

Protected Lands Outcome Target Timeline

From now until December 2027, the Protected Lands Workgroup will focus on developing targets by identifying tracking methods, determining precise acreage goals, and ensuring definitions are scientifically defensible and applicable across the entire watershed. Listed below are the questions to address and tasks needed to establish target numbers.

During the July 1st Protected Lands Workgroup Meeting, the workgroup expressed support for taking additional time to better define numerical targets for Wetlands, Watershed Health, Forests, Tribal Lands, Agricultural Lands, and Community Greenspace. Currently, a baseline study can be conducted to understand how many of the targets are protected; however, we need more information than simply knowing which targets are protected versus unprotected. The workgroup requires time to delve into questions, consult with experts, and explore geospatial analysis to make the most informed decisions regarding the targets.

The Protected Lands coordination team believes that to be successful beyond 2025, we must have a sound and clear understanding of our exact objectives. The team is also seeking active participation from all jurisdictions in the development of these targets. Jurisdictions will be asked to review materials, participate in meetings, and provide feedback and guidance on how these targets should proceed.

- **Protected Lands: By 2040, permanently protect an additional 1.5 M - 2 M acres of land throughout the watershed at the federal, state, or local level.**
 - Jurisdiction members of the workgroup need to choose between 1.5 or 2 million acres. The Protected Lands coordination team will reach out to states individually to obtain their final decision on the acreage target.
 - The PLWG will continue to gather protected lands data annually from each jurisdiction to track additional acres added.
 - In 2026, Jurisdictions will be requested to participate in the GIS community of practice to work towards protected lands data standardization. Historically, USGS employees have cleaned jurisdiction data for use with the Protected Lands Indicator; however, this is unsustainable. The partnership needs to find a way to ensure that data submitted to the program is standardized to ensure that we can easily and accurately track protected lands in the watershed. The USGS recommends jurisdictions submit protected lands data in the PADUS format. Alternatively, jurisdictions could provide a detailed attribute dictionary. This approach will help avoid unnecessary confusion and ensure data is updated correctly. (Note: This does not affect the process

of defining targets. However, it is crucial for the MB to be aware of this as it has long-term implications for tracking the target).

- By August 2025, jurisdictions will be engaged and make a final decision on 1.5 or 2 million acres.
- **Forests: By 2040, permanently protect a total of _XX_ acres of forest, _XX_ % of which are in riparian areas.**
 - High-resolution 1-meter land use/land cover data and 2024 Protected Lands indicator data will be used to understand current forest conditions in the watershed.
 - The Protected Lands Workgroup will conduct a baseline study to understand: 1) total acres of forest in the watershed, 2) acres of forest currently protected, and 3) acres of forest in riparian areas within the watershed.
 - Once the PLWG has the current acreage numbers, a discussion on acreage goals for the target can take place.
 - Forestry Workgroup will be invited to the September Protected Lands Workgroup meeting to determine target values.
 - Placeholder value will be proposed to the MB by September 2025.
- **Wetlands: By 2040, permanently protect a total of _XX_ acres of wetlands, focusing on the protection of buffer zones.**
 - Questions to address include 1) defining buffer zones, 2) whether the metric focuses solely on tidal wetlands, 3) calculating buffer zones, and 4) determining the appropriate number of acres to protect.
 - Peter Claggett (USGS) is working on defining this number.
 - Work with the Wetlands Workgroup in Fall 2025 to define the acreage goal. Placeholder value will be proposed to the MB by December 2025.
- **Watershed Health: By 2040, protect a total of _XX_ acres of natural lands in watersheds supporting good stream health.**
 - Define “good stream health.” The Healthy Watersheds GIT has taken responsibility for providing a definition and will inform the PLWG.
 - After “good stream health” is defined, the PLWG will conduct a study to compare the number of acres of natural lands currently protected versus those not protected.
 - Throughout 2026/2027, delve into this target to ensure the goal is appropriate and achievable.
 - By December 2027, the placeholder value will be proposed to the MB.

- **Tribal Lands: Support the sovereignty and duty of care of Tribal Nations and communities by securing protection status and/or co-management agreements for a total of _XX_ acres of tribal homelands.**
 - Consult with the Indigenous Conservation Council (ICC) to establish tracking methods for the protection status and co-management agreements of tribal homelands.
 - Identify and consult with other indigenous and tribal groups regarding this target.
 - Determine whether an acreage goal is necessary or if there are better ways to represent successes for this target. With ICC guidance, define what success looks like for this target.
 - By December 2027, the placeholder value will be proposed to the MB.

- **Agricultural Lands: By 2040, permanently protect a total of _XX_ acres of agricultural lands within the Chesapeake Bay watershed.**
 - The Protected Lands Workgroup will conduct a baseline study to understand: 1) total acres of agricultural land in the watershed and 2) acres of agricultural land currently protected.
 - Identify and consult with land trusts that focus on the protection of agricultural lands.
 - By December 2026, the placeholder value will be proposed to the MB.

- **Community Greenspace: By 2040, permanently protect a total of _XX_ acres of community greenspace.**
 - The Protected Lands Workgroup will define “greenspace” and “community” to help determine the current acreage of greenspace within communities across the watershed.
 - Establish tracking methods for greenspace and community.
 - Consult with groups who focus on the protection of community and urban greenspace, such as Bmore Greenspace.
 - By March 2026, the placeholder value will be proposed to the MB.