Chesapeake Bay Program
Science. Restoration. Partnership.

Public Access Workgroup and Protected Lands Workgroup
Defining Greenspace Workshop

January 29, 2026
10:00am - 3:00pm

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

Meeting Materials:
- [Defining Greenspace Workshop Presentation Slides](#)
- Guest Speaker: [Greenspace Equity Program Presentation Slides](#)
- Guest Speaker: [Trust for Public Land's Presentation Slides](#)

Purpose: Generate a working definition of greenspace for the Protected Lands and Public Access Workgroups to review and approve following the workshop. The final definition should be scientifically defensible and enable the Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership to guide conservation planning and consistently monitor and report greenspace trends over the next 15 years. This meeting is non-decisional and discussion only.

Meeting Minutes

I. **Welcome and Introductions (10:00 - 10:10am)**

II. **Opening Whiteboard Activity (10:10 - 10:25am)**
- *Where is your favorite greenspace in the watershed?*
- *How do YOU define greenspace?*
  [See the Mentimeter results here](#)

III. **Connection to Bay Program Outcomes (10:25 - 10:45am)**
Participants learned how tracking greenspace is connected to other Bay Program outcomes, with particular focus on the Public Access outcome.
Key points:

- Protected Lands and Public Access both have urban and community greenspace targets
- Acreage targets in protected lands are a lasagna, not a pie. Protected acres in a forested area could also be counted to greenspace or wetlands, for example.
- The Protected Lands Dataset cannot tell us the public access story right now. Not all of public access is fully attributed. It also can't tell us the rate of protection due to lack of dates of establishment in many sites.

Discussion Notes:

Kevin Du Bois, in chat (regarding Sentinel Landscapes and DoD military installations within the protected lands outcome language): The DoD Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) program also makes significant contributions to the extent of protected lands outside of military installations. In FY 24, $25.3M was spent to protect 3,398 acres

Regarding slide 9 in Powerpoint:
>   **NOTE:** informal sites (may be on public land and publicly accessible but **are not managed by an agency/agreement for access**) are not counted.
- **Kevin DuBois:** how does this relate to lands owned by DoD?
  - **Sophie Waterman:** If the land is not managed for access/recreation, it will not be counted for the public access outcome
- EXAMPLES:
  - Trails of convenience
  - **Julia Wakeling:** Are cemeteries an example of this? Managed privately but accessible to the public.
    - **Sophie Waterman:** Possibly, will need to think more deeply about cemeteries
    - **Aurelia Gracia:** For cemeteries, we have to go back to what is the recreational use, and how the public uses it.
  - **Stephanie Benavides:** What about sites managed by NGOs with help from state grants?
  - **Daniel Koval:** This scope is from the 2013 Public Access Plan, discussing scope of work and informal sites (page 23 of the pdf) https://www.chesapeakebay.net/files/documents/Public_Access_Plan_v15_-_FINAL.pdf

Kevin DuBois: Are federal protected lands wrapped into jurisdiction totals?

- **Coral Howe:** Yes, Federal lands are included in jurisdictions totals. The data is further divided by ownership

Sarah D'Adamo: Could you discuss more about the attribution process that you just glossed, and what thus far it involves? I'm here on behalf of Baltimore city where there is lots of city land that is green in some way; how do you consider questions around what is protected?
- **Sophie Waterman:** People at the local county level report to states, and then states report to us. We do need to work through how to better engage with local partners. We have a specific definition by what we mean by protected lands, and I think greenspace may be different. The attribution process of what is a protected land comes from the state. Smaller NGOs have expressed to us that they don't always see the land they protect in the dataset, so we need to fill that disconnect moving forward.
    - **Daniel Koval, in chat:** 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 non‑traditional 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 purchase of development rights typically remain in private ownership.
- **Sarah D'Adamo**: As someone who works with nonprofits and city government around greenspace and whether it has conservation value and use, there is a typology that I use that the city has defined for their purposes for measuring that value. I can share that here.
    - There is a basic division between "open space" and "natural areas" that splits greenspace and forested areas into two conservation categories. within the open space category for green space, the typology I follow is below:
    - 1) "clean and green" - least conservation/use value, typically turf grass and some invasive weed pressure that is mowed/cut back
    - 2) "pocket park" - an enhanced clean and green with trees, shrubs, and elements for human use like seating, pathways, murals, edge gardens
    - 3) "garden" - pervious surface land with a higher number and range of plantings with more active maintenance across the growing season
    - 4) "farm" - land in productive use whether for profit or not (often donation based food growing)

