Defining Greenspace Workshop

- Protected Lands and Public Access Workgroups

- Chesapeake Bay Program

- January 29th, 2026
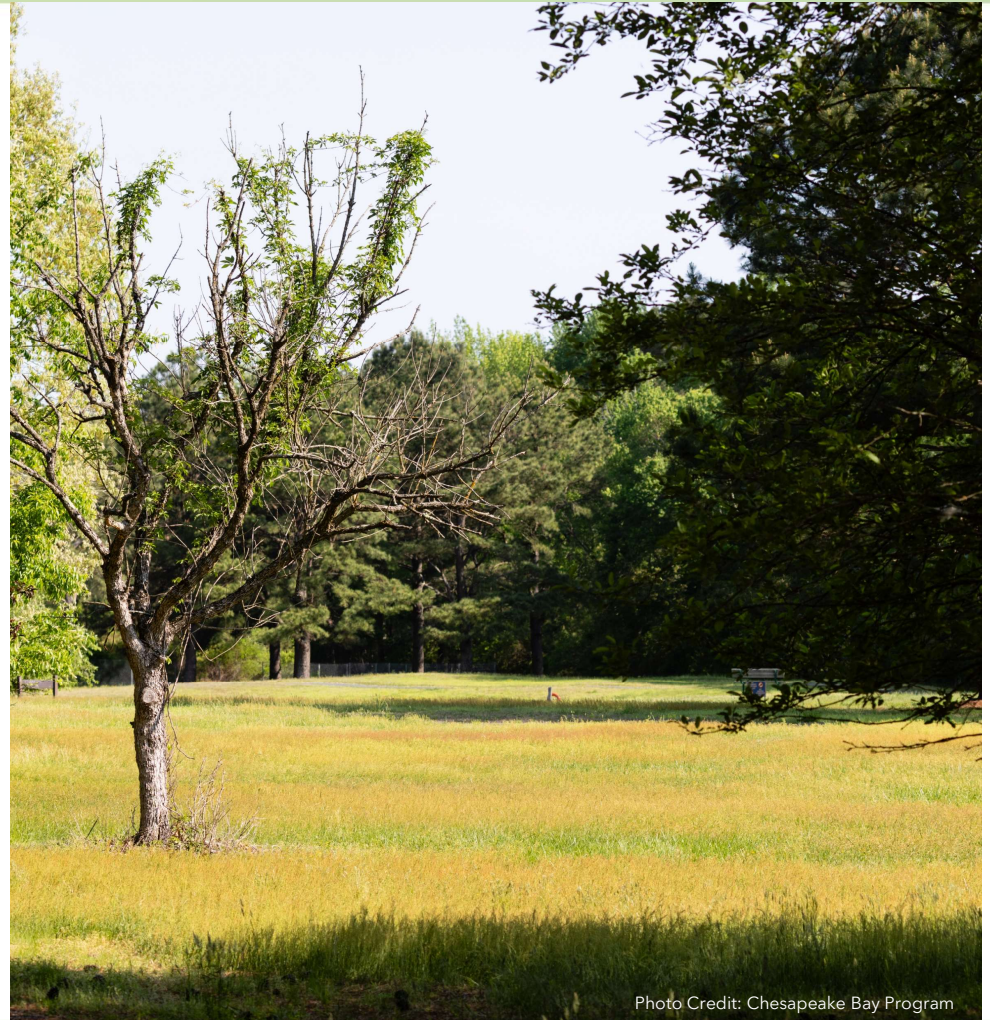

Photo Credit: Chesapeake Bay Program

Woodland Park, Seaford, DE

Agenda

(Breaks will occur in morning and afternoon)

