



## Chesapeake Bay Program

*Science. Restoration. Partnership.*

### Forestry Workgroup Meeting Minutes

June 11th, 2025 | 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

[Meeting Materials](#)

<b>10:00</b> (5 min)	<p><b>Welcome and Introductions</b> – <i>Anne Hairston Strang (MD FS, FWG Co-Chair) and Matt Keefer (PA DCNR)</i></p> <p>For roll call purposes, please enter your name &amp; affiliation in the chat box. Call-in participants are requested to identify themselves verbally.</p>
<b>10:05</b> (10 min)	<p><b>Announcements</b> – <i>Katie Brownson (USFS, FWG Coordinator)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Call for nominations for the <a href="#">FWG Co-Chair Community Tree Canopy</a> position</li><li>● Beyond 2025 Updates<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ PSC approved draft outcome language to put out for public feedback. The new forest conservation target still has a placeholder for the numeric target that we will work to fill in. The 60-day comment period starts on July 1st.</li></ul></li><li>● New At-Large Member Introductions and Confirmations<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Rob Schnabel and Frank Rodgers re-confirmed as at-large members. One at-large member position is currently vacant.</li></ul></li><li>● Update on the New LULC Data and Tree Canopy Fact Sheets and Story Map<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ New LULC data and hyper-res hydrography data are in the final stages of review and approval for public release. We will be releasing new municipal tree canopy status and change fact sheets, updated county fact sheets, and an updated State of Chesapeake Forests storymap. These products will likely be released in conjunction with the update for the Tree Canopy and Forest Buffer indicators this summer.</li></ul></li><li>● Launch of <a href="#">ChesapeakeData</a>, including a featured collection on <a href="#">Tree Canopy and Forests</a></li><li>● Update on Agroforestry Expert Panel Evaluation Group (EPEG)<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ The FWG and Ag WG supported the development of an EPEG to consider whether and how CBP could credit Silvopasture and Alley Cropping in the watershed model. The EPEG has been meeting since last fall and will be wrapping up their final recommendations and report soon</li><li>○ The EPEG agreed that the practices provide water quality benefits and have devised an approach to credit these practices as efficiency BMPs. The EPEG will be seeking partnership approval to credit these practices based on the amount of land that would be covered with tree canopy once mature, without going through an expert panel process.</li></ul></li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ FWG members recommended also including guidance on the numbers of trees per acre that should be planted to achieve the minimum canopy cover required to receive water quality credit.</li> </ul>
<b>10:15</b> (15 min)	<p><a href="#"><u>2024 Chesapeake Bay Progress Data and Updates to the Tree Canopy and Forest Buffer Indicators</u></a> – <i>Katie Brownson (USFS, FWG Coordinator)</i></p> <p>Katie gave an overview of the 2024 progress data and previewed the new draft data for the Tree Canopy and Forest Buffer indicator updates.</p> <p><b>Presentation Summary:</b></p> <p>Overview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The 2024 Bay Program progress runs were just released</li> <li>● Reviewed forestry BMP progress relative to state-set WIP goals</li> <li>● Covered riparian forest buffers, tree canopy, and forest cover trends</li> </ul> <p>Riparian Forest Buffers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Not many big changes overall</li> <li>● Some declines appear due to practices dropping out of the model due to credit expiration (cumulative numbers)</li> <li>● Big jumps in 2022–2023 for the annual forest buffer indicators numbers were mostly from Pennsylvania and Virginia, likely due to “catch-up” reporting from influxes of grant funding or reporting on previously planted acres</li> <li>● Average buffer widths used (100–120 ft) can be updated by states if needed</li> <li>● Expect future spikes in planting rates in PA with additional influxes of spending</li> </ul> <p>Riparian Forest Trends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Updated classification rules now include some acres that were previously classified as tree canopy over turf as riparian forest - this makes the totals higher than before, but the overall trend is still net loss</li> <li>● Between 2013–2022, about 42,000 acres of loss were recorded</li> </ul> <p>Tree Canopy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Significant increase in Pennsylvania in 2024 as a result of increased investments (these occurred later than the buffer investments)</li> <li>● Community tree planting numbers look strong</li> <li>● Tree canopy BMPs tracked include urban forest planting, urban tree canopy, and urban riparian forest buffers</li> <li>● Tree cover land use tracking focuses on 2010 Census places, refined to only count changes to/from developed classes to avoid misclassifying temporary losses (e.g., timber harvest)</li> <li>● Still seeing significant canopy loss to development</li> </ul>
<b>10:30</b> (15 min)	<p><b>Round Robin/State Updates</b></p> <p><u>Maryland</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Working with partners who lost funding and trying to find ways to pick up pieces of projects to continue, but with the loss of conservation corp members it has been challenging</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MD's state-funded 5 Million Trees Program is still going strong, and they expect to continue delivering on commitments</li> </ul> <p><u>Virginia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Riparian Forest For Landowners (RFFL) updates: The first round is complete, with contracts in place through April 2026. A total of 85 landowners statewide enrolled, resulting in 170.14 acres planted (many of them backyard buffers, highlighting how the program is successfully reaching smaller landowners who are often missed by other efforts)</li> <li>The program faced a hiccup with IRA funding, which was frozen during a critical planting period. Although those funds have since been unfrozen, the delay has slowed momentum and hindered the ability to launch a second round</li> </ul> <p><u>Pennsylvania</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Given the meeting was running over-time, the PA representatives deferred to the other states</li> </ul> <p><u>West Virginia</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cacapon Institute gave an update on their tree planting program where they moved out over 1000 trees in the spring</li> </ul> <p><u>Delaware</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No representative from DE gave an update</li> </ul> <p><u>Washington DC</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No representative from DC gave an update</li> </ul> <p><u>New York</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No representative from NY gave an update</li> </ul>
<p><b>10:45</b> (1 hour)</p>	<p><a href="#">Pennsylvania Conservation Landscapes</a> –</p> <hr/> <p><a href="#">Pennsylvania Conservation Landscape Initiative</a> – Meredith Hill (PA DNCR)</p> <p><b>Presentation Summary:</b></p> <p>Conservation Landscapes Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program has been running for nearly 20 years</li> <li>Landscape-level, place-based approach: dynamic and adaptive, with partners updating work plans annually or biannually</li> <li>Focus areas include watershed and greenway protection, recreation, habitat conservation, forest fragmentation reduction, acquisition, and community revitalization.</li> </ul> <p>Examples of Conservation Landscapes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Susquehanna Riverlands</b> (Lancaster &amp; York counties) – watershed and land protection focus.</li> <li><b>Pocono Forests &amp; Waters</b> (northeast PA, 6 counties) – land conservation goals, wetlands focus.</li> </ul>

