DEVELOPING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEW FOREST CONSERVATION TARGET

AUGUST 6TH 2025 - FWG MEETING

FOREST CONSERVATION IN THE CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERESHED

SUMMARIZED FROM THE MARCH 2025 FWG MEETING

Please note: The bullet points to the right are examples selected from the March 2025 FWG meeting and are in no way an

State-wide conservation goals

- Maryland: 30 x 30 & 40 x 40 goals
- New York: 30 x 30 goal
- DC: 40% tree canopy by 2032

Land acquisition

- USFS Forest Legacy Program
- New York: Land acquisition grants
- Pennsylvania: C2P2 grants

Conservation easements

- Virginia: Forest Land Conservation program
- Maryland: Program Open Space
- DC: Casey Trees partner land trust

Tax incentive programs

- West Virginia: Managed timberland tax program
- Pennsylvania: Clean

Technical assistance & education

- Delaware: Technical assistance for urban & private forest management, forest conservation ed programming

Policy

- DC: Regulation for tree removals on private property
- Maryland: Forest Conservation Act

HOW SHOULD WE APPROACH DEFINING FOREST CONSERVATION?

Proposed conservation definition from the February 2025 FWG meeting (Matt Keefer, PA DCNR)

- **Conservation is the sustainable use and management of natural resources to ensure their long-term viability**. Conservation aims to equitably provide for human benefits while maintaining and improving ecological function. Practices include tree planting in communities, reforestation and habitat restoration, agricultural best management practices, sustainable forestry, and maintaining working lands through easements and acquisition.

- If needed, we can also include the comparison to protection and preservation: **Compared to conservation, protection and preservation focus on safeguarding ecosystems from harm and degradation**. Protection measures include habitat preservation with limited intervention, pollution control, and enforcement of environmental regulations. While conservation aims to consider human needs, preservation and protection are more about safeguarding ecosystems from harm and degradation. Both approaches are essential for maintaining the health, resilience, and biodiversity of our planet.

DRAFT PROTECTED LANDS OUTCOME & TARGET LANGUAGE

OUTCOME LANGUAGE: Protect critical landscapes within the Chesapeake Bay watershed to protect water quality, enhance biodiversity, support sustainable livelihoods, ensure military readiness and national defense, and honor cultural heritage.

TARGETS:

- **Protected Lands:** By 2040, permanently protect an additional 1.5-2 million acres of land throughout the watershed at the federal, state or local level.
- **Forests:** By 2040, permanently protect a total of _XX_ acres of forest, of which XX% are in riparian areas.
- **Wetlands**: By 2040, permanently protect a total of _XX_ acres of wetlands, focusing on the protection of buffer zones.
- **Watershed Health:** By 2040, protect a total of _XX_ acres of natural lands in watersheds that support good stream health.
- **Tribal Lands:** Support the sovereignty and duty of care of tribal nations and communities by securing protection status and/or co-management agreements for a total of _XX_ acres of tribal homelands.
- **Agricultural Lands:** By 2040, permanently protect a total of _XX_ acres of agricultural lands within the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

UPCOMING PROTECTED LANDS MEETING

During the next **Protected Lands Workgroup meeting on September 2nd (2pm-3pm),** the Protected Lands Workgroup will discuss the protected lands target for forests:

Forests: By 2040, permanently protect a total of _XX_ acres of forest, of which XX% are in riparian areas.

The FWG is encouraged to attend and participate!

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

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

Net Forest loss to development:

2013/14-2021/22

*Note these numbers do not include the loss of early successional lands to development

