



Chesapeake Bay Program

Science. Restoration. Partnership.

Forestry Workgroup Meeting Minutes

May 14th, 2025 | 9:00 am - 11:00 am

[Meeting Materials](#)

Attendees:

Alexis Dickerson, Potomac Conservancy
 Anna Killius, CBC
 Anne Hairston-Strang, MD DNR
 Brendan Durkin, DC DOEE
 Cassie Davis, NYS DEC
 Chris Miller, DE FS
 Chris Peters, PA NRCS
 Craig Highfield, ACB
 Emily Heller, EPA CBPO
 Frank Rodgers, Cacapon Inst.
 Helen Golimowski, Devereux Consulting

Jeremy McGill, WV DOF
 Joel Cockerham, Cacapon Inst.
 Katie Brownson, USFS
 Kristin Saunders, UMCES
 Lara Johnson, VA DOF
 Marilyn Yang, CRC
 Nancy Sonti, USFS
 Rob Schnabel, CBF
 Sarah Brzezinski, EPA CBPO
 Susan Minnemeyer, Nature Plus
 Teddi Stark, PA DCNR

9:00 (5 min)	Welcome and Introductions – Anne Hairston Strang (MD FS, FWG Co-Chair) For roll call purposes, please enter your name & affiliation in the chat box. Call-in participants are requested to identify themselves verbally.
9:05 (5 min)	Announcements – Katie Brownson (USFS, FWG Coordinator) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing update Call for nominations for the FWG Co-Chair Community Tree Canopy position Reminder: The June Forestry Workgroup meeting has been rescheduled to an in-person meeting on June 11th (10am-3pm) hosted by Adams County Conservation District in Gettysburg, PA! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those that cannot attend in person, a virtual option will be available (10-12). Please RSVP here if you're interested in attending in-person or virtually. STAC workshop update: "Healthy Forests: Proactive Strategies for Managing Threats and Promoting Conservation" proposal was selected for STAC funding. The workshop Steering Committee will begin convening in June. "Fund Your Buffer" page on the Riparian Forest Buffer website has been updated! Highlight: Work with NRCS to Update Your State's Source Water Protection Priority Areas Timeline Update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LULC Data Release (May 28) State and Municipal Fact Sheets, StoryMap, and Indicator (sometime in June)

	<p>Rob Schnabel (in chat): Not sure if someone from USDA Farm Service Agency will cover, CREP signup is apparently open again after being closed for sometime.</p>
<p>9:10 (10 min)</p>	<p>At-Large Member Nominations Introductions – Katie Brownson (USFS, FWG Coordinator)</p> <p>Katie invited the nominees for the three available at-large member positions to provide a one-minute statement on their qualifications and interest.</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <p>Frank Rodgers: My forestry career started at Parks and People Foundation in the 1990s working on revitalizing Baltimore. I was also part of early GIS work on urban tree canopy (UTC) in 2006. I came to the Cacapon Institute in West Virginia to establish an urban tree canopy program because Martinsburg is at the center of the fastest urban land cover growth in the Bay watershed. Looking forward, I’m interested in connecting UTC with schools and forestry education. I also serve on the Education Workgroup and see opportunities for schoolyards and education efforts.</p> <p>Katie Brownson: Thank you Frank, the Cacapon Institute has been a great partner on the ground, delivering a lot of restoration in West Virginia.</p> <p>Rob Schnabel: I work with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation out of the Maryland office and also in eight counties of West Virginia. I’ve been with CBF nearly 25 years, working directly with landowners while also sharing feedback with state and federal agencies about what’s working and where improvements are needed. Despite planting efforts, we continue to see net losses of riparian forest buffers, so conserving existing buffers is just as important as establishing new ones. I’m interested in exploring how agricultural preservation programs could better require buffers, looking at models like Maryland’s CREP easement program. The goal is to make progress toward net gains and stop the losses.</p> <p>Katie Brownson: Thanks, Rob. You’ve brought valuable perspective from your work with Maryland farmers and the losses we’re seeing on agricultural lands.</p> <p>Anne Hairston-Strang: Thank you, Frank and Rob, for your leadership and for building the connections we need.</p> <p>Katie Brownson: Alexis, would you like to introduce your nominee? (Melody was not present on the call)</p> <p>Alexis Dickerson: I nominated Melody Staria Mobley, the first Black woman forester for the USDA Forest Service. She is now active in education, outreach, and diversity, while also bringing strong technical expertise. She serves on other regional boards and commissions and has a wealth of knowledge. Melody is a kind, thoughtful leader who would complement the Forestry Workgroup and strengthen our ability to connect people with the work of preserving trees. I will follow up with her for confirmation. <i>[Please note, confirmation for Melody did not move forward after this meeting since the FWG leadership did not hear back from Melody after following up]</i></p>