- we are working on established a stormwater infrastructure category as well for bioswales, rain gardens, etc

Claire Jantz, in chat: I see a role for social data (like Strava, Placer.ai) to identify areas where "green space" and public access/recreation align

IV. **Defining Urban, Community, and Greenspace (10:45 - 11:20am)**
Participants will learn how greenspace is defined around the watershed and discuss what components should be included in a Bay Program definition of greenspace.

Key Points:

- To define the area of interest, we can just look at Urban Areas, we can look at Census Places, or we can look at both.
    - Census places reflect the geography of a city, and are bound by the legal boundaries of the city.
    - Urban Areas reflect population density, rather than the legal boundaries of the city. It can include more suburbs and extended areas beyond technical city limits.

Discussion Notes:

Regarding Census Places and Urban Areas:

- **Kevin DuBois**: It would be helpful to understand how the data is going to be used to know if parsing the data is important or not.
    - **Sophie Waterman:** in this case, how the data is used is what is the bounds in which our greenspace we are tracking exists. For example, you can count Shenandoah National Park as a greenspace, but is that focusing on the urban and community side of things? But a park in downtown Richmond might be better meeting that urban/community focus. It is asking where the people are at and where they can access outside.
- **Kevin DuBois:** I thought the purpose of this effort was to make sure we didn't leave out greenspaces that were important to people, again to build consensus for the CBP that would spill over into other areas other than just greenspace. I would want to make it less restrictive, not more restrictive.
- **Claire Jantz, in chat:** Want a better picture of what's happening in both urban and suburban areas. But connection to walkability, accessibility, connectivity.
- **Aurelia Gracia, in chat:** Counting all green spaces used by the public but being able to track it in categories like Sarah's comment above would help us understand the data in the future

- **Claire Jantz:** We could also consider using Census tracts with a population density threshold. Either of these approaches are dynamic over time - the Census-defined areas also change as population changes.
- **Cassandra Davis:** I would include rural community greenspaces (5 thumbs up)

Chase Douglas: Agree, there are benefits to have both identified for comparison purposes. Tracking both is what we've heard from CCP partners. One issue is that some areas don't show up as much in the larger picture of what's being protected. We want to enhance that picture of what is happening in urban and suburban areas while also being able to come together with accessibility/walkability and how that connects.

Coral Howe: Difference with protected lands is that protected lands has a more natural emphasis vs human centric. Is that an accurate distinction? If so, maybe we should include more suburban areas instead of just urban areas to show the benefit of access.

Stephanie Benavides: Agree with being less restrictive. For the Greenspace Equity program, we consider green networks which allow movement of people/wildlife, and we look at that component of protection under our program. Also areas that fall outside of urban areas that end up bringing communities together.

Sophie Waterman: How would we parse it out then, what data sets?
- **Cassie Davis:** I wouldn't even tie them to census places, just include all greenspaces. If it's in a small town and it's in a park and people are using it, I wouldn't want that to be excluded.
    - With our land use, we separate developed and ag land; if it's not ag land, it is natural or developed. We don't have forested areas called out, so all national forests, is that greenspace? Where does that get separated?

