



## Chesapeake Bay Program

*Science. Restoration. Partnership.*

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Forestry Workgroup Meeting  
November 1, 2023  
[Meeting Materials](#)

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### **9:10 Riparian Forest Buffer Indicator- Katie Brownson, USFS**

Katie gave an update on preliminary 2022 data for the Riparian Forest Buffer indicator. She discussed the initial ideas for updating the indicator using the land use data that will be discussed further at the joint Forestry/Land Use Workgroup meeting on December 1st.

The Bay Watershed planted 457 miles<sup>1</sup> in 2022, which is a substantial increase from the the 2021 numbers. We are trending towards our 900 miles. However, we are far from the WIP 3 goals. The progress needed to meet those goals continues to get bigger as 2025 gets closer. Katie ran through some graphs showing where those trees were planted (PA saw the biggest bump in miles added). All of the state numbers are available via spreadsheet, email Katie to get access.

Katie mentioned now that we have the high-resolution data and a new 1:24K stream network, there is an opportunity to understand better if we are meeting the goal of having 70% of riparian areas forested within the watershed.

The updated forest buffer indicator will mimic the tree canopy indicator, which reports both BMP implementation to understand tree canopy gain and LULC change to understand canopy loss.

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<sup>1</sup> Note we initially reported a higher number at the meeting, but this number has since been reduced due to an error found in the excel spreadsheet

There are a couple of next steps that will be discussed at length at the December meeting, including talking about the definition of a forest in the context of this indicator.

#### *Discussion*

When talking about the increase in forest buffers planted, it was mentioned that it is most likely due to increased investment. The hope is that communications around increased buffer planting can highlight the importance of investment in buffer programs and capacity.

Including information on % of the plantable riparian area that is forested with the indicator may be a helpful visualization for folks and help tell a wider story. This sort of analysis could likely be included as part of the next phase of the State of Chesapeake Forests Storymap, as we try to keep the RFB Indicator simple and directly tied to the language in the RFB Outcome for ease of interpretation.

#### **9:30 USFS IRA Forest Landowner Support Program - Collin Shephard, USFS**

Collin provided an overview of a new [USFS Forest Landowner Support program](#) that is being funded through the Inflation Reduction Act.

In the presentation, Collin reviewed the Legislative Provisions of the funding, what the funding looks like, funding timelines, who can apply, what land they are targeting, benefits, and how applicants can find support.

It was noted that there is a non-competitive funding option that is open to state forestry agencies. The competitive funding is open to various entities, including for-profit organizations, non-profit organizations, and tribal governments. The real focus of this funding opportunity is supporting the participation of underserved forest landowners to help with climate mitigation and forest resilience. The landowner support program is focused on supporting activities that support the participation of underserved and/or small-acreage landowners in emerging private markets for climate mitigation or forest resilience.

To view the entire presentation, use this [link](#).

#### *Discussion*

A question about emerging markets arose: how directly does an applicant need to connect their practice to the outlined emerging markets? Applicants should expect to articulate at least how the proposed project is linked to the intent of the funding.

#### **9:50 USFS Forest Legacy Program (FLP)- Kirston Buczak, USFS**

Kirston presented on the [USFS Forest Legacy Program](#), highlighting new components of the program is funded through the Inflation Reduction Act.

FLP is a conservation program that is implemented in partnership with state agencies to encourage the protection of privately owned forest lands through conservation easements or fee purchases. The FLP is funded through the Land Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The FLP received \$700 million through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) in 2022. Those IRA funds need to be spent by 2031.

\$250,000 in IRA money is set aside for an administrative grant fund for each state annually based on need over a five-year period (FY23-FY27). This provides the opportunity to fund projects that may not be typically funded through LWCF.

Three types of projects can be funded through IRA: Large Landscape, state- Tribal partnerships, and strategic small tract. Large landscapes are large-scale with high-impact opportunities with exceptional economic, social, and environmental benefits. State-tribal partnership projects are projects in which a state works in partnership with tribes to identify and conserve lands with high importance and significant benefits for those tribes. Strategic Small tract projects are ones that support the conservation of strategic or adjacent properties already conserved. IRA projects follow the same process and ranking as LWCF projects, with some additional requirements.