- Introduction / Mentimeter Activity
- Connection to Bay Program Outcomes
- Defining Urban, Community, and Greenspace
- Program Spotlights
- Lunch
- Morning Review
- Breakout Session
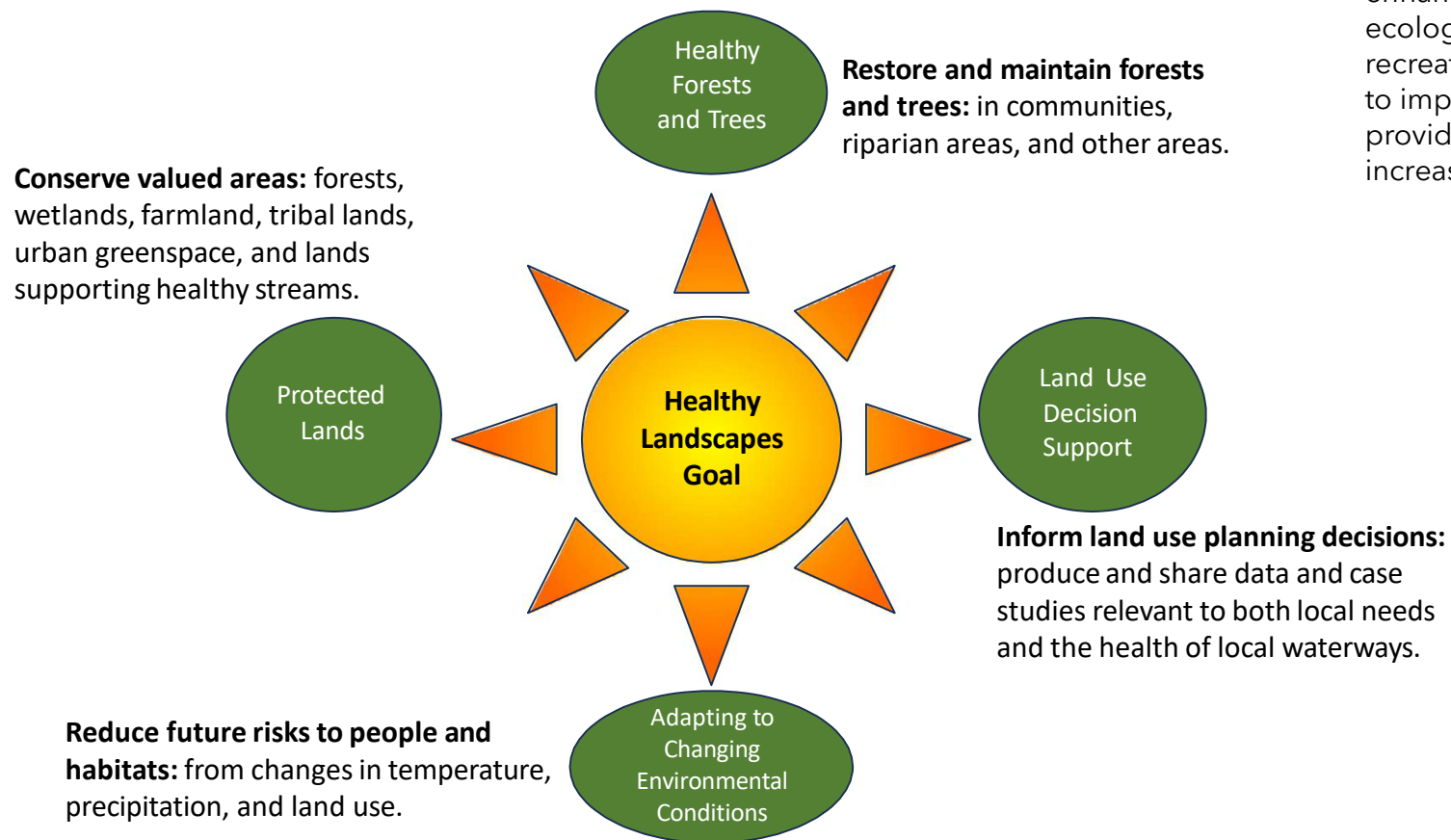- Language Drafting

Mentimeter Activity:

🌳 Where is your favorite greenspace in the watershed?

💭 How do YOU define greenspace?