Julia Wakeling: If it's park land in an otherwise urban area, then I would say yes. (ex, Rock Creek). Specifically with Public Access and Protected Lands, one of our main challenges was measurability. We have to be able to tie the Outcomes to a dataset. We have to create indicators for our targets in a short period of time.

Katie Brownson: Use land use to figure out what an urban community green space is rather than a boundary layer. I don't think that's possible because we have forest land, which is in the natural sector, within urban/community areas, and then we also have forest land in the national lands sector. I don't think that would fit that bill of urban/community greenspace. For

community tree canopy, we found that we do have to have some sort of geographic bound to identify where those places are. I do support a less restrictive definition though, anywhere where there are populations of people. But this specific piece of the protected lands target should focus on community population access, and greenspace where we have people.

Wendy O'Sullivan, in chat: There is a distinction between public access greenspace and lands and spaces that are green and value-added to the environment (and people) but not publicly accessible. This is about public access greenspace.
- **Sara Coleman, in chat:** ^^ love that. What is the purpose of the protected lands?
  - Thinking about the original intent of why the land was protected. I'm thinking about the National Mall, which serves a very specific purpose, and it is publicly accessible. Having multiple options related to intent. Most lands would probably check multiple boxes.
- **Coral Howe, in chat:** how about distance from communities?

Claire Jantz, in chat: For reference: For the 2020 Census, an urban area will comprise a densely settled core of census blocks that meet minimum housing unit density and/or population density requirements. This includes adjacent territory containing non-residential urban land uses. To qualify as an urban area, the territory identified according to criteria must encompass at least 2,000 housing units or have a population of at least 5,000. Census Designated Places represent unincorporated communities that are locally recognized and identified by name. No population or housing unit threshold.

Greenspace Definitions Around the Watershed

See [Presentation Slides](#) for greenspace definitions from MD, VA, NY, EPA, and TPL.

[Click here for mentimeter results](#) of the definition components discussion.

Kristal McKelvey, in chat: Virginia Open-Space Land Act Information

Discussion Questions:

- What components of the definitions do you agree with and think should be in the Bay Program definition?
- Which components best support consistent measurement and spatial tracking across jurisdictions?
- Should areas with artificial turf, highly managed lawns, or monoculture vegetation be excluded?
- What components of greenspace do you think are important to track?
- Is public access important for this definition?
- Is there anything that should not be included?

Sophie Waterman: What are people's thoughts on artificial turf, highly managed lawns, monoculture, etc?

- **Chase Douglas:** I also want to raise vacant lots – not inherently protected, some have been vacant for a long time and have vegetation and the public uses those spaces
    - **Stephanie Benavides:** Those are one of the limitations that we see in Baltimore. The city does an Adopt a lot program, allowing orgs to use those lots on a year to year basis. The program warns not to invest too much into that area, because they are actively trying to sell the lot, so nothing is guaranteed long term. They do also give a priority to the organization adopting if they wish to buy it.
- **Sarah Coleman:** I think yes- still a public health benefit
- **Kristal McKelvey:** That would mean athletic fields... which I think are green spaces, yes.
- **Jillian Seagraves:** I would think it depends on active or passive recreation

- **Claire Jantz:** Yes - these are often places for community interaction
- **Michelle Fonda:** I think no since it's -only- human benefit...it provides very little of the other ecosystem benefits (wildlife, stormwater, heat island)
- **Kevin DuBois:** Unfortunately, some people are not comfortable in natural areas, so turf areas could be a psychological gateway to more natural areas. Scared of critters, bugs, noxious plants, etc
- **Aurelia Gracia:** That question makes me want to survey the community to see if HS football fields, golf courses, etc. come up naturally as their view/form of green space.
- **Maggie Woodward:** From the VA urban green space definition: "To qualify as urban green space, the use of such land must make a substantive impact on the reduction of the urban heat effect, the offsetting of greenhouse gas emissions, or the mitigation of stormwater." -- how is it determined if the land is meeting one of those goals/who makes that call?
- **Claire Jantz:** Benefits for people should come first in this definition
- **Isabel Layton**: What about greenhouses/botanical gardens?
    - **Claire Jantz:** I think yes, if publicly accessible
- **Kevin DuBois -** There's more that happens on golf courses and football fields than golf or football.

