



Protected Lands Workgroup Meeting

April 7, 2026
2:00 - 4:00pm

[Visit the meeting webpage for meeting materials and additional information.](#)

Purpose:

- Hear from Chair Nominations, and vote as a workgroup (**decisional**)
- Discuss workgroup membership and position within the Healthy Landscapes Goal Team.
- Review the final draft language of the greenspace definition, refined following the February Public Access Workgroup Meeting (**decisional**).

Meeting Materials:

- [Presentation Slides](#)
- [Chair Nominee: Jeff Lerner, Resume](#)
- [Four Network Principles for Collaboration Success](#)
- [Protected Lands Workgroup Collaboration Spectrum Interactive Activity](#)

Meeting Minutes

I. Chair Nominations (2:15 - 2:30)

The workgroup heard from Jeff Lerner, EPA, nominee for Chair of the workgroup. Jeff brings over 30 years of experience in conservation to his role with the Bay partnership. He has served as the Branch Chief for Partnership Programs in the Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds at EPA Headquarters and at the Chesapeake Bay Program. Jeff also served as chair of the Healthy Watersheds Goal Implementation Team for several years. Prior to working with EPA, Jeff managed national conservation planning, habitat, forest and watershed conservation programs for several conservation organizations and foundations in partnership with federal, state, and local agencies focused on proactive strategic conservation. He currently supports watershed based efforts for EPA nationally including watershed financing partnerships. He began his career as a raptor biologist studying bald eagles, golden eagles and prairie falcons, still enjoys birdwatching and gets a kick out of the peregrine falcons nesting at EPA HQ.

Materials:

- [Chair Nominee: Jeff Lerner, Resume](#)

Decisions: Chair Approval

Actions: Voting members of the jurisdictions will receive a form to vote for Chair Approval.

II. Current Membership and the Future of the Protected Lands Workgroup (2:30-3:10)

Participants reviewed what agencies are currently represented on the workgroup, what the Protected Lands Network looks like, and how it fits into the broader Healthy Landscapes Goal Team.

Materials:

- [Presentation Slides](#)
- [Four Network Principles for Collaboration Success](#)
- [Protected Lands Workgroup Collaboration Spectrum Interactive Activity](#)

Decisions: N/A

Actions: N/A

Discussion Notes:

Sophie Waterman shared some concepts discussed in the Bay Program's network science training program offered by Local Concepts LLC, and how to apply those concepts to the Protected Lands Workgroup. Moving from an ego-system to an eco-system of networks will prioritize the shared goal of land protection among all of our networks and within the Healthy Landscapes Goal Team.

Peter Claggett: The Healthy Landscapes goal team is composed of 4 workgroups (Protected Lands, Land Use, Forestry, and Adapting to Changing Environmental Conditions). Each group has shared targets and outcomes, and I am anticipating the four workgroups working together on some of these protection goals.

Claire Jantz introduced herself as deputy secretary at the department of conservation and natural resources at PA. Claire and Ken Hyer, USGS, will be co-chairing the Healthy Landscapes Goal Team.

Sophie Waterman: I see the protected lands workgroup as a place to synergize and work

through strategies for land protection. How can we be strategic, thrifty, and innovative in the space of land conservation and funding?

Levels of participation in the workgroup:

- Consumers (outer ring)
 - How can I benefit?
- Co-Creators (middle ring)
 - How can I contribute?
- Stewards (core)
 - How can I serve?

Guiding questions:

- Why is it important that I am here today?
- What are your hopes for this network?
- What are you willing to contribute?
- What will you need to keep you connected?

Interactive Activity: On the scale of Trust, how do you feel the Protected Lands Workgroup currently operates, and how would you like it to operate?

- See the [linked slideshow](#) for results

Discussion:

What are some ways the workgroup can be of benefit to you?

What are some things you are looking forward to?

Katie Brownson: Not an answer to this question, but during this exercise, made me think that it is challenging to think about where we should be when we are still defining what the workgroup will be focused on, so it might be interesting to revisit this exercise in the future, especially in alignment with management strategy drafting.

Claire Jantz: from the Goal Team level, we are excited about the stronger focus on collaboration on adaptive management and leaning more on those types of processes as well as forming up some of the workgroup-goal team-PSC information flows vertically and horizontally.

Peter Claggett, in chat: I'm excited about engaging with more groups- particularly those working at the local level.

III. Greenspace Definition and tee up for Goal Setting (3:10-3:40)

The final draft definition was shared with the workgroup for discussion and approval. See below for edits proposed during the meeting.

Materials:

- [Presentation Slides](#)

Decisions: Definition Approval

Actions: Voting members of the jurisdictions will receive a form to vote for Chair Approval.

