

SUMMARY

General Challenges

- Lack of funding for WF development programs, outreach, and materials
- Technically-focused and complex application processes for funding sources that do exist
- Lack of knowledge among jobseekers about environmental careers
- Lack of pathways for people with no experience to enter the field
- Low capacity for coordination, outreach, and engagement of both students and organizations to place students in WF opportunities
- Lack of integration of environmental career aspects across diverse industries/sectors
- Low capacity for hiring/sorting through hundreds of applicants
- Lack of funding to pay staff enough to keep them long term/ offer opportunities for financial advancement
- Lack of funding for professional development and training opportunities
- Lack of funding for employer engagement
- Lack of funding/capacity to maintain workforce development programs/operations
- Entry level positions in environmental careers don't pay enough to attract and retain talent
- Lack of a clear, agreed upon definition of 'green careers' or 'green workforce'
- Lack of organizational capacity to conduct outreach to colleges/universities (e.g., tabling at career fairs) exacerbates challenge of lack of student knowledge of green career opportunities
- Inside hiring/ hiring through networks and connections creates a privilege divide where students and young professionals without pre-established networks/connections struggle to enter the field/workforce.
- Need a greater diversity of educational backgrounds in hiring – i.e., jobs often hire people with degrees in environmental science and biology when organizations need skillsets in communications, project management, financial management, behavioral science, etc.

Specific Industry Gaps

- Small, rural jurisdictions struggle to keep planning department positions filled
- Landscaping contractors (extremely limited on Eastern Shore)
- Contractors to plant trees for riparian forest buffers and tree canopy goals
- Upper Susquehanna Coalition – has struggled to get an experienced outreach coordinator for landscaping/tree planting
- Lack of entry level awareness, interest, and positions for green stormwater infrastructure

Resources

Defining a Green Workforce/ Green Career:

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics definition of a green job: "jobs in businesses that produce goods or provide services that benefit the environment or conserve natural resources. Jobs in which workers' duties involve making their establishment's production processes more environmentally friendly or use fewer natural resources."
- Careers in Conservation one-pager:
<https://jamesriverconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/careers-conservation.pdf>

Job Boards

- [Current Ag Conservation Job Postings in PA — Center for Agricultural Conservation Assistance Training](#)

Career Development Programs, Examples, Other Solutions

- CRC Environmental Management Career Development Program

- Chesapeake Conservation & Climate Corps
- Agriculture Technician Apprenticeship Program (PA State Conservation Commission & Indiana County Conservation District)
- Howard EcoWorks READY Program
- EcoLatinos contractors and landscapers training program
- Baltimore Civic Works
- Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional Training/Certification <https://cblpro.org/>
- Young Professionals of the Chesapeake (CCWC) <https://www.choosecleanwater.org/ypc>
- internVa program (VEDP): <https://vedp.org/internshipsva>
- Shenandoah Valley Conservation Fellowship: <https://shenandoah.org/fellowshipprogram/>
- VCN Environmental Leadership Program: <https://vcnva.org/fellowship/>
- DOEE Green Career Pathways & GZEP: greenpathways.doe.dc.gov
- Ward 7 Resilience Hub Community Coalition partnership with OSSE and DCPS for the Advanced Internship Program for 11th & 12 grade students
- Washington Conservation Corps (Washington State)
- James River Stewardship Program
- Marshall Heights Community Development Organization has a workforce development program and wants to participate with climate and green workforce training.
- UMCES Environmental Job Fair

NOTES

Discussion 1: Gaps, Challenges, & Workforce Related Needs

Kenyatta Rowel – I’ve seen a lot of positions and new faces come and go and the same challenges exist. My business does what you’re facing, we hire and share nature-based and outdoor careers, engage underrepresented audiences (give professional development opportunities and skills). The biggest challenge we face on our side is funding for WF development programs, outreach, and materials. Funding sources that are out there now are very technically extensive. There is a lack of knowledge among prospective job seekers of what environmental careers exist. Hiring prioritizes the highly experienced, so how do folks with little to no experience enter the field?