Sophie Waterman: What components should we be tracking? Ex: ADA accessibility
- **Isabel Layton:** We could also track recreation opportunities in the land
    - **Sarah Coleman:** To Isabel Layton - yes! what amenities exist might help decide if it's community greenspace or not
- **Julia Wakeling:** For public access, we're tracking ADA/ABA features as opposed to the entire space being ADA

Aurelia Gracia: I also think we need to go through a process of collecting ALL data and then sorting it out and asking the public what their needs are. I keep reminding myself of our original goal which was to provide more access to green spaces specifically for communities who are not near the water or don't have as much access to green spaces in their surrounding area.
- The turf question made me think: we are not trying to record all turf areas to implement more turf areas. We need to ask what the public needs: if we have a community that only has a turf area as their only greenspace, how can we identify ways to provide other types of greenspaces to that community? When it comes to actual implementation, we need to narrow down what the real needs are - don't want to populate a community with tons of turf fields just to add 'greenspace' if that's not what their need or want is.

- **Maggie Woodward:** agree, Aurelia! I find it helpful to think about as "what would we like to encourage?" Build a definition that will count/credit the things we would like to see more of

Wendy O'Sullivan: The EXPLORE Act directs the Federal Land Management Agencies to conduct an inventory and assessment of recreation resources for Federal recreational lands and waters; and recognize the type of recreation opportunity and type of natural or artificial recreation infrastructure.

Stephanie Benavides: Consider ability to *maintain* a natural area, ex: access to water to maintain grass. In some areas, turf might be the best option. But flip side argument too - turf not technically natural area

Kevin DuBois: Wendy, is DoD considered a Federal Land Management Agency or is that reserved for BLM, USFWS, NPS, USFS?
- **Wendy O'Sullivan:** The US Army Corps is named. And USACE is part of the [FICOR: The Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation](#).

Break (11:20 - 11:25am)

V. **Greenspace Programs and Tracking (11:25 - 12:25pm)**
   Participants will explore programs that promote greenspaces and learn about organizations monitoring their impact.

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Guest Speaker
Maryland's Greenspace Equity Program:
Stephanie Benavides, MD DNR
Materials: [Greenspace Equity Program Presentation Slides](#)

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Key Points:
- Greenspace Equity Program administers grants for enhancing the public health and livability of overburdened and underserved communities by implementing projects to preserve, create, and enhance community greenspace.
- Requires a 15 year term for protection within the program, which can be a limitation.

- Accessibility considerations for ADA access, and the times it is open to the public

- **Claire Jantz, in chat:** I like a lot of elements in this definition: urban farms, community gardens, community gathering open spaces, community woodlands
- **Kristal McKelvey, in chat:** We (VA DCR) do have a definition of "Greenways". That could be a 'type' of 'greenspace'?

Guest Speaker
Trust for Public Land's 10-Minute Walk Program:
Will Klein, Trust for Public Land
Materials: Trust for Public Land's Presentation Slides

Key Points:
- Criteria for tracking a site includes: it is outdoors; it is a named destination and advertised as such; it encourages informal public use; and it encourages at least one park-like activity (socializing, playing/exercising, enjoying nature)
- Site Examples
    - Golf courses: If it encourages public use outside of golfers, we include it
    - Streetscapes: Must be named destination, and provide park-like activities
    - Trailways: Don't always have names; if not, it is not counted (ex: general bike lanes vs a specific advertised path)
    - Open Spaces: vacant lots with no name, but may still allow public use, are not counted.
    - Cemeteries: if they don't allow recreation (no walking trails, signs saying no eating/running/etc), then it is not counted. Those that do have such paths and welcome other types of visitation are counted.
    - Schoolyards: If there is signage saying the public hours of use, it is counted. If it is closed to the public, it is not counted.
    - HOA spaces: if it does not allow use outside of the members/residents, then it is not counted. If the city does not advertise it for public use, or it has restrictive signs saying private, it is not counted.
- Track subcomponents of whether the space is natural or designed (see slides for more information), or a mix of both.
- Two options for applying proximity in watershed:
    - One: looking at protected acreage within an urban area

