Chesapeake Bay Program

FEBRUARY PROTECTED LANDS WORKGROUP MEETING

2/3/26

David Sites

ICE BREAKER: WHAT ARE YOUR 2026 PRIORITIES?

DID PUNXSUTAWNEY PHIL SEE HIS SHADOW?

Phil saw his shadow- six more weeks of winter ☹

AGENDA

1. Management Board and Governance/Structure

2. Greenspace definition

3. Data Standardization Network

4. Protected Lands in 2026

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MANAGEMENT BOARD AND GOVERNANCE/STRUCTURE

Management Strategies (MS):

- One strategic plan with a collaborative executive summary, followed by four chapters: one management strategies for each goal

- March: Draft MS Template developed

- June: Draft MS Template approved

Authorship

- MS Chapters: Goal Team Chairs

- Executive Summary: EPA, in collaboration with GIT Chairs, MB, and PSC

Governance / Structure

- Feb – June: coordination and drafting of an updated governance and structure document

- June: Revised Framework drafted for PSC

EC Charge on Tribal Partnership

- Jan: Signatory Team established

- April: Signatory Team presents recommendations for inclusion of Tribal representation

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GREENSPACE DEFINITION WORKSHOP

https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/event/public-access-
protected-lands-definitions-workshop

GREENSPACE WORKSHOP

1. 38 people from around the watershed joined from both **public access and protected lands** workgroups

2. Conversation on what a greenspace is and how we should be tracking it

3. Learned about MD's Green Space Equity Program and Trust for Public Land's conservation and tracking efforts

4. Breakout groups produced their own ideas that were used to create a draft definition

We found that people agreed that we **shouldn't be overly restrictive** with both the definition and the area of interest

Greenspace needs to **be publicly accessible and people-centric**. Protecting outdoor spaces not just for the ecological and water quality benefits

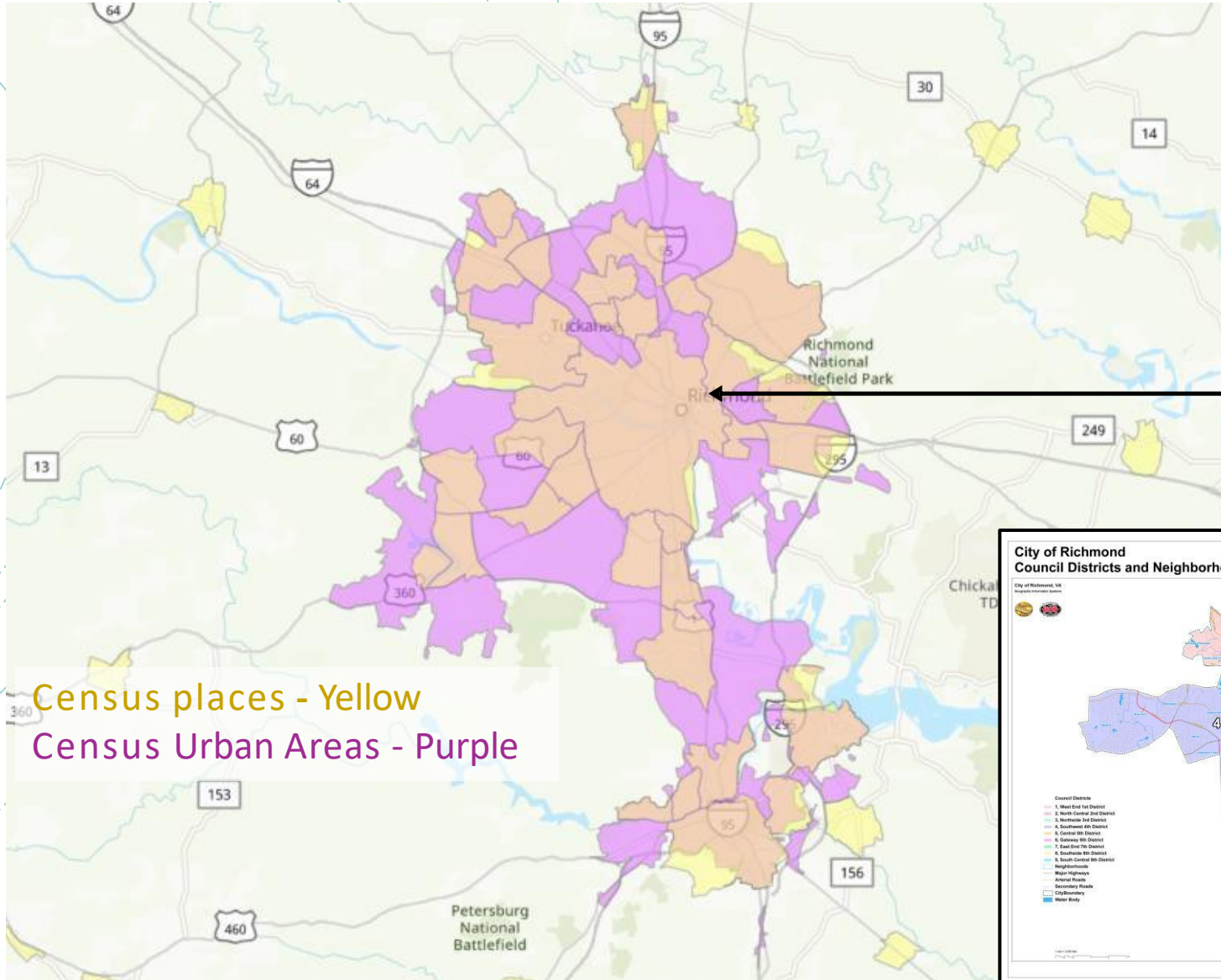Must include an **outdoor component**, including things like turf grass.