Connection to Bay Program Outcomes

Conservation in the revised Agreement

Healthy Landscapes Goal: Conserve, protect, restore and enhance landscapes of ecological, economic, recreational and cultural value to improve water quality, provide habitat for wildlife and increase resilience.
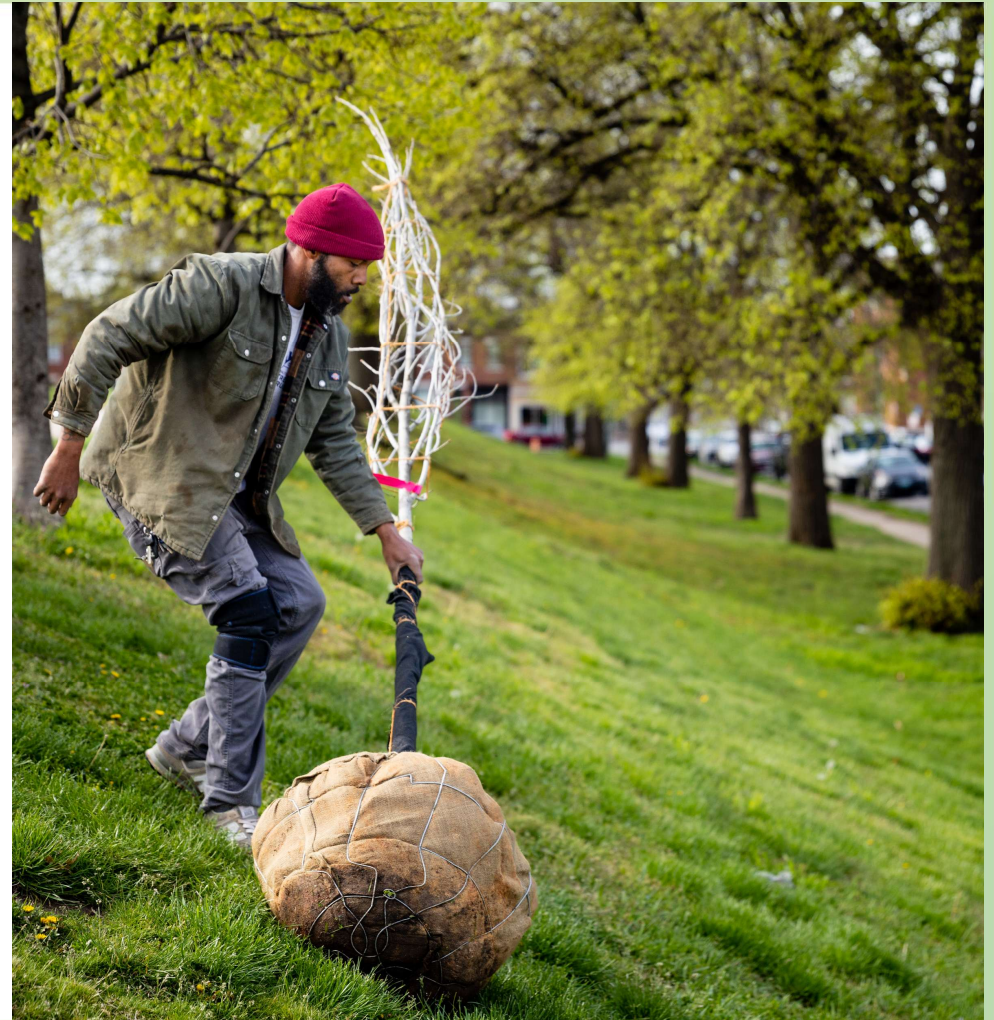
Restore and maintain forests and trees: in communities, riparian areas, and other areas.

Healthy Forests and Trees

Conserve valued areas: forests, wetlands, farmland, tribal lands, urban greenspace, and lands supporting healthy streams.

Protected Lands

Healthy Landscapes Goal

Land Use Decision Support

Inform land use planning decisions: produce and share data and case studies relevant to both local needs and the health of local waterways.

Reduce future risks to people and habitats: from changes in temperature, precipitation, and land use.

Adapting to Changing Environmental Conditions

Protected Lands Outcome

Outcome: Permanently protect critical landscapes within the Chesapeake Bay watershed to protect water quality, enhance biodiversity, support sustainable livelihoods, bolster local economies, honor cultural heritage and protect the mission and resilience of military installations.

By 2040, permanently protect at least an additional 2 million acres of land above the 2025 baseline of 9.3 million acres. The 2 million acres will include specific targets for: riparian forests; wetlands (including migration corridors); natural areas supporting healthy streams; agricultural lands; tribal homelands; and **urban and community greenspace.**

Engaged Communities Goal

Engage and grow a community of local stewards and leaders through education, **recreation** and professional opportunities to ensure the long-term success of restoration and **conservation** efforts.

Public Access Outcome

Outcome: **Create new and enhance existing public access sites** in the Chesapeake Bay watershed through a combination of actions aimed at improving recreational opportunities and accessibility while addressing barriers to access by increasing the number, quality and geographic distribution of sites.