	<p>Katie Brownson: FWG voting members, we will request your approval of the nominees following the meeting. The elected members will be announced at the June FWG meeting.</p> <p>ACTION: FWG voting members, please reach out to Katie (katherine.brownson@usda.gov) and Marilyn (myang@chesapeakebay.net) if you have any blocking concerns with Rob and Frank staying on as at-large members. If we do not hear from you by COB May 30st , we formally re-elect Rob and Frank as FWG at-large members. Please note, there is one more at-large position available because Susan Minnemeyer did not choose to re-elect herself. Please send any additional nominations to Marilyn and Katie before the June 11th FWG meeting for consideration.</p>
<p>9:20 (20 min)</p>	<p>Chesapeake Bay Commission Overview & Federal Legislative/Policy Update – <i>Anna Killius (CBC, Executive Director)</i></p> <p>Anna Killius discussed the role of the Chesapeake Bay Commission in bridging collaboration across state boundaries and how forestry efforts fit within this effort. In addition, she provided an overview of current federal legislative and policy updates.</p> <p>Presentation Summary: Commission Overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tri-state legislative commission created in the 1980s by MD, VA, and PA • 21 members: 7 per state (legislators, gubernatorial appointees, citizen members) • Funded by states; does not take federal dollars • Mission: translate science into policy; push bills and budgets in state legislatures; serve as a legislative voice in the Bay Program; coordinate with Congress • Provides a bipartisan, regional perspective from legislators to legislators <p>Highlights from Last Year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoted pay-for-performance/outcome programs in all three states • Advanced state-funded agricultural cost-share programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ PA: Clean Streams Fund and dedicated funding ○ VA: record funding; progress on invasive species management ○ MD: Whole Watershed Act implementation; leadership on PFAS mitigation • Maintained program authorizations to secure continued federal funding. • Publications included: annual report; Bay Restoration memo (cooperative federalism, role of federal support); annual federal agency budget request (covering 6 of 12 appropriations bills) <p>Federal Budget and Policy Updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing Resolution: maintains FY24 spending through FY25; agencies directed to outline spending plans; possible rescissions package (not expected to affect Bay programs) • Reconciliation Bill: will include mandatory spending cuts and tax changes; limited overlap with Bay priorities • FY26 “Skinny” Budget: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ EPA cut by 54% (categorical state grants, nonpoint source, revolving funds)

- Interior cut by 30% (USGS, Fish & Wildlife, Park Service, Forest Service)
- Cuts to state/private forest grants and Forest Service operations
- Reductions to conservation technical assistance (concern for landowner support)
- Potential elimination of NOAA and DoD climate/conservation programs
- Reauthorizations: ACE Act renewed Bay Program, Gateways and Watertrails, and Chesapeake WILD for five years.
- Farm Bill: second one-year extension of 2018 Farm Bill; reconciliation may set funding for next 5–6 years; conservation title could see increases.

Discussion:

Cassie Davis (in chat): Thank you for this overview Anna!