BREAKOUT GROUP GREENSPACE DEFINITION EXAMPLES

- Greenspace and Open space can overlap but greenspace has a more intentional focus on community benefit and public access.

- Community greenspace should include metrics of:
  - Accessibility – parking, pedestrian access, ADA, transit access, activation of space, costs/fees to access
  - Practicality – it's practical for the community (i.e. artificial grass may be a more economically sustainable option for some communities vs. real grass)
  - Greenspaces can serve to support ecosystem services but that shouldn't be the main goal; human use should be the priority

- Community Greenspace: A mostly natural place, open to the public, where people can gather for outdoor recreation and exposure to nature

- Publicly accessible vegetative area that can be used for active and passive recreation that can include but are not limited to:
  - Parks
  - Trails
  - Gathering Open Spaces
  - Community Gardens
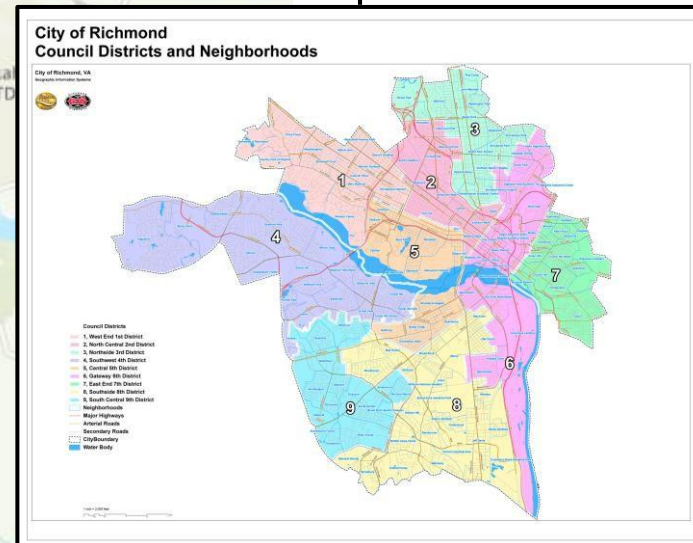 - Athletic Fields

DRAFT GREENSPACE DEFINITIONS

- Greenspace is a publicly accessible, human-centric outdoor place that supports active and/or passive recreation and provides exposure to nature. It may be fully or partially vegetated (e.g., lawns, trees, shrubs), and can include designed or improved areas such as parks, trails, gardens, athletic/sports fields, and community gathering open spaces.

- Greenspace is an outdoor place that's open to everyone and gives people a chance to be in nature, whether for walking, playing, gathering, or relaxing. It includes parks, trails, gardens, sports fields, waterfronts, and natural areas.