New Target: Increase access to existing urban and community greenspaces identified in the **protected lands dataset.**
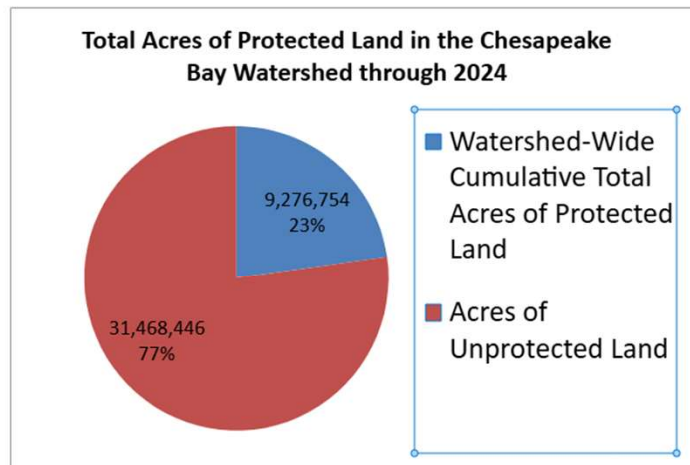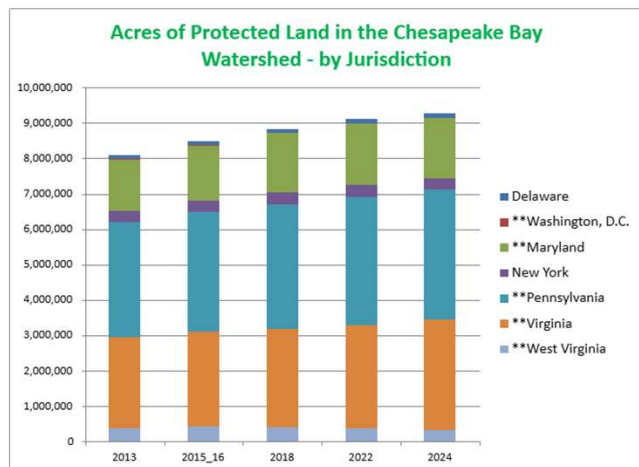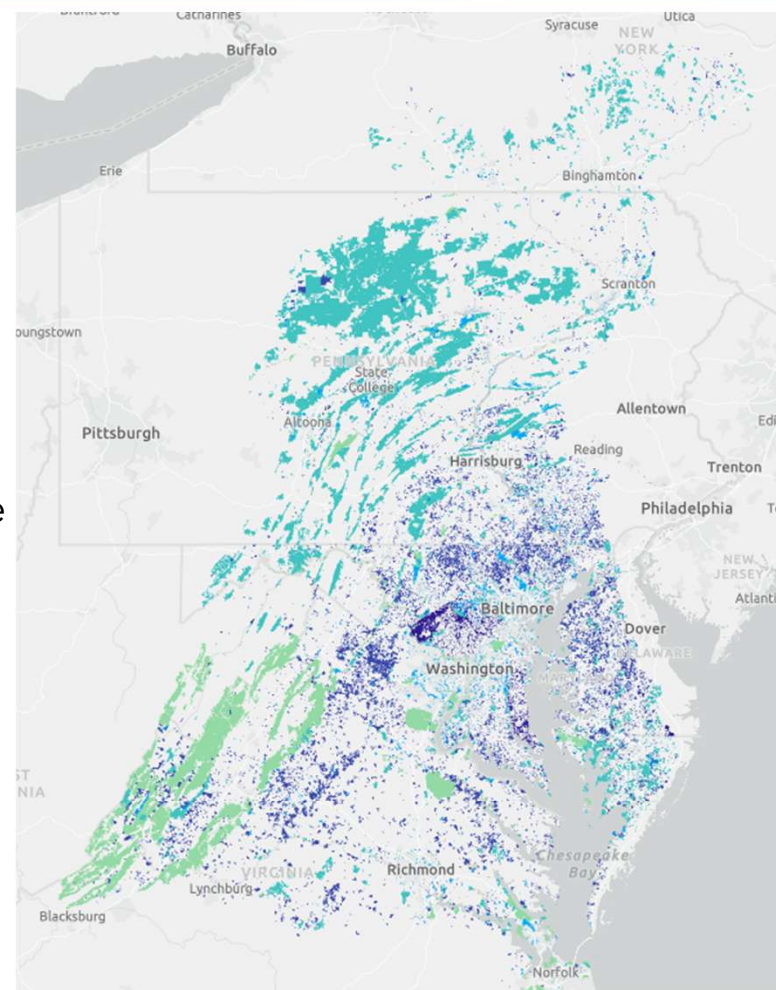
Public Access Workgroup