Maya Alexander – Agree with Kenyatta. The Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley started a career development program that has reached 8 students.

- Challenges:
 - Seed funding is running out;
 - capacity to coordinate and bring intentional outreach and engagement to reach students with different backgrounds and find more/different types of placements.

Emily Thorpe (In Chat) – I understand that the challenge of Bay restoration is monumental, but it also seems like we have more people working on it than ever before. Chesapeake Bay watershed education and restoration has become an industry in itself. I think saying that we don't have enough people working in this field is a little over-simplified. We also need people who are not singularly dedicated to working on Bay restoration to also be involved in stewardship - folks like developers, realtors, landscapers, healthcare providers, local gov staff, etc. Much like the goal of environmental literacy has been to integrate the environment across disciplines, we need it to be integrated across sectors. Rather than bringing everyone into our field, we need to reach people in their respective fields. For example, I

can't get a project done if I don't have good local government support, but small, rural jurisdictions struggle to keep planning department positions filled.

Erin O'Grady (In Chat) – Building off of Emily's note, I agree the green workforce is so much more than direct restoration careers. The 'green workforce' is so hard to define because it can embody so many businesses. I recently read the Bureau of Labor Statistics definition of a green job:

"jobs in businesses that produce goods or provide services that benefit the environment or conserve natural resources. Jobs in which workers' duties involve making their establishment's production processes more environmentally friendly or use fewer natural resources."

- Rachel Bensink – Our partners (Upper and Middle James Riparian Consortium) created a one-pager to start to help address confusion around the range of "green jobs" when doing outreach - agree there are definitely opportunities to build on this

<https://jamesriverconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/careers-conservation.pdf>

Emily Thorpe – Landscaping contractors are extremely limited on the Eastern Shore.

Lorenzo Cinalli – There is a lack of contractors to plant trees for riparian forest buffers and tree canopy goals.

Wuill Urvina – For organizations with low capacity, it can be difficult to sort through applicants since online application portals like Indeed or LinkedIn have made it easier to apply to jobs, certain jobs can get a lot of applicants. Applicants can also struggle to sort through the different jobs/position postings that are out there.

Julie Lawson -- What is the scope of the industry?

Sarah Xenophon – I see a lot of people in this field, but it's like a revolving door with many partners who are unable to pay their staff enough to keep them long term. It's challenging to provide advanced training and for people to grow professionally, if they only stay for 2 years.

Rainier Lucas – Upper Susquehanna Coalition (Coalition of 22 SWCDs) – Has major issue with landscaping contractors, typically have three contractors/options and are always looking for more workforce or contractor options to plant trees and plants. We also have difficulty with getting an experienced outreach person on the ground. The types/locations of grant funding available is a challenge.

- Outreach – mailers to private landowners to see if they want to do restoration or riparian buffers

Alec Lynde – Howard EcoWorks – Funding and revenue stream challenges – We can find funding for planting, but it's hard to find funding to actually run WF development programs. A lot of funding is focused on on-the-ground implementation and community outreach, but it's hard to get funding for our organization to go out and engage employers and sustain staff/capacity for workforce development program operations.

Maryam El-Amin: As a job seeker, the vague definitions for "Green Jobs" makes it very hard to even find the positions you'd like to apply for. The industry needs to make a standardized set of terms to use for types of roles: consulting, fundraising, policy work, lobbying, advocacy, farm/forestry/gardening staff, etc

- Lack of capacity for outreach to colleges. Find it extremely difficult even to find internships. Counselors just send students job boards. There's also a lack of organizations coming into the colleges to discuss internship and career opportunities. Lots of engineering organizations approach the engineering school, but there is a lack of organizations coming to approach Environmental Major schools.
 - Privilege divide – only some students who already have a network or connections know how to connect with organizations since those organizations aren't coming in to connect with disconnected students on campuses.
 - Need more outreach to minority organizations on campuses or specific outreach to HBCUs/MSIs

Janette Rosenbaum – Agree. If I search for "environmental" roles, I get postings for hospital janitors. If I search for "communications" roles, I get everything that lists "excellent communication skills." Advice for better search terms?