Anne Hairston-Strang: Thank you, Anna. There's a lot going on, and part of our challenge is figuring out what information is most useful to gather for the Bay Program and broader forestry interests. One important note is that the U.S. Forest Service budget actually begins under Department of Interior appropriations, which isn't always obvious. Another proposal in the skinny budget is to consolidate fire suppression across DOI and the Forest Service. While coordination makes sense, removing fire funds from land management agencies would cut their firefighting capacity in half. There are also concerns about losing science and data. The administration has proposed eliminating state, private, and tribal forestry programs, as well as Forest Service R&D, keeping only forest inventory and analysis. These changes would significantly impact the science base we rely on. Anna, what information would be most helpful to the Commission?

Anna Killius: Please share any information you hear, especially specific to losses or impacts in districts across the watershed. That kind of local detail helps Congressional members understand what cuts mean for their constituents and makes it easier to push back against proposals. As we get more clarity on job impacts, project delays, or reductions in effectiveness, those examples are especially valuable.

Anne Hairston-Strang: So Congress needs more than just "we lost funding" they need to see what that means for people and the benefits they depend on.

Anna Killius: Right

Anne Hairston-Strang: Are there other questions or concerns? Impacts differ by jurisdiction, but I'm also wondering what's happening in the Bay Program beyond 2025, especially how the benefits of investments are being communicated.

Katie Brownson: Do you mean communications?

Anne Hairston-Strang: Yes, summaries and numbers that show the value of partnerships. In Maryland, our budget is mostly state funds, but federal dollars amplify that investment. For example, we buy fire trucks, then use federal funds to equip them, which makes them more effective locally and also contributes to national mutual aid. Last year, Maryland added 132 responders to the national pool, and 80% of the federal firefighting force comes from state and local crews. These partnerships matter. But when AmeriCorps was

cut, we had little notice—our Maryland Conservation Corps had to lay off staff even though they were essentially volunteers doing important work. That loss made no sense.

Matthew Keefer (in chat): Appreciate the info and context, Anna! In PA, like Anne described, we have some significant value-added partnerships in the balance depending on USFS state and private forestry funding.

Rob Schnabel: At CBF, we hosted NRCS leaders last week. Technical assistance is always a limiting factor for conservation. In Maryland, we've lost 19 NRCS staff. I'd be interested in Baywide numbers—how many staff have been lost and what that means in terms of producers not reached. That's an important data point to highlight. On buffers, with CREP reopening, larger states often use up available acres quickly. A regional set-aside could help. We've had massive rain events after drought, which shows why buffers are essential for stream flow, recharge, and resilience. Communicating these needs would be helpful.

Anne Hairston-Strang: Agreed. Metrics like “farmers served” would be compelling. The administration says it supports farmers and rural working lands, but we need to hold them accountable for delivering.

Katie Brownson: The Bay Program is a strong example of state-federal partnership. Federal funds have been leveraged to do extensive on-the-ground work and build long-term relationships.

Anne Hairston-Strang: We've heard that programs like state, private, and tribal forestry, wildfire defense, forest health, and legacy programs may be held at last year's funding levels, which is good. But urban and community forestry and forest stewardship may face cuts as much as half. Urban forestry in particular has been targeted.

Rob Schnabel: This may be a chance to better educate local communities about what different agencies and programs deliver. People often don't realize how much federal dollars support them until the funding disappears.

Anne Hairston-Strang: Exactly. Federal-state partnerships create efficiency and leverage. For example, equipment provided to local fire companies is refurbished and put back to use—a win-win that people don't always see.

Lara Johnson: In Virginia, we're hearing the same concerns about urban and community forestry—potential base-level funding only. The Forest Service is trying to show the importance of staff capacity, but it's difficult after the billion-dollar IRA investment and now nothing. It's a big shift, and strategies that worked with past administrations may not work now.

Anne Hairston-Strang: Matt Keefer noted in the chat that PA has developed strong partnerships and efficiencies that contribute to national capacity. We should continue sharing this kind of information and highlight cost savings and efficiencies, since funding is tight and those points resonate. Thank you, Anna, and thanks everyone. I need to leave, so Katie will take over.