- Two: Looking at the total amount of protected lands and asking how many people are within a 10 minute walk of a publicly accessible protected land?

Peter Claggett, in chat: I like the inclusion of trails as its own category- particularly those that connect to parks and other forms of public open space.
- **Sophie Waterman:** I like the idea of tracking types of green spaces, such as trails vs greenways vs turf . That way, we can identify what is out there and where there are gaps in natural lands for communities

Wendy O'Sullivan: This is a big issue for water access around the Bay and up the rivers.
- Highlighted the project that Chesapeake Gateways did with TPL with Parkscore: (NPS/TPL Chesapeake Watershed Community Assessment) for folks understanding, this project looked at going beyond the 10 minute walk and identity an assessment of all communities (we used census-tract) that we could create a prioritization for additional public access greenspace. This was a way to identify areas of investment needs.
- This project was done a few years ago, so there is positioning in the presentation that would be presented differently under our current administration.

Lunch (12:25 - 1:00pm)

VI. **Review of the Morning (1:00 - 1:15pm)**
Sophie shared a brief review of the morning to prepare participants for the break out sessions.

VII. **Breakout Session (1:15 - 1:45pm)**
Participants were put into breakout groups to discuss how the Bay Program should define greenspace in order to track it in the Watershed.

Probing Questions:
- How does your jurisdiction/organization define greenspace (aka open space)?
- What kinds of boundaries could be set for tracking within the workgroup? Possibilities that have been mentioned include:
  ○ Presence of recreation amenities (and if so, what kinds of amenities?)
  ○ Size of parcel
  ○ Characteristics of the the greenspace
    ■ Do athletic fields or parks that only have lawn grass count?

- ○ Extent of accessibility
  - ■ Within 10 minute walk of a certain percentage of people (Trust for Public Land)

VIII.   Report Out (1:45 - 2:15pm)

Key Points / Similar Sentiments Across The Groups:
- Greenspace is people-centric with emphasis on public access and community benefit
- Provides exposure to nature with an outdoor component, but does not have to be 100% natural; turf and sports fields are included
- Encourages passive/active recreation
- No size limitations
- Metrics for access:
  - 10 minute walk / ½ mile proximity
    - Include a 10 minute drive analysis?
  - Accessibility components
    - ADA/ABA
    - Quality of amenities and space
    - Public perception: is it perceived as safe / welcoming?
      - Signs in multiple languages
      - Hours of public access
- Track different types of greenspace

Notes from each group below:

Group 1: Baltimore Greenspace, NPS, PA Boat/Fish, DoD, NY DEC, MDNR
- Land that is undeveloped, partly vegetated
- Supporting community goals; spaces identified by community
- Accessibility: ADA/ABA, hours of access, is everyone allowed, how public is it, signs in multi languages
- Data developed at different levels to assess the access. Targets can be used to increase/enhance access

Group 2:
- Defining as community greenspace. This metric is people centric

- Communitygreenspace: a mostly natural place opened to the public where people can gather for outdoor recreation and exposure to nature.
    - No minimum size limit.
    - No characterization of specific amenity or quality of lands yet; important to do later on as secondary measures
- Boundaries: urban areas and census places included together; alternative is looking at population within a certain distance or travel time of those greenspaces, and include them whether or not they are in a urban or census place or not
- Metrics; 15 minute city, public transit access, visitation rates, state parks that are far from people