Kenyatta Rowel – We also see a lot of inside hiring. A lot of organizations aren't willing to take a chance on applicants outside of their networks.

Emily Thorpe – Our field also has a tendency to hire people with degrees in environmental science, biology, etc. But we really need people with different skillsets - communications, project management, financial management, behavioral science, etc.

- Maryam agrees
- Janette disagrees – I see the opposite, actually! All the communications roles want a degree in marketing or journalism. I got a degree in environmental science. I thought it would be a differentiator.

Discussion 2: Solutions

Sarah Xenophon – Some food for thought, the PA State Conservation Commission is partnering with the Indiana County Conservation District to launch an Ag Technician Apprenticeship Program this year. It should be ready for enrollment this fall. No degrees needed, just a HS diploma.

Rainier Lucas (Upper Susquehanna Coalition) – We have a tree planting stewardship program; we often hire from within those internships.

Emily Thorpe – Partners on the Shore are interested in building something similar to the Howard EcoWorks READY Program.

Alec Lynde – about Howard READY - model that is intended to be transferable to other communities. Uplift program (partnership with MD Corps/Service Year) offers more professional development

- How do you help trainees get placed and track success after they leave programs?
 - Career fairs with partners (like MDNR) – opportunity for employers to talk to our WF participants
 - Alec – I'm looking into employer engagement. How do we engage employer partners more to see what skills they're looking for so we can tailor our training to those skills? To see if we can set up career pathways and reserved job spots at partners.

Erin O'Grady – On a more community level, the EcoLatinos contractors and landscapers training program shows promise, specifically in the interest among landscapers to learn green skills.

Also, Baltimore Civic Works.

Sarah X – Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional Training/ Certification <https://cblpro.org/>

- Emily – I heard recently that local governments requiring this kind of certification is key to getting more landscapers / contractors certified.
- Sarah – Yes, lots of opportunities for different sectors to set certification expectations that encourage the specific skills/certs that they need.

Kristin Reilly – Young Professionals of the Chesapeake, which focuses on retention of talent to our workforce. We need to be increasing our hiring opportunities and outreach, but we also need to retain our staff: <https://www.choosecleanwater.org/ypc>

Emily T – Chesapeake Conservation & Climate Corps

Meredith Lemke – Environmental Management Career Development Program (CRC)

Maya Alexander – internVa program (VEDP): <https://vedp.org/internshipsva> and Shenandoah Valley Conservation Fellowship: <https://shenandoah.org/fellowshipprogram/>; VCN Environmental Leadership Program: <https://vcnva.org/fellowship/>

Julie: DOEE Green Career Pathways & GZEP greenpathways.doe.dc.gov

Jason Swope (CBLP) – CBLP has great programs for landscape contractors and other landscape professionals. A big gap is entry-level positions. We get a lot of response on our certifications from folks who are already in the industry but we need to attract more entry level folks and we need to increase public awareness around the value of green stormwater infrastructure

- CBLP partners with Maryland Re-entry Resource Center – center helps formerly incarcerated folks re-enter society. We've partnered with a land trust to give them green stormwater infrastructure training (hands-on, in the field) and connecting them with employers is very important.

Lindsay Ryan – University System of Maryland – I'm working with folks who know way more than me about K-12 education and workforce development but I was the only one who could join the call. I appreciated Maryam's comments. I welcome any additional input on K-12 and/or higher ed changes that are recommended to help. Separately but relatedly, we are trying to understand workforce flows with climate-focused startups (non-profit and for-profit) as well, related to the Climate Innovation Alliance: <https://www.usmd.edu/launch/climate/>. Iryan@usmd.edu, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/lindsaydambrosio/>

Sarah X – How much are organizations paying entry level positions? Is the salary enough for them to live on their own?