- **Schuylkill Highlands** (eastern PA) – heavily populated, working to connect remaining forest blocks.
- **Lehigh Valley Greenways** (eastern PA, NJ border) – conserving/connecting green spaces in the fastest-growing area of the state.
- **Laurel Highlands** (southwest PA) – conservation + outdoor recreation development/protection.
- **Kittatinny Ridge** – linear landscape, designated DoD Sentinel Landscape, valued for habitat, water quality, and recreation (Appalachian Trail runs through it).
- **Pennsylvania Wilds** (northwest/central PA, 13 counties) – largest landscape, mostly public/forested lands; rural focus; building outdoor recreation destination while conserving natural assets.
- **South Mountain** – robust conservation work led by Katie Hess and DCNR partners; example of strong collaboration.

Additional Notes

- [2019 evaluation report](#) outlines best practices and landscape work
- Meredith shared her contact: mhill@pa.gov for questions

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[South Mountain Conservation Landscape](#) – Katie Hess (*PA Landscape Conservation and South Mountain Partnership, Appalachian Trail Conservancy*)

**Presentation Summary:**

Shifting Appalachian Trail Conservancy's Focus:

- Celebrating its centennial; historically focused on the footpath
- New emphasis: conserving the broader trail corridor, surrounding landscapes, and engaging communities
- South Mountain Partnership has been a pilot for this model

South Mountain Conservation Landscape:

- Located at the northern terminus of the Blue Ridge Mountains; unique geology, habitat, and culture
- Multi-county, multi-municipal collaboration; no fixed boundaries due to habitat/connectivity needs

Regional & National Importance:

- Part of a larger network of conservation landscapes along the AT in PA (Kittatinny Ridge, Poconos, Lehigh Valley, etc.)
- Corridor is globally significant for habitat connectivity and climate resilience
- PA positioned as a “world-class ecological powerhouse” for climate solutions

Community Engagement & Partnerships:

- Hosting regional and annual meetings to connect municipalities, nonprofits, and local leaders
- Peer-to-peer learning emphasized to build trust and share best practices
- Grants: \$50k annually through DCNR, plus small flexible grants for grassroots groups
- Additional science & research grants for students and academic institutions

State of the Region Project:

- Collaborative report card assessing six major challenges (water, air, heritage, ag preservation, etc.)
- Developed with 11 county planning agencies; ensures buy-in and regional direction
- First time diverse partners (foresters, water quality, recreation, cultural heritage) aligned under one project

Current & Emerging Projects:

- Updating the Natural Heritage Inventory (finishes 2026)
- Exploring a regional trail coalition to expand connectivity
- Wildlife corridor work to address fragmentation along I-81 and Turnpike
- Historic resource inventory to strengthen cultural preservation
- Exploring ways to track land conversion consistently across counties
- Appalachian Trail Community Conservation Collaborative (launching 2026)
  - Expands the AT Community Program to include community-led conservation planning
  - Pilot in Pennsylvania with hopes to scale nationally
  - Funding anticipated from DCNR, Mellon Foundation, and other partners

Communications & Outreach:

- Heavy emphasis on communications as a conservation gap
- Newsletter every two months; strong local and regional engagement

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[Pennsylvania DCNR Michaux District](#) – Roy Brubaker (*PA DCNR*)