Existing Scope of Work:

- Sites with water-based access limited to boating, swimming, fishing, and viewing

- Sites operated by any unit of government, or an NGO operating under an agreement with a gov agency

- Sites along 5th order streams or higher

NOTE: informal sites (may be on public land and publicly accessible but **are not managed by an agency/agreement for access**) are not counted.
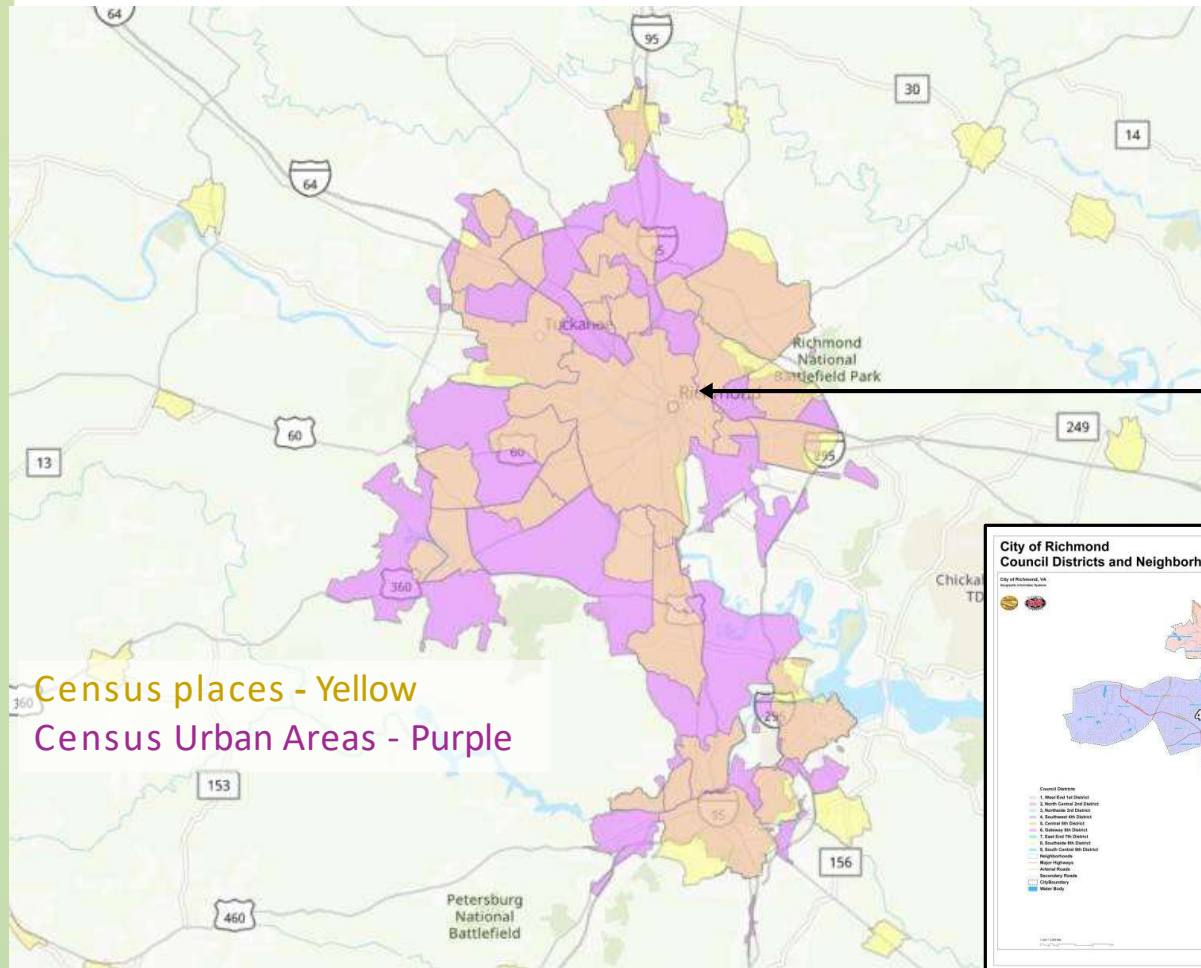
Acres of Protected Land in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed - by Jurisdiction

Total Acres of Protected Land in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed through 2024