Group 3: MD Greenspace Equity, DC, TPL,
- DC and TPL use ½ mile and 10 minute walk
- MD Greenspace defines access with ability of visitation, their 15 year period, etc.
- Boundaries: no size limit; hours of access; distance/location;
- Defining greenspace as a publicly accessible vegetative area that can be used for active/passive recreation; include but not limited to parks, fields, trails, gathering open spaces, gardens, athletic fields

Group 4: USGS, PA DCNR, WV DNR, NPS
- Similar boundaries: consider driving and walking proximity; starting with the greenspace and looking at proximity assessment to use that for the boundary, rather than limiting to urban/census place
- Human centric: shouldn't be hard threshold for vegetation cover; should be based on how people are using the space
- No size threshold
- Consider type of recreation involved
- Quality of amenities available
- Accessibility; parking, pedestrian access, ADA access; make it practical for the community. One community might not be able to maintain real grass long-term, so use artificial grass, but that still encourages outdoor recreation

Group 5: PA DCNR, MD DNR, CCP , TPL, EPA
- Distinction b/n open space and greenspace. Is greenspace a subset of open space?
    - Open space can be protected, but maybe not publicly accessible;
    - Public access is key feature of greenspace / providing community benefits
- Accessing safely is important: roadways, crime, polluted areas

- Greenspace could be green, but not 100% green. Sports fields included
- GIS experts could look at spatial threshold; could evolve over time
- TPL 10 min walk as measure for accessing greenspace

Break (2:15 - 2:20pm)

IX. ~~Drafting a Definition of Greenspace for the Bay Program Partnership (2:20 - 2:50pm)~~

Sophie and Daniel expressed that they would work through the ideas presented from the breakout groups to put together a draft definition to send out to participants.

X.   **Closing Remarks (2:50 - 3:00pm)**

XI.   **Adjourn (3:00pm)**

Attendance:

Sophie Waterman, USGS
Peter Claggett, USGS
Coral Howe, USGS
John Wolf, USGS
Daniel Koval, CRC
Meredith Lemke, CRC
Aurelia Gracia, NPS
Wendy O'Sullivan, NPS
Eddie Gonzalez, NPS
Sandi Olek, MD DNR
Sara Coleman, MD DNR
Isabel Layton, MD DNR
Stephanie Benavides, MD DNR
Keith Lockwood, MD DNR
Jillian Seagraves, MD DNR
Claire Jantz, PA DCNR
Ashley Rebert, PA DCNR
Kelly Rossiter, PA DCNR
Mark McLaughlin, PA Boat/Fish
Michelle Fonda, WV DNR
Jake Shoemaker, WV DNR
Julia Wakeling, DC DOEE

Michelle Campbell, DC DOEE
Alisonya Poole, DC DOEE
Becky Gwynn, VA DWR
Kristal McKelvey, VA DCR
Mark Hohengasser, NY Parks
Cassie Davis, NY DEC
Kevin Du Bois, DoD
Chase Douglas, CCP
Aaron Knishkowy, CCP/CCCC
Brendan Shane, TPL
Will Klein, TPL
Emily Maciejak, Volpe DOT
Peter Wilke, Volpe DOT
Jeff Lerner, EPA
Emily Heller, EPA/CBP
Andy Fitch, EPA/CBP
Katie Brownson, FS/CBP
Maggie Woodward, CBC
Sarah D'Adamo, Baltimore Greenspace
Kindle Samuel, Baltimore Greenspace
Jess Blackburn, Alliance for the bay

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- To request access to the microphone and camera, all meeting participants will be required to use the raised hand feature on Teams. Once access has been granted by the meeting organizer, you will then be allowed to unmute your mic and turn on your camera. Unless instructed otherwise, once a participant has microphone or camera access, they will have this permission for the remainder of the meeting.
- Access to chat will be provided as well. Should it be necessary, the Q&A feature on Teams will be utilized to field participant questions.

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