- Greenspace is a people-centric subset of Open Space that requires equitable public access and intentional community benefit.
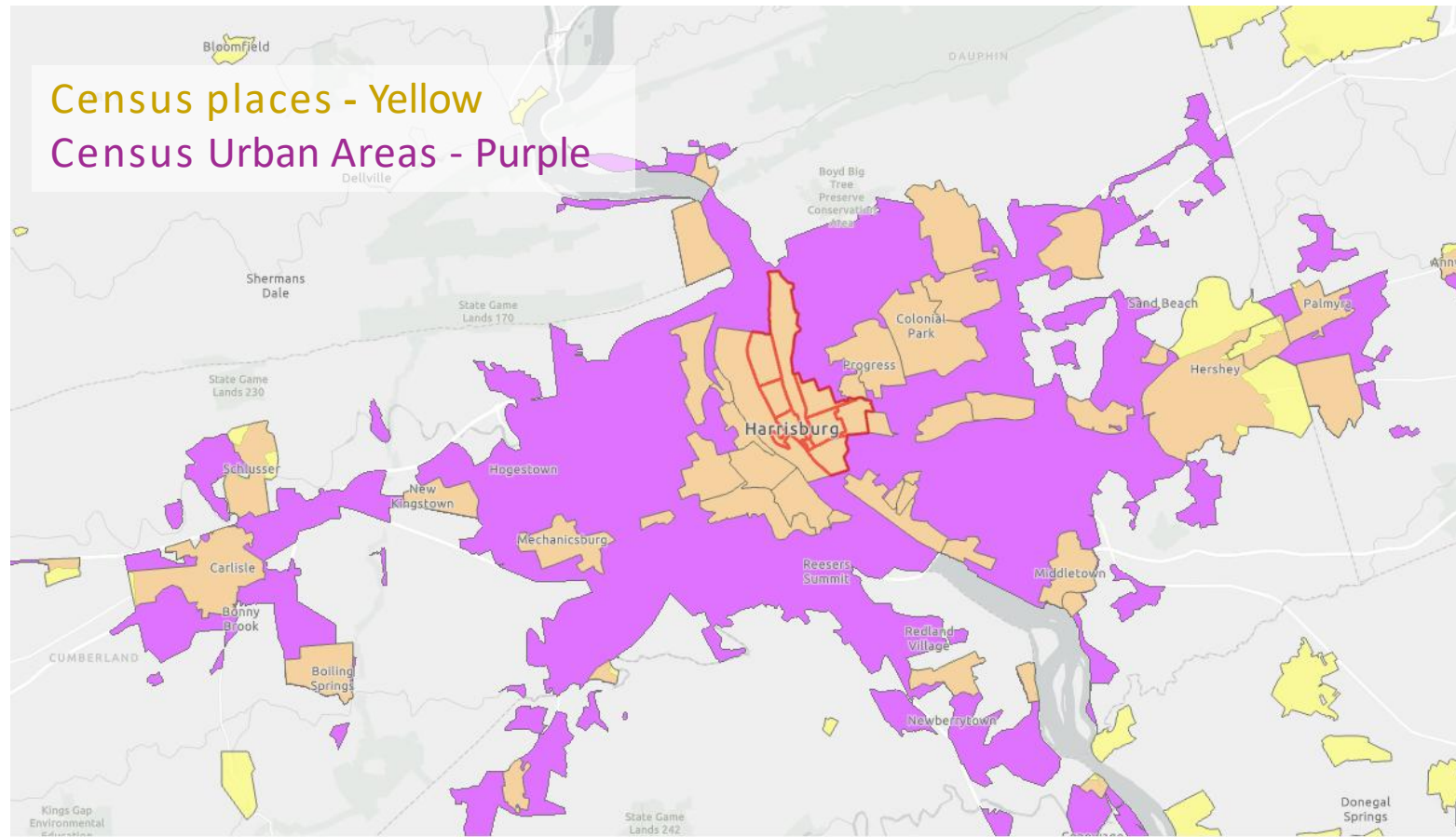
CENSUS PLACES VS URBAN AREAS