2024 Chesapeake Protected Lands

Protected Lands Dataset
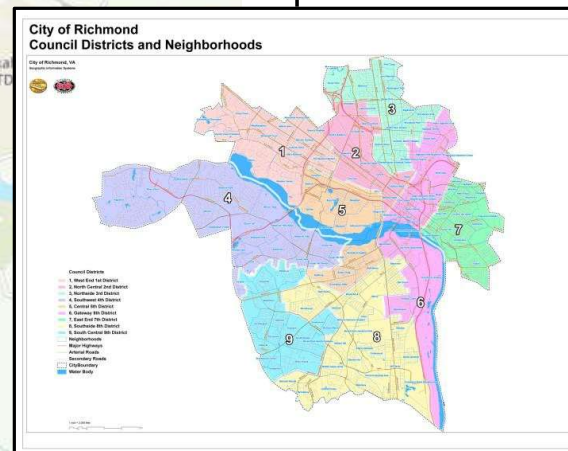
- Can tell us where protected lands are within urban boundaries
- Can tell us who owns the land (e.g., federal or state)
- Can use with the LU/LC data to tell what the land is (ex: agriculture or forest)

- Can't tell us the whole public access story
- Can't tell us the rate of protection

Defining Urban and Community

Census Places vs Urban Areas

Census places - Yellow
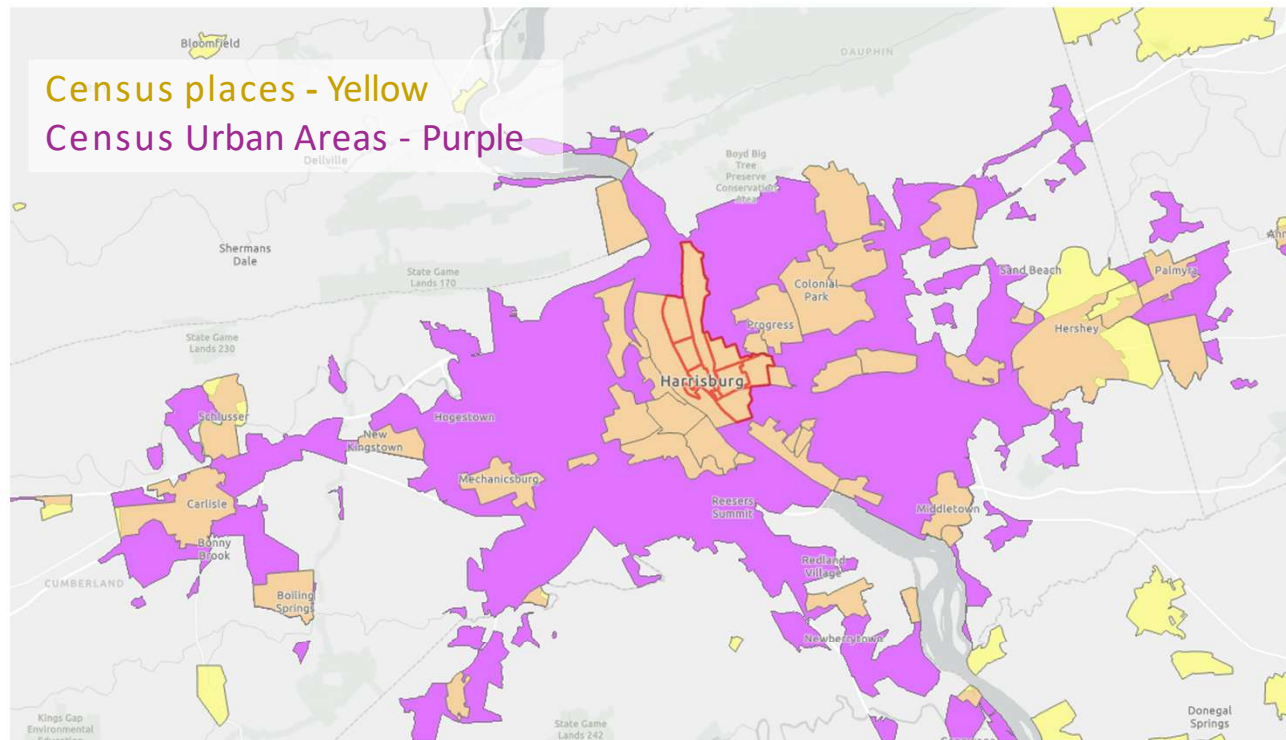Census Urban Areas - Purple

- The Census Place for Richmond reflects the same geography as the City of Richmond.