Katie Brownson: Thanks, Anne, and thank you Anna for the great overview. At some point, it would be good to revisit the state-level pay-for-performance and

	<p>pay-for-outcome programs to see how forestry is being prioritized. That would be useful as we think about creative funding strategies.</p>
<p>9:40 (1 hour)</p>	<p><u>Updates from the Management Board Retreat</u> – <i>Katie Brownson (USFS, FWG Coordinator)</i></p> <p>Katie gave an update on the May 7th and 8th Management Board Retreat, during which they reviewed and refined the outcome language in preparation for the May PSC meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion topics on the consolidated Healthy Trees and Forests outcome: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Finalize Forest Buffer and Tree Canopy target language ◦ Forest conservation sub-goal language ◦ Potential priorities to advance through this broader outcome • Management Board materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <u>Healthy Trees and Forests PPT</u> ◦ <u>Healthy Trees and Forests 2-pager</u> <p>Presentation Summary:</p> <p>April Meeting Recap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed proposal to consolidate 10 original goals into 4, plus updates to related outcomes like Healthy Watersheds and land use. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ For forest buffers, a small group developed specific numeric targets; these were reviewed with the workgroup and moved forward without objections. ◦ For tree canopy, Julie presented three target options (24,000 / 35,000 / 50,000 acres by 2035). Voting members preferred the middle option (35,000 acres). Some concerns were raised about 50,000 acres being unattainable and 35,000 being ambitious, but members agreed it should be a stretch goal, achievable with adequate funding <p>Separate vs. Consolidated Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The workgroup was evenly split on keeping separate outcomes (tree canopy + forest buffers) versus consolidating into a single “Healthy Forests and Trees” outcome. • No blocking concerns were raised with either approach. • The Management Board discussed the idea of consolidating outcomes but keeping the specific numeric targets for tree canopy and forest buffers in the agreement. <p>Management Board Decisions from the May Retreat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced total outcomes from 31 (2014 Agreement) to 21 • Agreed outcomes should include high-level intent language plus specific, measurable targets • Approved consolidating tree canopy and forest buffers into a single Healthy Forests and Trees outcome, while keeping both sets of numeric targets • Minor edits suggested (e.g., avoid “working toward” phrasing; place long-term goals at the end of statements).

Draft Outcome Language (proposed)

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.

- **Tree canopy target:** Plant and maintain 35,000 acres by 2035 → achieve long-term net gain.
- **Forest buffer target:** Annual planting goals; maintain at least 71% riparian forest cover by 2035 → long-term goal of 75%.
- **Forest conservation target (new):** Achieve long-term net gain by reducing forest loss to development; track gains through BMP reporting as well as land cover monitoring.
- **Forest stewardship (placeholder):** Could be aligned with the Stewardship Workgroup in the future, but not advancing now.

Next Steps:

- Revised outcome language due to Principal Staff Committee for review (May 23).
- Full watershed agreement revisions targeted for completion in June, with July 1 release for a two-month public comment period.
- FWG may revisit targets in the future under adaptive management

Discussion (Tree Canopy and Forest Buffers Targets):

Rob Schnabel (in chat): I need to jump off Teams but will be calling in. Listen while driving.

Frank Rodgers: The education workgroup is working on 2040, and we're working on 2035. Is there any direction from leadership on that? I can't imagine workgroups coming out with different end dates.

Katie Brownson: Great question. When we started this process, we asked the MB if there should be a consistent end date and they said no. So, as the FWG, we decided 10 years—2035—seemed like the right balance: long enough to accomplish things, but not so far out that we're just kicking the can down the road. Days before we had to submit the outcome target language, we were told to consider 2040, but it was too late to pivot. The MB or PSC may still decide to set a consistent end date, and if they do, it will likely be 2040. If that happens, we'd extrapolate—carry our rate of progress forward to 2040. But so far, no official decision has been made. The original idea was to let outcomes operate on different timeframes depending on the work. Since then, there's been recognition that a consistent date may be needed, but it hasn't been decided.

