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# Riparian Forest Buffer Outcome

*Katie Brownson, USFS  
Forestry Workgroup Coordinator*

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*Through the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, the Chesapeake Bay Program has committed to...*

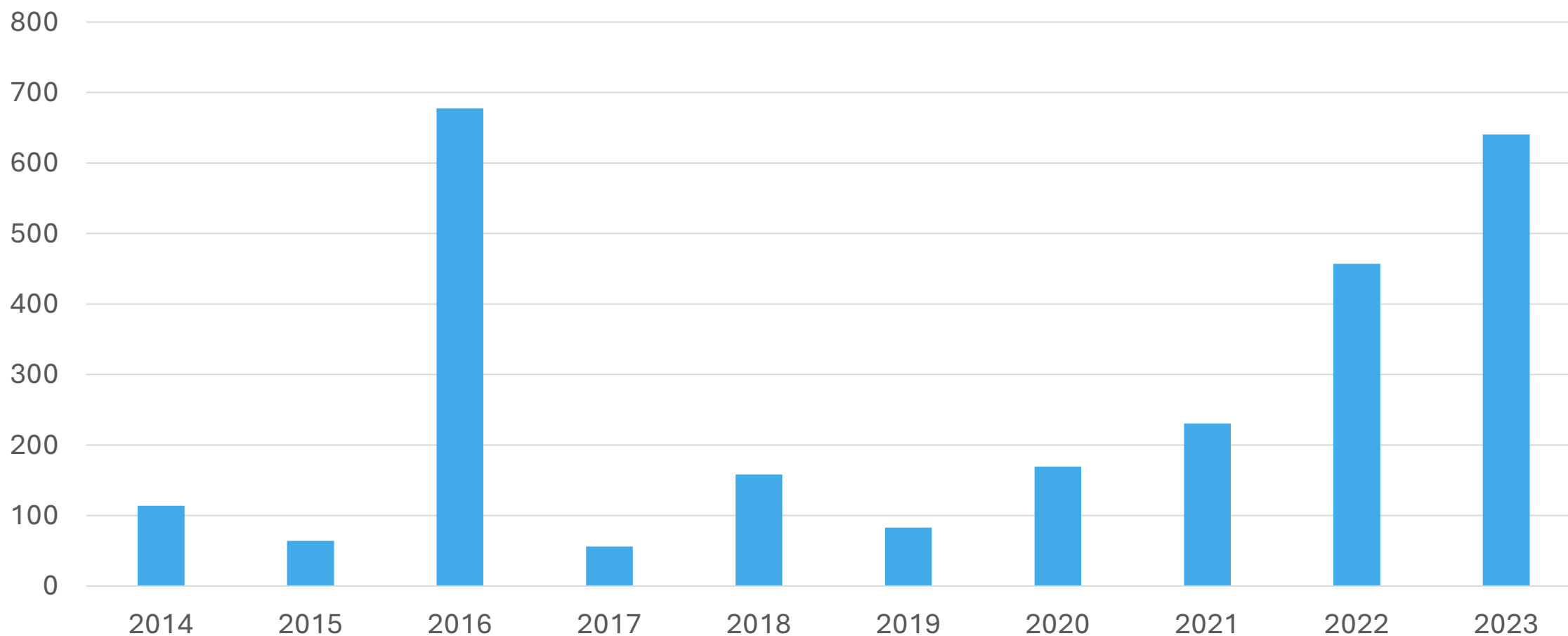


## Vital Habitats Goal

*Riparian Forest Buffer Outcome: 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.

**457 miles planted in 2022,  
640.5 miles planted in 2023\*!!**

Miles of RFB planted since 2014 Watershed Agreement



\*Draft data subject to revision

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# Investments in flexible buffer programs have been effective!

## Benefits

- Quick, easy landowner sign-up
- Funding available on a rolling basis
- Broad eligibility (ag and non-ag)
- Limited or no out-of-pocket costs for landowners
- Turnkey programs deliver all needed site prep and maintenance

## State examples:

- MD: Healthy Forests, Healthy Waters
- VA: James River Buffer Program (and forthcoming Riparian Forests for Landowners Program)
- NY: USC Water Quality Program, Trees for Tribes
- PA: DCNR Community Conservation Partnerships Program, ACB Riparian Forest Buffer Project
- DE: Buffer Incentive Program