- Maya Alexander – There are very few of them, and if they are, they're an internship/fellowship giving \$25/hr with no benefits. Most 'entry level' ask for 2-5 years experience
- Sarah X – We are asking people who are investing in a higher level of skills, but insisting we should be able to pay them the same amount they could make flipping burgers and working at warehouses.
- Maya Alexander – or requiring we spend more money to go back to school for another degree, certification, license, after already working our butts off for a Bachelor's

Dennis Chestnut – Ward 7 Resilience Hub Community Coalition works with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, DCPS, Advanced Internship Program (AIP) Career Ready Internship Program for 11th & 12th grade students in their National Academies Program (NAF). OSSE pays them for 25 hrs per week for 6 weeks in the summer and 12 to 15 hrs p/week during the school year. Organizations and businesses provide the content and OSSE pays their salary, presently \$17.50 p/hr.

Lorenzo Cinalli – There are lots of great programs in the watershed, but I want to highlight a great program located in Washington State - Washington Conservation Corps. I did this program in 2018 and it was really great. They employ 300 young adults 18-24 every year for a wide range of outdoor conservation focused jobs. They typically do tree plantings, trail maintenance, fish and invertebrate monitoring, disaster relief, and many many other things. The Conservation Corps located on the West Coast really work at a different scale than us, but it might be useful to invite a leader there to speak at the Workforce Workgroup and share their experiences and challenges, to see what lessons we can learn from larger more established programs.

Rachel Bensink – This post shares a bit about the expansion of the James River Stewardship Program, including supporting other partners in replicating the program/program format for this summer internship. This year we expanded from 4 to 6 interns assessing riparian forest buffers in the Upper and Middle James, partnering with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

<https://thejamesriver.org/buffers-year-five-of-the-james-river-stewardship-program/>

Dennis Chestnut – Marshall Heights Community Development Organization has a workforce development program and wants to participate with climate and green workforce training. They have a dedicated training site in Ward 7 that is available.

Sarah X -- Penn State currently has a simple job clearing house for Ag conservation here: [Current Ag Conservation Job Postings in PA — Center for Agricultural Conservation Assistance Training](#)

Alec Lynde – In case you're in the DC area, wanted to make a plug for this event tonight happening in Dupont Circle:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-tree-conomy-a-panel-discussion-tickets-1993153277106>

Rachel Bensink – We invited students from a local community college to a meeting last year and did a specific field visit for them before they joined us for the day and that has led to some great continued relationships - we definitely hope to continue that approach

Kristin Reilly – Going back to solutions - this convening and feedback from folks searching for jobs makes me think about some kind of Chesapeake Job Fair - virtual or in-person. Lots of details to think about with that, but I feel like there is an opportunity to facilitate these connections more...

- Maryam – This is already a thing at the University of Maryland! But they need MANY more employers participating! Please contact their career office about their Environmental Job Fair!
- Kristin – That's great to know! Not sure if anyone from UMCES is on, but given UMCES is so connected into the Bay effort, I feel like there is an opportunity to work with them to get more folks to this!
- Maryam – This is exactly what I meant by trying to reach out to universities more; most of them already have their own job fairs, open to students and alums! And UMDCP is one of the biggest ones

Attendance:

- Wuillam Urvina
- Julie Lawson
- Alec Lynde
- Allyson Gibson
- Annabelle Harvey (CBF)
- Bart Merrick
- Bryn Kearney
- David Wood
- Emily Thorpe
- Erin O'Grady
- Everett Marshall
- Janette Rosenbaum
- Jason Swope
- Jeremy Hanson
- Jessica Diaz Council
- Jordan Gochenaour
- Josey Schwartz
- Kate Beats
- Kenyatta Rowel
- Kristin Reilly
- Kylie Baker
- Lindsay Ryan
- Lorenzo Cinalli
- Maggie Price
- Maryam El-Amin
- Melanie Kincaid
- Melanie Steele
- Melissa Dombrowski
- Meredith Lemke
- Rachel Bensink
- Ranier Lucas
- Sabrina Fu
- Sarah Xenophon
- Scott Christensen
- Serena Moncion