Kristin Saunders (in chat): Katie, do the current forest action plans from states seem to line up with these numbers? The reason I ask is because if they do, we may want to incorporate or bring those action plans in by reference to the management strategy when it gets updated. Frank, the PSC does intend to give some direction on the overall time horizon but I think they wanted to see what outcomes came up with in terms of workable time horizons where they thought they could see improvement. This information will help them make a determination (I think).

Cassie Davis: New York's forest action plan is based on our WIP III.

Dave Montali: I don't know what the answer is. There's no consistency. But this is just a draft going to public comment, so we're fine for now. Maybe the public will come back

and ask for consistency. The one thing is the water quality outcome—the WIP outcome—is already tagged to 2035. We’re developing a new model system to look at climate impacts, and that’s also set to 2035 for now. Anything can change, but that’s where it stands.

Katie Brownson: With 2035, the partnership may decide differently later. Who knows—you all drive the train sometimes.

Dave Montali: But your goals are in line with ours anyway.

Katie Brownson: Yes, and actually a lot of outcomes used 2035. By my count, more had 2035 than 2040.

Matt Keefer: So if it does move to 2040, would we just tack on five more years, or keep the same rate and increase the number?

Katie Brownson: We’d keep the same rate, just extend progress to 2040.

Matt Keefer: OK. My other question is about consistency. Tree canopy and buffer targets are worded differently—one has an annual target and the other cumulative. Would it help to align their structure?

Katie Brownson: That’s a good point. Some of that was inertia—buffers always had an annual planting goal, so we kept it. Tree canopy had a cumulative goal, so we kept that too.

Matt Keefer: Our WIP target is still around 70–75,000 acres, since it started so high. That might cause confusion if the WIP target is higher than the agreement target. In recent years, we’ve had about 35,000 acres planted per year. The original goal was 85,000 acres, plus 15,000 in the Conowingo WIP. Maybe no one will notice the difference, but the numbers aren’t fully aligned.

Katie Brownson: The WIP target date was 2025. Now with new models and planning, things are shifting anyway. I don’t think we need to worry too much about alignment with the old WIPs.

Matt Keefer: I’ll flag it for Jill to make sure she understands.

Rob Schnabel: I’m a little concerned with Matt’s point. Ideally, state numbers should add up to the Bay Program target. Pennsylvania’s numbers are strong, but in Maryland we often set goals too low. Do we know what the other states’ numbers are, and how they compare Baywide?

Katie Brownson: With the current WIPs, we tracked progress both against the 900 miles per year partnership goal and against combined state numbers. States—especially Pennsylvania—set much higher goals than the partnership’s 900-mile target, which we never achieved. That’s why we scaled down. We can’t control how states set their numbers, but I hear your point about alignment.

Rob Schnabel: That makes sense. In Maryland, our WIP goal was only about 1,600 acres, with three counties making up two-thirds of it. We need to aim higher in the next round so we're not just holding the line.

Kristin Saunders: The challenge is that WIPs can substitute BMP actions to meet targets. So if Pennsylvania's WIP has a higher number, they could swap out plans later and not align with the Baywide target.

Sarah Brzezinski: On another note, I'd suggest flipping the order of the tree canopy target. Start with "plant and maintain" before "reduce," to match the structure of forest buffers. The Management Board raised similar comments about starting with the positive before the reduce language.

Katie Brownson: OK, I'll run that by Julie. Any concerns from urban/community folks? The wording would be: "Plant and maintain 35,000 acres of community trees and reduce the loss of existing canopy to achieve a net gain over the long term."

Joel Cockerham (in chat): I like the consistent wording.

Matt Keefer: The original wording may have highlighted loss intentionally since planting won't offset it. But I understand the argument.

Katie Brownson: Maybe instead we flip the forest buffer language to start with "reduce the loss." That way both are consistent.

Laura Johnson: I agree. We've never hit our buffer goals because of losses. The wording was intentional to emphasize that.

