Healthy Forests and Trees: Establishing the New Numeric Forest Conservation Target

Healthy Forests and Trees

Conserve and restore forests and tree cover to maximize benefits for water quality, habitat and people throughout the watershed, with a particular focus on riparian areas and communities.

REVISED TARGETS	New Target / Update of Existing Target	Date estimate for target being developed
Tree Canopy: Reduce the loss of existing canopy and plant and maintain 35,000 acres of community trees by 2035 to achieve a net gain in canopy over the long term.	Update	Ready
Forest Buffers: Reduce the loss of existing buffers and plant and maintain 7,500 acres of forest buffers annually to achieve no less than 71% riparian forest cover by 2035 and 75% riparian forest cover over the long term.	Update	Ready
Forest Conservation: Reduce the loss of forests to development through planning and conservation and plant and maintain ## acres of new forests by 2035 to achieve a net gain in forests over the long term.	New	Summer 25

Considerations for the new Forest Conservation target

Constraints

- Aiming to develop an initial target that is SMART and straightforward to track

- Can consider developing additional indicators or targets **later** to capture forest management and stewardship activities, forest health status & trends, etc. (and/or capture this in our new Management Strategy)

Draft outcome target

Forest Conservation: *Reduce the loss of forests to development and plant and maintain ## acres of new forests by 2035 to achieve a net gain in forests over the long term*

Two components:

- Forest loss to development
  - Use land use data to evaluate forest loss (focusing on forested classes, not developed tree canopy classes)
  - Focus on loss to developed classes that reflect a more permanent loss
- Forest planting and maintenance
  - Track “forest planting” BMPs reported by the states every year (Agricultural tree planting, Riparian forest buffers, Urban forest planting)
  - May FWG input: numeric target should be cumulative to align with the tree canopy target

Recent progress

Forest loss to development: 2013/14-2021/22

	Acres
DE	(692.45)
DC	(84.29)
MD	(19,741.24)
NY	(7,378.85)
PA	(28,841.97)
VA	(48,813.33)
WV	(3,661.93)
CBW	(109,214.06)

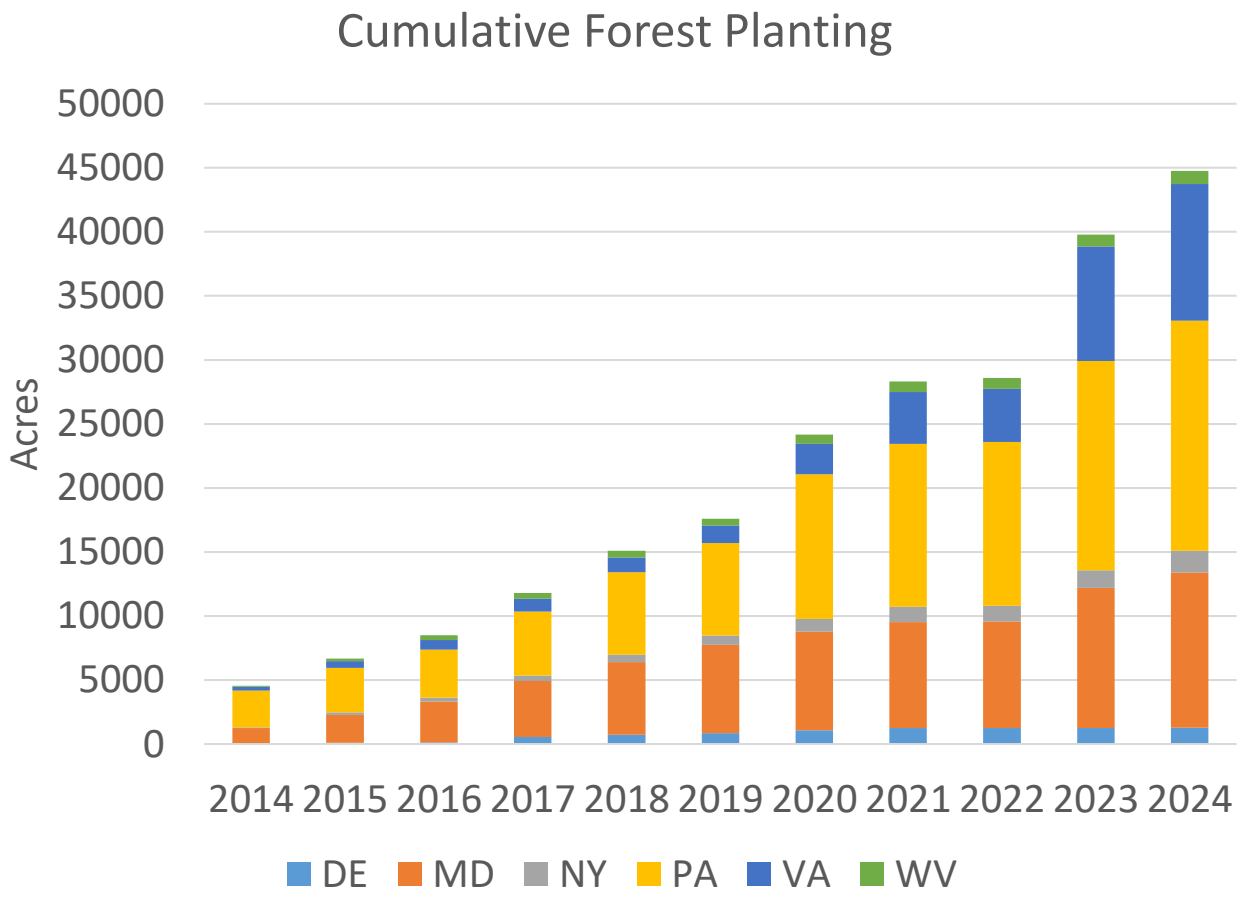
Forest planting 2014-2024**

**Note 2022 data is currently incomplete

Cumulative total: 44,754 acres

Average annual planting: 4,449 acres (range 2,131-11,200 acres/year)

Potential target: 100,000 acres by 2025? -> 5,000 acres/year x 10 years



Questions to consider

How much planting is realistic? Should we use a 2014 Baseline to align with the other targets?

Interest in meeting as a small group to develop a proposed numeric target?

Any other input on proposed forest conservation outcome target?