Census places - Yellow
Census Urban Areas - Purple

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

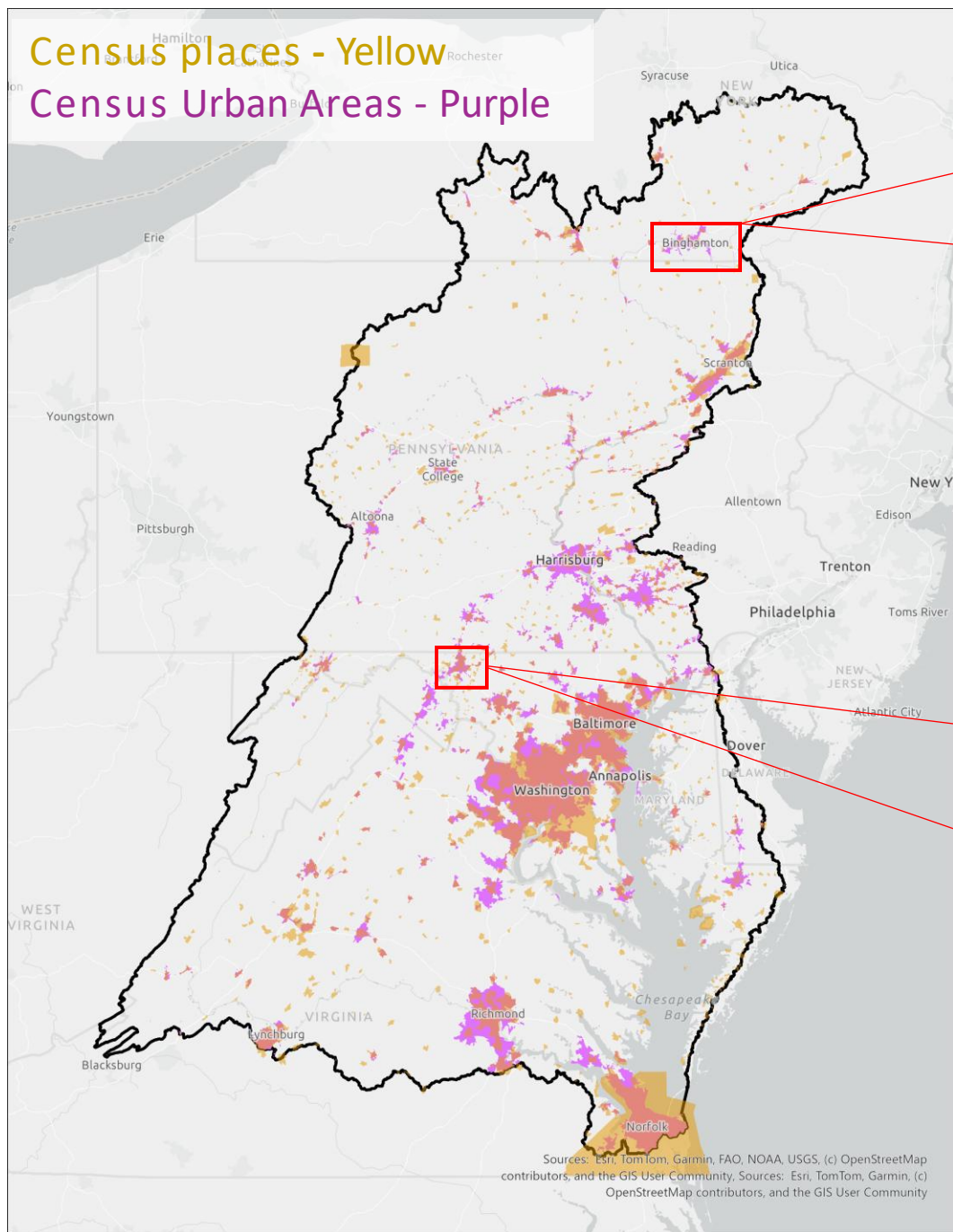 - The Census Urban Area for Richmond contains multiple Census Places