# Riparian forest cover- 100 ft buffer

	Forest Cover- Acres Time 1: 2013/2014	Forest Cover- % area Time 1	Forest Cover- Acres Time 2: 2017/2018	Forest Cover- % area Time 2	Net Change- Acres (Time 1- Time 2)
DE (2013-2018)	30,806	55.87%	30,591	55.48%	-214
DC (2013-2017)	920	52.95%	909	52.33%	-11
MD (2013-2018)	407,298	59.11%	405,852	58.90%	-1,445
NY (2013-2017)	209,272	63.11%	209,420	63.15%	148
PA (2013-2017)	984,794	69.21%	981,475	68.98%	-3,319
VA (2014-2018)	1,386,640	73.76%	1,370,811	72.92%	-15,829
WV (2014-2018)	203,816	75.51%	202,743	75.11%	-1,073
<b>Total CBW</b>	<b>3,223,546</b>	<b>69.32%</b>	<b>3,201,802</b>	<b>68.85%</b>	<b>-21,743</b>

- **68.85% of the riparian area (100 ft buffer) was forested as of 2017/18. To reach 70% forested, an additional 53,334 acres needs to be restored (=~4400 miles)**
- Both VA and WV have >70% of the riparian area forested
- **Over 21,000 acres of riparian forest was lost**, with only NY showing a net gain
- Caveats: The imagery is better at detecting loss than gains, some of the losses are likely in areas (like ditches/gullies) that are not supporting aquatic life