  - The Census Urban Area for Richmond contains multiple Census Places

Census Places vs Urban Areas

Census places - Yellow
Census Urban Areas - Purple

City of Harrisburg is both a census-designated place and an urban area.

Urban Areas include more suburbs. Census-designated places include more rural towns.

Census Places vs Urban Areas

	Census Designated **Places**	Census **Urban Areas**
Definition	Includes cities, towns, villages (incorporated places) and unincorporated census-designated places (CDPs)	Areas classified based on population density and urbanization
Boundaries	Based on legal boundaries and census blocks	Based on population and development, can cross political boundaries. Boundaries determined by census blocks.
Purpose	Used to track characteristics of specific settlements	Identifies urbanization patterns for infrastructure and policy planning

Additional Thoughts

Census Places reflect cities and towns (following legal boundaries), while Urban Areas reflect regions with high development density.

Census Places are not necessarily urban

Do we include the defining area in our definition?

Greenspace: Definitions Around the Watershed

Maryland: Greenspace Equity Program

<u>Community greenspace</u>: "a **community space that enhances the public health** and livability of an overburdened community or an underserved community"

- a community garden;
- a community gathering open space area;
- a community woodland;
- a green network;
- a park;
- a trail; and
- an urban farm.

Photo Credit: Chesapeake Bay Program

Charles County Scrap Tire Playground: Smallwood State Park, Marbury, MD

Virginia

Urban Green Space: "urban land, partly or completely **covered with grass, trees, shrubs**, or other vegetation, that is located in a densely populated area that has a high concentration of residential or commercial structures."

➢ street trees, city parks, sports fields, gardens, and greenways.

"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**. Rural areas and areas of low population density or development shall not be considered urban green space."

From 15.2-977.1. Local incentives for urban green space.

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title15.2/chapter9/section15.2-977.1/>

Photo Credit: Chesapeake Bay Program
Butternut Valley, Otsego County, NY

New York

Open space: "land or water that is **undeveloped (free from residential, commercial, industrial, or institutional use)**. Open space can be either private or publicly owned and includes areas such as forests, agricultural field, public parks and preserves, and coastal lands."
(https://dec.ny.gov/nature/open-space)

Green Space: "land that is partly covered in trees, shrubs, or grasses" (definition for outdoor recreation purposes)

EPA

Open space: "any open piece of land that is **undeveloped** and is **accessible to the public**. Some opportunities for community open space can include:

- Schoolyards
- Playgrounds
- Public seating areas
- Public plazas
- Vacant lots"

Green Space: "land that is **partly or completely covered with grass, trees, shrubs**, or other vegetation"

- Parks
- Community gardens
- Cemeteries

https://www.epa.gov/G3/green-streets-and-community-open-space

Trust for Public Land (TPL)

Defining a Park

"an outdoor destination that **encourages informal public use** and, in addition, facilitates a) socializing, b) exercising and playing, and/or c) enjoying nature." (Park and Recreation methods doc)

- Traditional parks and facilities that provide a park-like experience (e.g. cemeteries)
- Excluding specialized facilities (athletic complex or private nature preserve) that do not allow for informal public use

Criteria for a 'Park Site'

- Outdoors with named destination (signage)
- Publicly accessible and advertised as such on the agency's website or equivalent
- Encourages informal public use through gathering areas
- Encourages at least one of the following types of park-like activities:
  - Socializing (picnic tables, benches, plazas/lawns)
  - Play or exercise
  - Enjoying nature

Trust for Public Land:

Categorization of Park Lands

Natural Lands: pristine or restored areas open to the public, managed for their conservation and ecological value. May have trails/benches, but not developed for recreation activities beyond walking/running/cycling

Designed Lands: parklands constructed, created, and managed primarily for human use. Includes playgrounds, neighborhood parks, mini-parks, picnic meadows, sports fields, plazas, boulevards, golf courses, cemeteries

Non-Park Acreage: used for undeveloped lands (or lands awaiting development), which could include a grassy lot open to the public but with no signage or formal park features.

Comparing Definitions

Similarities	Differences
➢ Land cover by vegetation (grasses, shrubs, trees)	➢ Environmental focus: VA requires benefits to air quality, heat mitigation, stormwater)
➢ Focus on community/recreational benefits that are accessible to all	➢ Community focus: MD prioritizes community health benefits, similar to TPL's approach
➢ Land Use: recreational purpose with little to no development (no residential, commercial, industrial use)	➢ Open space vs. Greenspace

Discussion

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?