Census Places vs Urban Areas

Census places - Yellow
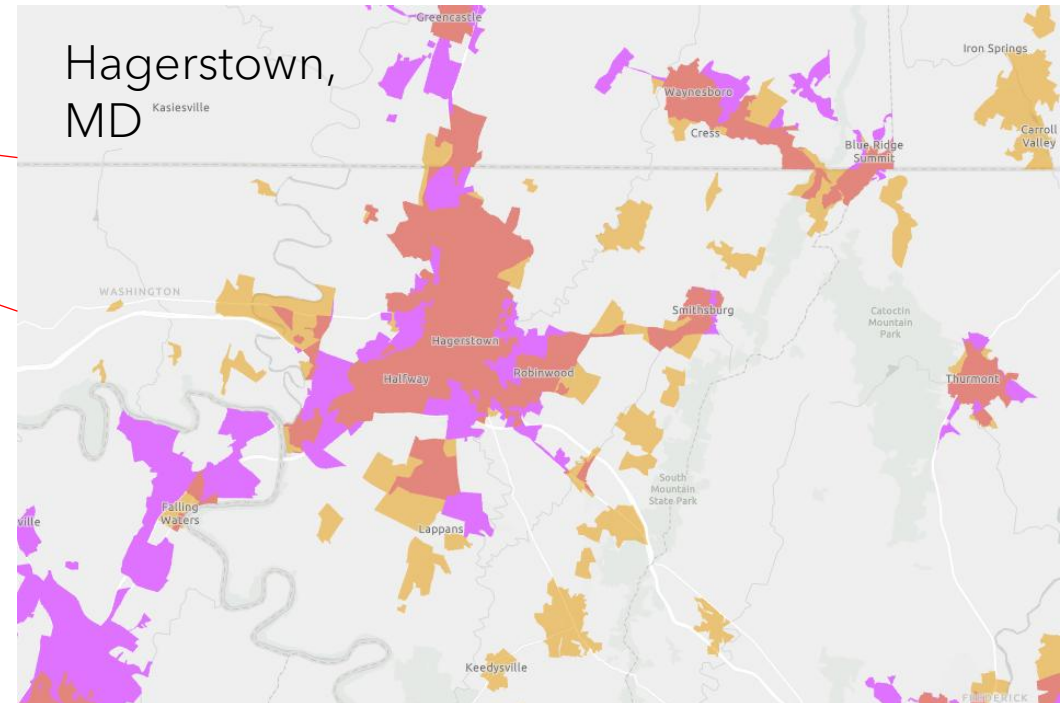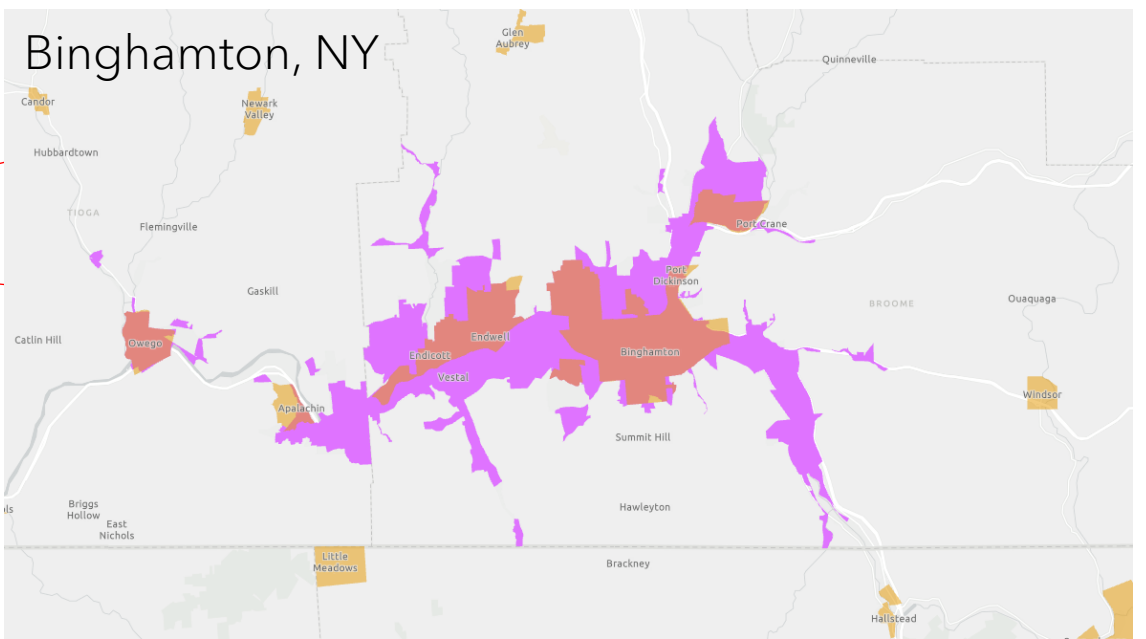Census Urban Areas - Purple