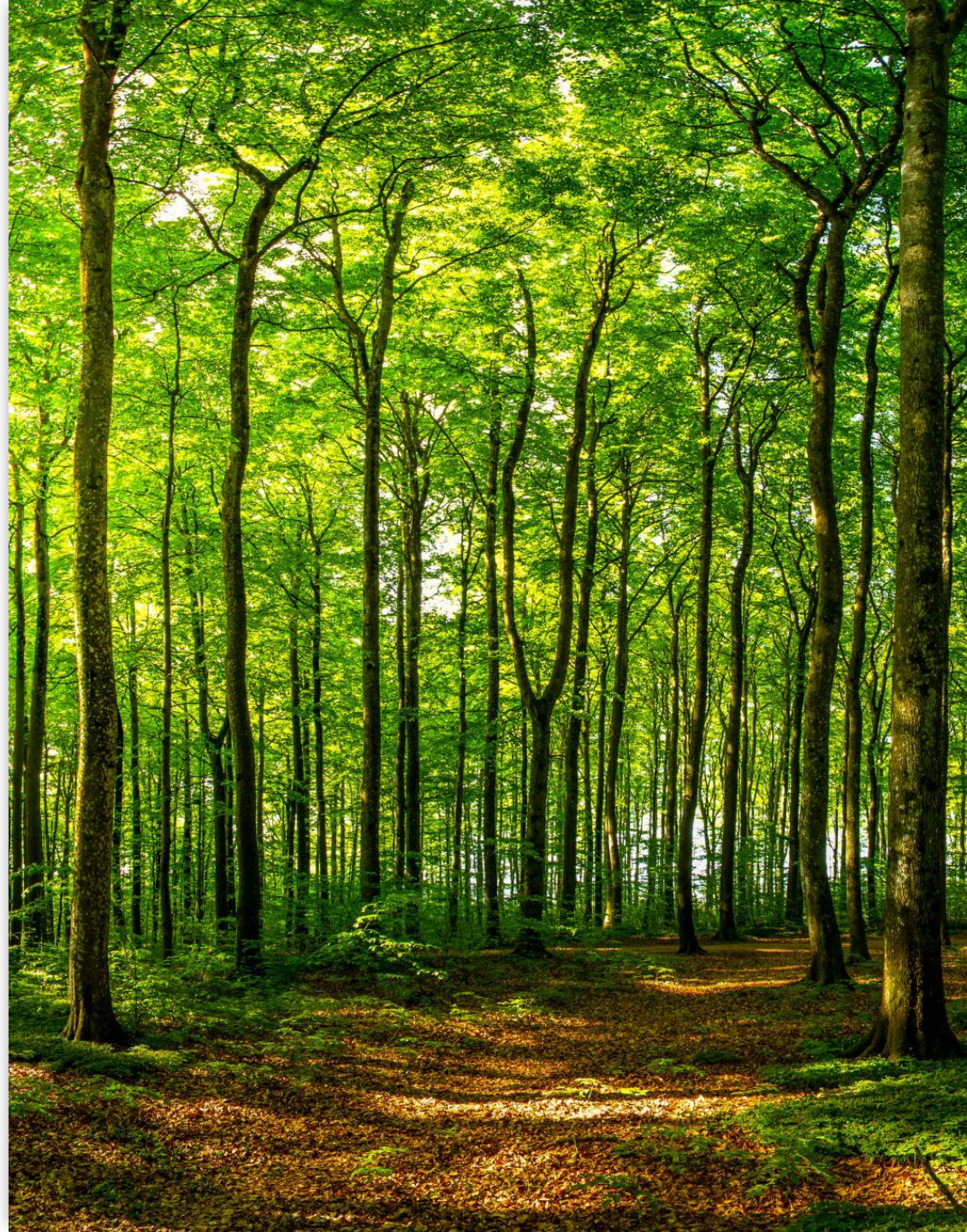


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# Re-focusing on Forest Buffer Conservation

## Opportunities

- Expanding availability of forest buffer easement programs
- Strengthening policies to reduce loss
- Potential to develop dedicated funding streams for maintenance and long-term stewardship?
- Input requested: What can the Bay Program and Management Board members do to help minimize the loss of Forest Buffers?



# Decisions from the last QPM

**Request:** 1. Commit to a tracking and accountability framework for the state Action Strategies: a. Report on progress in 2-year programmatic milestones. b. Provide annual updates on plan implementation at MB meetings between now and 2025.

**Decision:** ACTION 1: Beginning February 2023, Jurisdictions will provide annual updates to the Management Board on the implementation of their respective Forest Buffer and Wetlands action plans. The Jurisdictions will begin reporting on RFB implementation in their milestones where applicable beginning this year or next year if possible. Logistics will be confirmed by CBPO staff who will issue reminders to the Management Board.



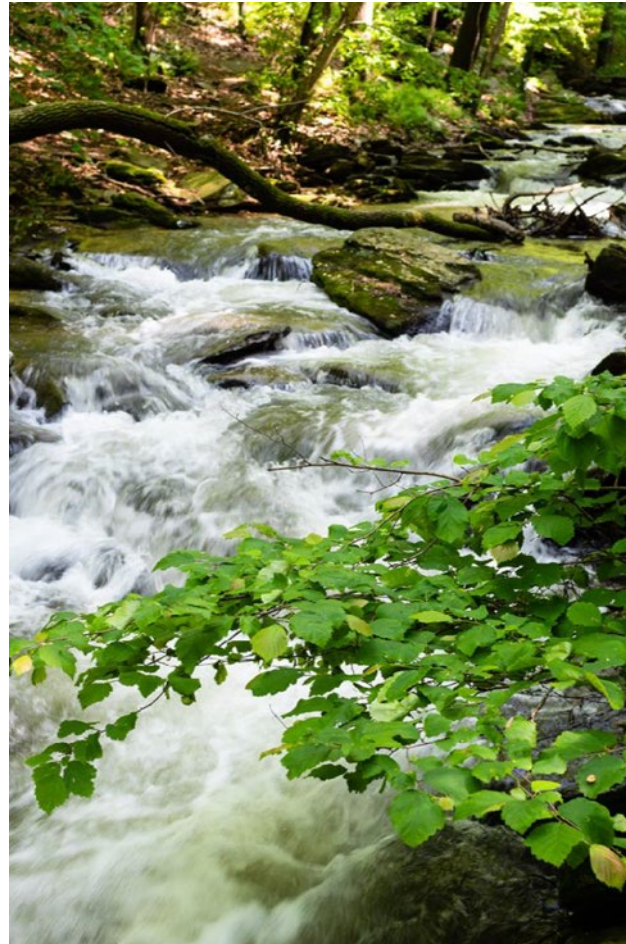
# Decisions from the last QPM

**Request:** 2.a Support investments in effective standalone flexible buffer programs (existing and new programs). 2.b Improve grant and Funding Provisions to better support building capacity in staff, contractors and outreach.

**Decision:** ACTION 2.a/2.b: Where possible, each jurisdiction (and appropriate federal agencies) will work to support actions 2.a and 2.b and will report progress at our annual Riparian Forest Buffer / Wetland Action Plan report out to the MB each February (along with whatever other actions from State plans they want to highlight). The Management Board's subsequent discussion as part of this annual agenda item will be to identify ways that MB members or the partnership can help support these actions and any specific items that we would like to elevate to the PSC for action in order to improve progress.



# Discussion



- How can we continue to maintain accountability for and better support implementation of the Forest Buffer Action Strategies?
- Are annual presentations/discussions on progress the best format?
- Are there topics that should be elevated to the PSC for further consideration?