#### Discussion

With the LWCF fund, does it come with any restrictions on future land use? FLP has a strict land use policy. Any land that gets funding needs to be at least 75% forested.

A question about where the FLP gets its money came up, and Kirston noted that the LFP has gotten more stable funding from the Great American Outdoors Act.

#### **10:10 Chesapeake WILD- Faren Wolter, USFWS**

Faren provided an overview of the [Chesapeake WILD](#) program with a focus on forest and headwater projects. The WILD grant is relatively new, with its first year of funding starting in 2022. For FY24, the hope is to have around \$8 million to fund projects. WILD grants have funded ecology projects related to at-risk & listed species, science and data gaps, actions led by indigenous and people of color, and cross-jurisdictional management & capacity building. WILD also funds projects that connect people with nature. Some of those projects include restoring cultural connections with living resources, equitable access, community-led and managed green spaces and habitats, and faith-based injustice-led conservation actions.

Faren highlights some of the forest projects that the WILD grant has funded. Some examples include:

- a project was funded to develop a wetland assessment and restoration assessment plan for indigenous-owned mountaintop forestland in VA.
- Helped permanently protect 1,000 acres of forestland, wetland, and high-quality riparian corridors in Western PA.
- Funded the Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust to protect 1K acres of critical forested habitat permanently.

There is an intention with the WILD grants to invest in under-resourced communities. 83% of WILD proposals are doing conservation work in places with more diversity, higher poverty and unemployment, and lower household income than the national average.

The FY 24 RFP release will happen sometime in late January/ early February. The RFP will be shared widely.

#### **10:30 Update on Beyond 2025- Katie Brownson, USFS**

Katie provided an update on the work of the Beyond 2025 Steering Committee. Kaite ran through the B 25 steering committee timeline and the big picture. ERG is a contractor evaluating the partnership and the work it is doing while the steering committee is taking on questions like where we want to be. And what is our path forward? The steering committee has also set up high-profile topics that will help inform some of the recommendations. The topics include climate, healthy watersheds, clean water, people, and shallow water habitats. These topics are being discussed in small groups, where they will be reported out on at bigger steering committee meetings. As the small groups meet they will consider the following questions:

3 Vs

- VISION: What does success look like? What do we hand to the next generation?
- VALUE: What are we doing that works? What could be improved? What learnings can we draw from?
- VANGUARD IDEAS: What idea would be transformative?

Cross-Cutting Considerations

- CLIMATE: How does climate change interact with your topic?
- PEOPLE: How can we better center people in our efforts on this topic?
- LIVING RESOURCES: How can your topic maximize living resource impacts?

The small group has a two-month timeline to meet and discuss and then return to the full steering committee to share what each group thinks is most important.

If workgroup members want to get involved they are more than welcome.

Anne noted that forests are very much a part of all these these high-profile topics. Katie responded that the hope is that forests will be considered as part of the cross-cutting considerations.

Judy asked if a white paper on how forestry meshes with each high-profile topic. Katie responded that it is a little early for those connections, but definitely something that we should keep on the back burner.

Anne asked to make sure we highlight the “big things”- are we planting more forest?

Judy suggested that we look at our management strategy to help build out the “big things.”

Faren noted that there is an “opportunity to connect brook trout outcomes/needs (e.g., water temp) to not just riparian and to focus on surrounding landscape protection & reforestation”.

Katie suggested that we use a future Forestry Workgroup meeting to start having these discussions about what the Workgroup thinks the broader partnership needs to consider for forestry as we move beyond 2025. We will also need to have these discussions as we start thinking about developing a new 10-year Management Strategy. Our current strategy expires in 2025.

## **Round Robin**

**MD:** Elliott Campbell from the Chesapeake and Coastal Services was awarded a 10-million-dollar RCPP grant from NRCS for buffers and reforestation in MD