigger-picture strategizing.

Delaying the Roundtable offers the opportunity to after we have on hand comprehensive Tree Canopy status and change report (discussed below) based on the new land cover analysis that will be completed in 2021. Understanding the extent and geographical patterns of tree canopy gains and losses will provide a strong foundation for the types of forward-thinking policy strategies and recommendations that we hope will emerge from the Roundtable.

The other actions in our workplan that are marked yellow indicate areas where we accomplished some limited work, but much more action will be needed in the next cycle in order to significantly advance towards our goals. This was mostly a function of limited staff coordination capacity to advance so many actions at once and an intention to minimize the “asks” to engage partners in new activities when partners were busy managing and responding to COVID impacts.

# Regardless of how successful your short-term progress has been over the past two years, indicate whether we are making progress at a rate that is necessary to achieve the outcome you are working toward. The example graph below illustrates this concept.

*\*\*This section coming soon – we are still refining the Tree Planting BMP progress numbers that were submitted in December*

# What scientific, fiscal and policy-related developments will influence your work over the next two years?

* *New Land Cover Data & Change Analysis*

The new land cover data and change analysis which will be completed for CBP in 2021 will provide the first robust dataset we’ve had to assess gains and losses in tree canopy across the watershed. This will be vitally important in testing out and refining as needed our Tree Canopy Indicator methodology and, most importantly, in helping to inform our next set of goals and strategies for the Tree Canopy outcome.

* *Latest Research on Tree Canopy, Urban Heat, & Environmental Justice*

In 2020, new research highlighted the connections between the historic racist practice of redlining, inequities in tree canopy distribution, and resulting disproportionate burdens of urban heat and air quality impacts. These findings underscore the need to expand and focus the assistance available to support tree canopy efforts in underserved communities of color and low income areas. CBP’s DEIJ statement and partnership efforts provide a timely framework for advancing environmental justice across outcomes.

* *COVID Impacts*

Our tree-planting organizations have been adaptive and creative in finding ways to plant safely during this pandemic but COVID has taken a toll and will no doubt continue to do so for some time. While planning can be virtual, planting can only happen in the real world. Safe-distancing, limited gatherings, inter-state tree deliveries, and regional cross training activities have all been disrupted, delayed or cancelled. Inhibited outcomes per labor involved (i.e., fewer trees planted with greater effort) has strained state and local government budgets and will do so into the future.

* *Climate Initiatives focused on Trees* – The last couple years have brought increased global and national interest in trees as a climate mitigation strategy (Trillion Trees initiatives, etc.) Although none of the proposed tree-focused legislation has passed yet at the federal level, we will need to be able to respond and contribute our urban forestry expertise to the new opportunities, challenges and drivers that these kinds of initiatives may produce in the next 2 years.

# Based on your response to the questions above, how will your work change over the next two years?

* *Assessing and Communicating Tree Canopy Status & Change to Stakeholders*

In 2021-2022, working with the new land cover and change analysis data will be a major focus, in order to test and refine our Tree Canopy Indicator and distill the most useful findings to inform future goals, policy and strategies. We will develop a Bay-wide summary report on Tree Canopy status and change that will serve as a springboard for convening the Funding & Policy Roundtable mentioned above. In addition, through a supplemental US Forest Service grant to the Chesapeake Conservancy, and with input from the Forestry Workgroup, we will be developing digital communication products to share the latest tree canopy/land cover data and change analysis at the local scale (e.g. county fact sheets, municipal where feasible). These efforts will be closely coordinated with the Local Leadership Workgroup, so that we can also take advantage of opportunities to engage and educate newly elected local officials in 2022 and beyond.

* *Sharing data, tools & best practices for Tree Equity*

We will work with CBP’s new Data Dashboard tool (environmental justice components) and develop a toolkit of data, tools and resources to support local tree equity initiatives. Having the data to help target efforts is important, but we are still wrestling will big questions around how to properly engage and collaborate with communities and ensure that trees planted will be sufficiently maintained. In these low canopy/highly paved areas, we need to engage different agencies and funding streams to help with removing impervious surfaces and building viable planting spaces so that the trees can survive and thrive. Although our 2020 GIT proposal was not selected for funding, we will work with stakeholders to further refine and develop training and technical assistance needs and pursue funding opportunities to deliver these. These efforts will be pursued through participation and alignment with CBP’s DEIJ actions and Diversity Workgroup collaboration.

* *Enhance virtual learning and other accessible training and technical assistance; plan for a post-COVID biennial Tree Canopy Summit in 2022*

While we are still in “virtual mode” due to COVID, we will look for opportunities to offer additional webinar trainings and engagement opportunities in 2021 and beyond. At the 2020 Tree Canopy Summit, we heard significant interest in continuing these periodic regional gatherings on a regular (e.g. biennial) basis, so we will scope out opportunities to host the next one in 2022, including virtual options for those who cannot travel to or attend long face-to-face meetings. In addition, we need to plan for gatherings where we can cross-pollinate with other partnership efforts like local government, schools, communications, etc. so that we can build tree canopy more into those efforts.

* *Continue building on prior partnership work around priority issues and needs*

While this is not a change in focus, we want to emphasize the importance of continuing and expanding our collaboration with partners around key priorities: local leadership/engagement, DEIJ with a focus on health, heat and resilience, communication plan/strategies, stormwater/WIP implementation, and school-based opportunities.

# What, if any, actions can the Management Board take to help ensure success in achieving your outcome?

*\*\*We will be forming up these actions based on January Forestry Workgroup meeting*

* *Continue to grow DEIJ investments in communities, with tree equity as a priority*
* *Participation in the Funding & Policy Roundtable – sending the right representatives when the time comes (we will provide briefing/details)*
* *Continue and grow the support for critical state urban and community forestry programs, through leveraging other available programs (public health, environmental justice, stormwater/water quality/infrastructure, climate resilience, sustainability, environmental education, etc.)*