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 - Yellow
Census Urban Areas - Purple

Binghamton, NY

Hagerstown, MD

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?
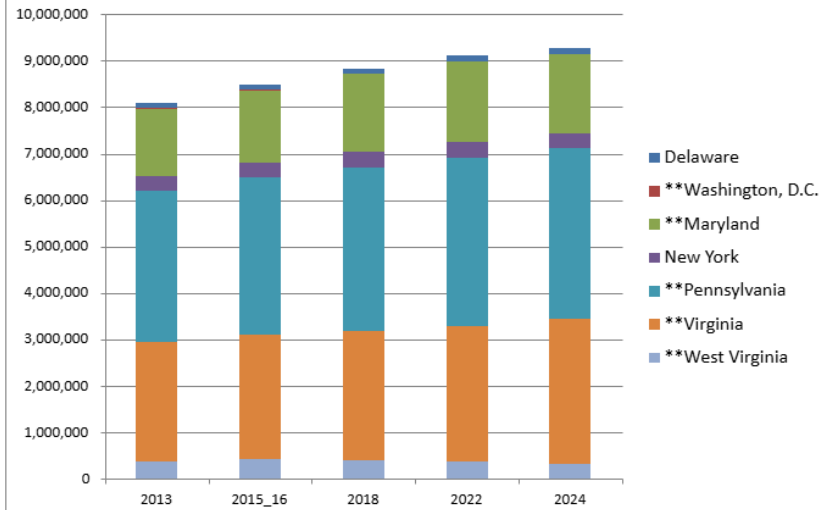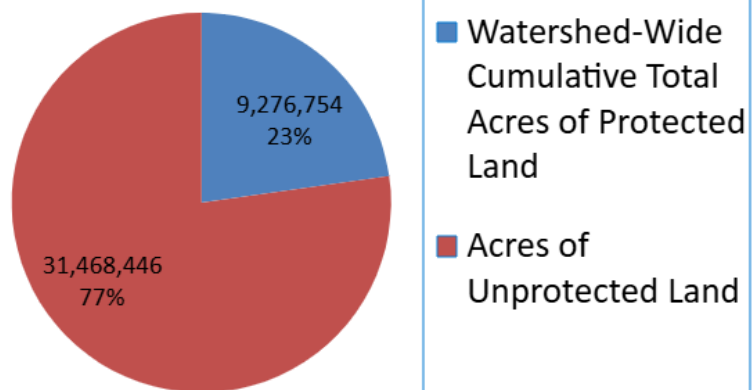
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DATA STANDARDIZATION NETWORK

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

General PLI Data Quality Issues

- Inconsistent schema usage (74% Non-Compliant w/PADUS 3.1 Schema)
- Duplicate and overlapping polygons (76% of records overlap by ≤25%)
- Omission of required attribute data
  - Date of Establishment (Missing in 38% of records)
  - GAP Status (Missing in 45% of records)
  - Public Access (Missing in 36% of records)
- Unique masking requirements by jurisdiction
- Inconsistent with PAD-US dataset
  - Not the same data sources
    - PAD-US uses The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, and The Trust for Public Lands

Past Indicator Issues

USGS employees have cleaned jurisdiction data for use with the Protected Lands Indicator.

Clean up can delay release of PLI

Data submitted not being in the suggested schema, or the required schema elements not being fully attributed.

Example: Own_Type not completely attributed

Missing key data

Example: Local lands are missing in some jurisdictions' data

Carrying over of past issues in the indicator code

Merging new data to previous version of PLI

Components of Data Standardization and Data Cleanup

Standard PLI Schema

- Consensus on the PLI schema

- What fields should be required?

Improve Attribution

Attribution of DoE
- NFWF-funded project to fill DoE gaps

- Attribution completion goals

- How will missing data and non-compliant submissions be treated?

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PROTECTED LANDS IN 2026

2026 PROPOSED PRIORITIES

Find a Chair

Develop specific conservation targets for: riparian forests; wetlands (including migration corridors); natural areas supporting healthy streams; agricultural lands; tribal homelands; and urban and community greenspace.