Frank Rodgers: In West Virginia, our plan is just to hold the line. We don't see gains in the near future.

Katie Brownson: Then maybe for buffers we put "reduce loss" first too. That way both outcomes follow the same structure. So far I've heard:

- Move "reduce loss" to the front for buffers
- Change the annual buffer planting goal to a cumulative goal—75,000 acres by 2035

I like the consistency across tree canopy, buffers, and the new forest conservation target. It helps communication if all three use cumulative goals. If anyone has objections, please let me know by the end of today since I have to submit the language tomorrow.

Presentation Summary (Forest Conservation Target):

Framing from Shared Stewardship Agreement:

- Pulled a few priorities from the agreement to guide the new, broader forest conservation target. Key priorities:
 - Incorporate agroforestry practices into farms (sub-group working on this, but could be part of FWG)
 - Restore forests, including early successional habitat, to improve health and address stressors such as pests, disease, and invasive species.

- Design and implement restoration projects that help communities adapt to changing environmental conditions.

Initial Target Considerations:

- Must meet specific, measurable, time-bound criteria
- Should be straightforward to track and not require major new data collection
- Additional indicators could be developed later, such as:
 - Capturing forest management and stewardship activities
 - Tracking forest health status and trends

(New) Draft Forest Conservation Target: *Working toward a net gain in forests across the watershed, reduce the loss of forests to development and plant and maintain ## acres of new forests by 2035.*

- Two components, similar to other targets:
 - Forest loss to development – trackable now using land use/land cover data, focusing on permanent conversion of forested classes to developed classes.
 - Forest planting and maintenance – track BMPs that transition land uses into forests with unmanaged understory.
 - *BMPs Included in Forest Planting Category*
 - Agricultural tree planting
 - Riparian forest buffers (urban and agricultural)
 - Urban forest planting (intended to transition to forest, not just scattered trees over turf)

Discussion (New Forest Conservation Target):

Jeremy McGill (in chat): Forest conservation outcomes for me are directly linked to how much money is available to purchase easements. Otherwise it is entirely subject to the needs of the land ownership.

Rob Schnabel: Just want to add one thing. You mentioned agriculture, but there's also silvopasture—trees in pastures or hedgerows. It's starting to take off with a lot of grazing producers. I don't know where it fits in this puzzle, but there's real interest. Just wanted to share that reminder.

Katie Brownson: Thanks, Rob. I'm not sure if it would fit here or not. Right now, there isn't a framework to credit silvopasture in the Bay model, but there's a group considering it as a first step—whether we can give water quality credit and how. But, I think there's an opportunity to integrate it into our work plan as we move forward.

Rob Schnabel: Thanks. That would help as we go after grants if we can list it as a deliverable.

Dave Montali: Anecdotally, in New York a lot of farmland is reverting to forest in parts of the watershed. Could we use high-resolution land use data to start counting natural succession? That's not water quality work per se, but it eventually turns into forest.

Rob Schnabel: Isn't there a land retirement BMP or crediting that could fit?

Dave Montali: Yeah, there is, but I don't know how proactive it is. Some things may just happen naturally without being counted as BMPs. I've heard especially in New York this is occurring, and eventually, 20 years later, it'll be forest.

Katie Brownson: Yes, those transitions in ag land aren't tracked as closely, partly because of lower confidence in the land use data—misclassification between pasture, harvest, and succession. The data is improving, with QA/QC and cross-referencing, so hopefully that helps. For now, we've focused on transitions to and from developed classes since that's more permanent loss and easier to detect.

Matt Keefer: That dynamic happens in Pennsylvania too. FIA shows gains and losses between ag and forest that net out. Looking at the outcome language, I wanted to verify: the "plant and maintain new acres" wouldn't be above and beyond canopy and buffers, right? Just acknowledging them plus ag tree planting?

Katie Brownson: Correct. We'd still count riparian forest buffers in ag and developed spaces, and urban forest planting. We wouldn't count urban tree canopy. We'd also add agricultural tree planting.