You can also drop ideas in this mentimeter (different QR code from previous one)

5 Minute Break

Program Spotlights

Learn about existing Greenspace Programs and Tracking
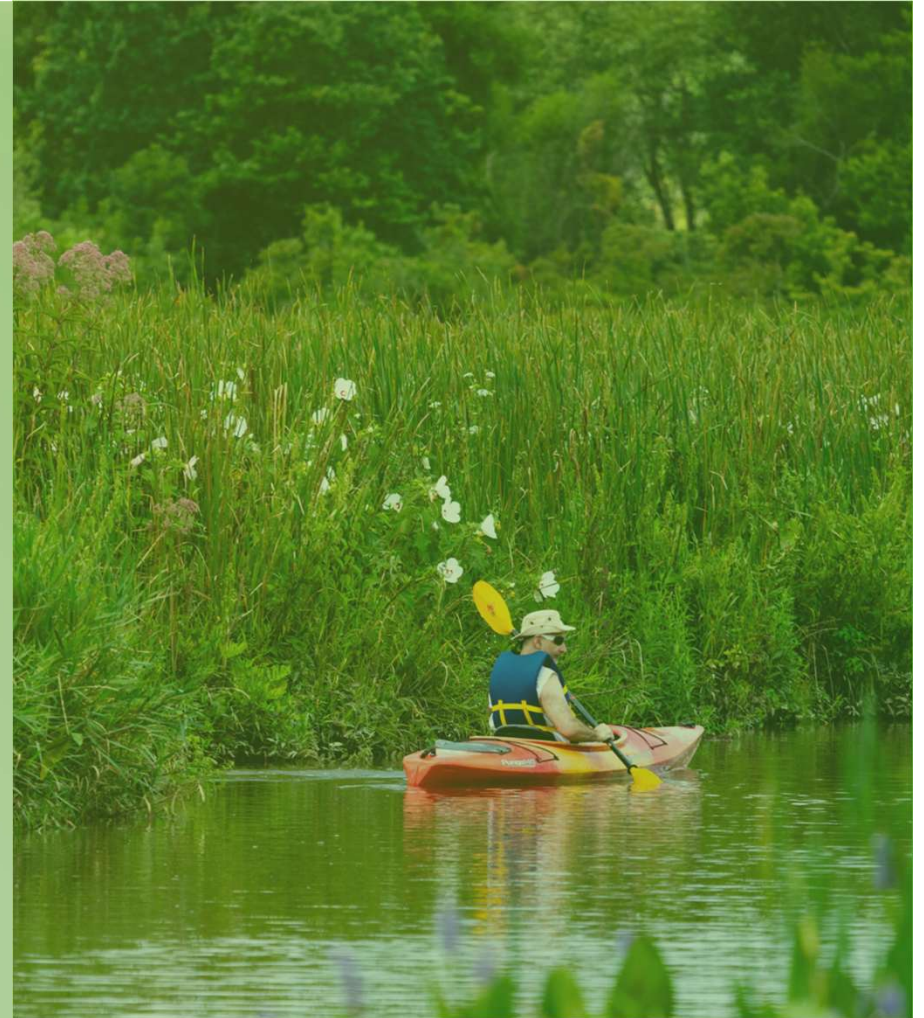
Lunch – Come back at 1:00 pm

Can you use PowerPoint?

Review of Morning Discussion

- **Cross Goal/outcome Connections**
  - Connection to Healthy Landscapes and Engaged Communities
  - Connection to Public Access

- **Protected Lands Data**

- **Places vs Urban areas**

- **Definitions from around the watershed**
  - Similarities in definitions:
    - Land cover by vegetation (grasses, shrubs, trees)
    - Focus on community/recreational benefits that are accessible to all
    - Land Use: recreational purpose with little to no development (no residential, commercial, industrial use)

- **Learned about MD's Green Space Equity Program and TPL's conservation and tracking efforts**

Breakout Session:
How could the Bay Program Define Greenspace to track across the Watershed?

How does your department/organization define and track greenspace (or open space) and access?

What kinds of boundaries could be set for tracking?

Guiding topics:

- Presence of recreation amenities?
- Characteristics of the greenspace: what kinds of vegetation should be included?
  - Do sports fields or grassy parcels count?
- Extent of accessibility
  - Ex: TPL's 10-minute walk
- Community and/or environmental benefit?

5 Minute Break

Drafting a Definition