Edited Definition is below. Suggestions from members during the meeting are in red:

Urban and community greenspaces are publicly accessible ~~outdoor~~ lands in census designated places and urban areas that provide opportunities for both passive and active recreation while offering exposure to nature. These **public** spaces deliver ~~public~~-human health, community, and environmental benefits and include, but are not limited to, parks, trails, gardens, sports fields, waterfronts, ~~outdoor~~ **community** gathering areas, and natural landscapes like ~~community~~ forests or grasslands.

Discussion

Chase Douglas: Do suburban areas fall into the census designated places and urban areas in the definition?

- **Sophie Waterman:** Yes, it does a good job at representing suburban areas as well, not just strictly urban areas. That was a part of the conversation when doing this, and there was an emphasis on being more broad (to include suburban and other areas where people live).

Peter Claggett: Recommend removing the repetitive use of ‘community gathering areas’ and ‘community forests and grasslands’. Recommend outdoor gathering areas and natural landscapes like forests or grasslands.

Sara Coleman: Is there a definition for community forests?

- **Sophie Waterman:** I’m not sure there is a specific one in mind, so we can take that language out.
- **Jeff Lerner:** I think community forests are usually owned by the community, so they are not private. But if it is already said they are publicly accessible, does that imply they are publicly accessible?
 - **Sophie Waterman:** Not necessarily
- **Suzan Bulbulkaya:** Could we say public forests or grasslands instead of community?

Suzan Bulbulkaya: Seeing that this is the protected lands workgroup, is it assumed that these are protected greenspaces?

Sophie Waterman: yes, this will be tracked through the protected lands indicator, a combination of all the jurisdictional protected lands data, and focusing on census designated places and urban areas. However, things like sports fields will have to be a separate data set and we will be working on that in the future.

- **Suzan Bulbulkaya:** So what about being protected in perpetuity?
- **Sophie Waterman:** yes, here is the definition of what we mean by protected Lands:
 - Definition of Protected Lands: As currently defined by the Chesapeake Bay Program, "protected lands" are understood as lands permanently protected from development, whether by purchase or donation, through a perpetual conservation or open space easement or fee ownership for their cultural, historical, ecological, or agricultural value. This definition includes nontraditional conservation mechanisms, including transfer of development rights, programs that require a conservation easement for the "sending" property, and purchase of development rights programs. Lands protected through easements and the purchase of development rights typically remain private.

Katie Brownson, in chat: Maybe "public" should go in front of the list of examples rather than just in front of forests and grasslands

Next Steps: Daniel shared next steps to consider after making the definition for urban and community greenspace:

1. Determine the baseline acreage for protected urban and community greenspace
2. Consider trends of greenspace protection over time, when data is available, to create an acreage projection for the 2040 target.
3. Identify priority areas for greenspace protection and access (in collaboration with Public Access Workgroup)
 - a. What areas in the watershed would you like to see prioritized when it comes to the protection of greenspace?

Jeff Lerner: The comprehensive outdoor recreation plan, the SCORP, does it include information like this that could be useful for targeting where community greenspace is intended to be?

- **Ashley Rebert:** That's a good question, I don't think it gets down to that level of detail, but I would have to go look at it again to see if that is called out specifically.
- **Daniel Koval:** That is a question I can bring to the public access workgroup in May, and I can see if they have insight on different areas in their jurisdictions that have been a priority for public access / outdoor recreation

Sophie Waterman: We will be talking about this more in depth in June, so please talk with your

colleagues about thoughts on a target metric for urban and community greenspace.

IV. Wrap-Up and Member Share-Outs (3:40-3:55)

Discussion / Shared Resources:

Kevin Du Bois: From the South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative:

- [How to find – and fund – the lands that hold corridors together](#). New research from Florida has produced a method for prioritizing lands for conservation, the statewide Human Modification Index (HMI), which goes well beyond traditional land cover classifications. A combination of high-resolution human pressure mapping, connectivity modeling, biodiversity analysis, and parcel-level economic valuation can be applied to regions facing a familiar set of fundamental challenges: limited conservation dollars, accelerating land conversion, and the need to identify the small fraction of the landscape that holds disproportionate ecological value. This brief article introduces the method and its uses.

V. Wrap-Up & Adjourn

- **Healthy Landscapes Goal Team Meeting: May 11th, 10-3pm**
- **Next Protected Lands Workgroup Meeting: Tuesday, June 2nd, 2-4pm**

Attendees:

Sophie Waterman, USGS
Daniel Koval, CRC
Jeff Lerner, EPA
John Wolf, USGS
Peter Claggett, USGS
Taylor Woods, USGS
Maggie Woodward, CBC
Katie Brownson, US FS
Emily Heller, EPA / CBP
Sara Coleman, MD DNR

Cassie Davis, NY DEC
Suzan Bulbulkaya, VA DCR
Becky Gwynn, VA DWR
Claire Jantz, PA DCNR
Jenna Talbot, DNREC
Kerri Batrowny, DNREC
Chase Douglas, CCP
Andrea Reese, Chesapeake Conservancy
Parker Agelasto, National Capitol Region
Planning Commission