Matt Keefer: Got it. But I think it's worth noting that planting is not the same as conserving existing forest. Jeremy's comment about easements is on point. Maybe the outcome language could hint at reducing loss through easements, local land use planning, or landowner legacy planning. Plantings are tangible, but reducing loss is harder since it's based on landowner decisions and planning.

Katie Brownson: I agree. The language is high-level intentionally so the management strategy can get into the details later—like how to reduce forest loss and what strategies to use. At that point, we could also track actions beyond plantings, such as conservation measures.

Matt Keefer: Could you add a third component—reduce loss *through planning and conservation*, and then plant and maintain? That connects the dots but keeps it broad.

Katie Brownson: I like "through planning and conservation." Planning alone may be too narrow, but that phrasing stays broad enough for a range of strategies.

Sarah Brzezinski: Does that become too similar to the Protected Lands forest target, which is about permanently conserving forest acreage?

Katie Brownson: Permanent protection is part of it, but conservation is broader. And this is a forest conservation target. Plus, there's the land use decision support effort, which ties into planning.

Matt Keefer: Good, because industry would have concerns if permanent protection were the only option. Keeping working forests viable is important too.

Katie Brownson: Right, so broad language like "through planning and conservation" gives flexibility without boxing us in. We're close to time, but just for awareness: quick numbers show less than 30,000 acres of cumulative planting through 2021, while forest

loss to development is nearly 110,000 acres. That gap means we'll need to lean heavily on the conservation piece, not just planting.

Frank Rodgers: Sounds like land cover change itself is a full workgroup topic. Dave's question—if ag is reverting to forest, is it intentional or just neglect? If it's intentional, that's an opportunity to connect with landowners and get them into forest management plans.

Katie Brownson: With new data, we'll have more opportunities to explore that. For now, this is just draft language going to public comment. We can refine later. Adding "through planning and conservation" and leaving the planting number blank for now seems a good interim approach.

Sarah Brzezinski: Katie, thanks for being thoughtful about how to track this and integrate it beyond the agreement. That will be important to communicate to the management board and PSC as they weigh short-term resources versus long-term goals.

Matt Keefer (in chat): Thank you Katie for all your leadership and guidance on this!

Katie Brownson: Thanks, everyone. One update I forgot: Jill volunteered Pennsylvania DCNR to step up as a champion for this new Healthy Forests and Trees outcome. Matt, I don't know if you're ready for that, but you're the new champion. Cindy Dunn has been a great ally on the forest buffer side, so it's exciting to broaden that out.

Matt Keefer: Yeah, happy to facilitate. And I have a lot of good help on the workgroup.

Katie Brownson: Thanks everyone for all your input today. We have to get this turned in tomorrow, so if you have any last-minute flashes of inspiration or concerns, please reach out today. We'll see what comes back, and I'm looking forward to seeing hopefully many of you in Pennsylvania in June.

POST MEETING UPDATE:

Katie submitted the final draft language to the MB on 5/15 before it is shared with the PSC to review at their May meeting.

Summary of the updates shared with the FWG via email after the meeting:

- **Tree Canopy:**
 - No updates made during the meeting
 - *Revised language: 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.*
- **Forest Buffers:**
 - Re-organize the target to start with a statement about addressing the losses first, before stating the annual planting goals.
 - We discussed changing the annual planting target to a cumulative planting target to better align with the tree canopy goal, but will not be making this change now due to the short turnaround with submitting revised language to the Management Board and potential complications with calculating a cumulative planting goal from a 2014 baseline given changes in data, methods and models

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Revised language: 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.</i> ● Forest Conservation Target: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Added “through planning and conservation” to clarify how we want to reduce the loss of forests ○ <i>Revised language: Reduce the loss of existing 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.</i> ● If we have to move our target year from 2035 to 2040, then we would maintain the same rate and extrapolate the numbers out to 5 more years.
10:40 (20 min)	Round Robin <i>Ran out of time</i>
11:00	Adjourn