**Presentation Summary:**

- South Mountain Partnership helps the district think and act at a regional scale while the district focuses on public-land management challenges
- Manage public lands not just as acreage, viewsheds, or trail corridors, but as accumulations of watersheds
- Foresters often don't apply classic watershed ecology foundations - need to bring that back. Watersheds are the best unit for testing assumptions about how our natural systems work.
- Public lands (e.g., Michaux) are the region's "high ground". How do we hold the high ground and the common ground without having land become the commons for extraction?
- Public lands are places to convene, learn, and plan together
- Aim to build a sense of belonging over ownership; avoid extractive or purely scenic use

Realities:

- The ecoregion functions like island biogeography - big protected blocks but fragmented by major corridors (I-81, Turnpike)
- Pennsylvania has protected many high-elevation areas, but the most productive soils/lowlands face intense competing uses

Management actions:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Transitioning their management approach and Implementing a biodiversity plan to de-homogenize stands and restore habitat mosaics</li> <li>● Created a “mind map” of the forest to set target conditions by community type (not just replace like-for-like)</li> <li>● Converted invasive-dominated areas - used savanna/open structures where appropriate for habitat and visitor experience</li> <li>● Worked in and along streams for brook trout—active restoration where “staying out” isn’t sufficient</li> <li>● Balanced competing objectives (taxa needs, recreation growth) using watershed-based trail and visitor management</li> </ul> <p>Indicators &amp; monitoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Past efforts were ad hoc/qualitative; couldn’t show bay-wide “needle movement”</li> <li>● New grant (Chesapeake WILD leveraged) to build scalable watershed monitoring that tracks multiple taxa and reconciles competing objective</li> <li>● Using timber rattlesnake, ruffed grouse, and eastern brook trout as indicator/flagship species to integrate goals</li> <li>● “Look upstream” need to reconnect forest ecology and public health—reviving Rothrock’s legacy of linking forests, water, and people</li> </ul>
<p><b>11:45</b> (15 min)</p>	<p><b>Welcome to Adams County</b> – <i>Marty Qually (County Commissioner, Adams County PA; CBP LGAC Chair)</i></p> <p><b>Presentation Summary</b></p> <p>Background on LGAC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Local Government Advisory Committee (<a href="#">LGAC</a>) advises the Chesapeake Executive Council (EC) on how to engage local governments in achieving the goals and outcomes of the Watershed Agreement</li> <li>● LGAC advises secretaries (not governors); meets with other advisory committees</li> </ul> <p>Beyond 2025 Updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Chesapeake Bay Agreement is moving from 10 goals to 4 goals</li> <li>● LGAC priorities: plain language (communicate clearly; use infographics), and centering people alongside science</li> <li>● Should emphasize “watershed” (upstream to downstream) vs. only “Bay”. Budget constraints mean little dedicated communication; LGAC preparing 1-page summary/infographic of its work</li> </ul> <p>Importance of Local Governments &amp; Advice for Better Engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1,800 local governments in the watershed (many in PA); decisions vary by state structure (townships vs. counties)</li> <li>● Projects often lack municipal letters of support—engage township/county officials early</li> <li>● Build relationships: go through planning staff to reach commissioners; create local leaders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Make it personal - brook trout upstream = Bay downstream; Adams County example (groundwater), connect actions to local benefits</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Some partners can't say "climate change" consider using "changing environmental conditions" to keep stakeholders at the table</li> <li>● Focus on observed impacts (flooding, bigger storms), health, and toxic contaminant mitigation as on-ramps</li> </ul> <p>County Jail Live Stake Nursery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Originally planned a composting facility at the jail, but COVID and operational challenges made it unfeasible</li> <li>● Scaled down to create a live stake nursery instead</li> <li>● Goal: grow local plants and shrubs for riparian areas, better adapted to native soils</li> <li>● Nursery will provide cuttings for plantings, ensuring a local, sustainable supply rather than relying solely on outside sources</li> </ul> <p>Priority Preservation Map</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The county originally had a scatter-shot preservation map, with properties preserved somewhat inconsistently</li> <li>● A new priority preservation map was created to better align with infrastructure and growth planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Example 1 – Conewago Water Chapel (near Cherrystown): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Located in a traffic-congested area where a long-planned bypass was expected</li> <li>■ Ag preservation partners wanted to preserve the property, but doing so would have blocked the only feasible route for the road</li> <li>■ Solution: excluded a 150-foot strip for potential road construction while preserving the rest of the land</li> <li>■ Lesson: <i>You can't preserve everything, but compromise can balance preservation and infrastructure needs</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Example 2 – Farm near Brethren Home senior facility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Farm sat inside the municipality's growth boundary</li> <li>■ The Land Conservancy wanted to preserve it, but the county opposed preservation there, since it conflicted with planned growth and infrastructure needs</li> <li>■ Decision caused controversy, but reinforced the principle that not all land can or should be preserved—some areas must remain available for housing, business, and infrastructure</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
12:00	Adjourn