Average annual loss: 14,020 acres

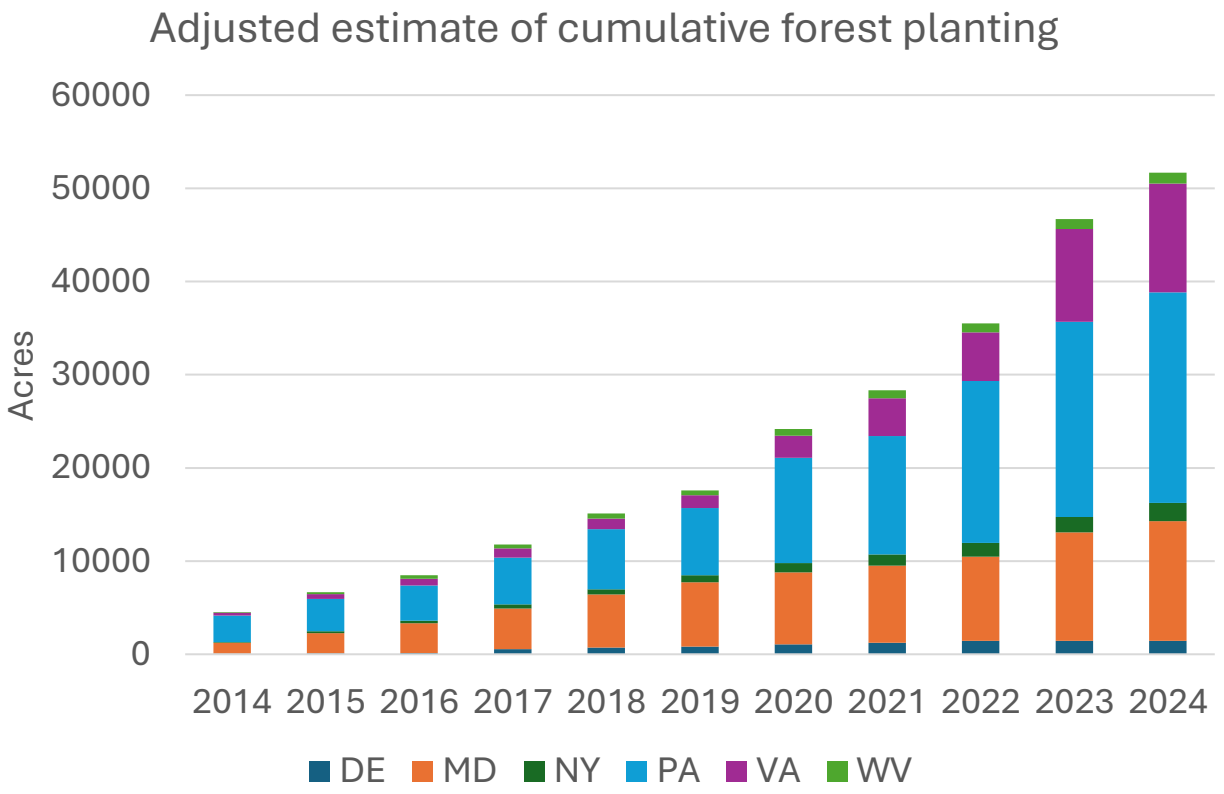
	Acres
DE	(692.45)
DC	(84.29)
MD	(19,741.24)
NY	(7,378.85)
PA	(28,841.97)
VA	(48,813.33)
WV	(3,661.93)
CBW	(109,214.06)

Forest planting 2014-2024**

**Note 2022 data relies on estimates for agricultural tree planting based on average annual planting rates from other years

Cumulative total: 51,684 acres

Average annual planting: 4,699 acres (range 2,037-11,200 acres/year)



Numeric target options

Forest planting 2014-2024**

- Cumulative total: 51,684 acres
- Average annual planting: 4,699 acres (range 2,037-11,200 acres/year)

- Option A: 110,000 acres by 2035
  - 58,316 additional acres planted
  - 5,301 acres/yr needed on average 2025-2035 (11 years)
  - Somewhat above average planting rate
  - Would compensate for 38% of current average annual rate of loss
- Option B: 120,000 acres by 2035
  - 68,316 additional acres planted
  - 6,210 acres/yr needed on average 2025-2035
  - Above average planting rate
  - Would compensate for 44% of current average annual rate of loss
- Option C: 130,000 acres by 2035
  - 78,316 additional acres planted,
  - 7120 acres/yr needed on average 2025-2035
  - Well above average planting rate, but also well below highest annual planting number
  - Would compensate for 51% of current average annual rate of loss

Discussion