- Map and assess the current extent and condition of each of the target areas.
- Host workshops and roundtables to better define targets to help with tracking
- Consult experts and critical stakeholders on realistic targets
- Share assessment and expert findings with the Protected Lands Workgroup to determine targets

Provide watershed-wide conservation data and analysis to help identify potential conservation priorities and focus on where increased benefits can be achieved.

- Coordinate data collection among jurisdictions for the Protected Lands Indicator
- Kick off and actively engage the Data Innovation Network
- Use the 2024 PLI, state wildlife action plans, and supporting data to help identify overlap and priority areas.
- Identify and map factors that are influencing and threating the progress of preserving land.

2026 PROPOSED PRIORITIES

Understand stakeholders and partners in conservation to create watershed-wide communication that helps with engaging and educating on the value of protected lands

- Stakeholder and partner research to gain an understanding of current views of conservation in the watershed, how to effectively communicate and educate on the topic of conservation, and how the Bay Program/PLWG can better support them in conservation efforts.
- Develop and/or improve communication materials and resources to support landowner and public outreach, specific to each jurisdiction, with a focus on more collective action in terms of larger efforts and projects.
- Coordinate with Workgroup members to compile or incorporate currently developed outreach/communication tools
- Spread awareness for the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership Narrative Toolkit: tools for communicating conservation messages.
- Consult the CBP Strategic Engagement Team to gain an understanding of what themes would be most effective with landowners
- Storymap on the Protected Lands Outcome and its relation to other Bay Program outcomes. This would be used for cross-partnership collaboration and emphasizing the value of protected lands.

2026 PROPOSED PRIORITIES

Facilitate collaboration between landowners, conservation and community organizations, and government agencies to aid in the sharing of policies, practices, and resources.

- Collaborate with workgroup members and other workgroups on increasing awareness of different types of land conservation programs and policies within the respective Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions by utilizing various communication channels and methods.
- Have jurisdictions share information about conservation policies, programs, and laws at protected lands workgroup meetings.
- Develop a living document with specific land conservation programs in each jurisdiction. This could include conservation easements, community-based programs, incentive programs, and educational initiatives.

PRIORITIES SUGGESTED AT THE MEETING

Clarifying expectations regarding the relationship between the Protected Lands Workgroup and the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership

- An examination of membership, roles and responsibilities, etc.
- How can we support mutual priorities while avoiding duplication of efforts?

Making meetings more beneficial to members

- Have jurisdictions share happenings related to their conservation efforts (successes, on-the-ground-work, funding mechanisms, etc.)
- A space to also identify threats and challenges (where are the sticking points, what is preventing conservation from moving forward? Where are there gaps?)

Follow the money

- Identify pockets of money for conservation
- Conversations on how jurisdictions are funding protection work
- The nexus of source water protection and conservation
- DoD conservation programs

SOPHIE'S CHAIR-LESS THOUGHTS ON THE FUTURE OF THE PROTECTED LANDS WORKGROUP

1. The workgroup would be a central hub for collaboration and technical support, similar to how STAR serves the broader CBP Partnership.

2. PLWG would provide technical expertise to benefit conservation initiatives across the watershed.

3. A space where protected lands data managers and jurisdictional conservation programs with CBP can collaborate on priorities and ensure smooth data sharing and coordination.

4. Meetings would serve as a dynamic forum for sharing progress, exchanging technical expertise, and guiding strategic decisions based on data.

5. A critical touchpoint for engagement, helping partners stay connected to conservation efforts at the watershed scale and fostering alignment across programs.

6. Maintain and update the status of protected lands within the watershed, supporting progress reporting and accountability for conservation goals.

FEEDBACK

2026 Proposed Priorities

- What are your reactions to the proposed priorities?
- What priorities would you add or remove?

Vision

- What do you see as the long-term vision for the Protected Lands Workgroup?
- What outcomes or impacts do you hope the workgroup will achieve in the next 1–3 years?

Roles & Participation

- How can we ensure participation is meaningful and not burdensome?
- How can we bring in missing voices, expertise, or partners?
- Are there barriers to engaging with the workgroup's activities?

Meetings

- Do we continue to meet on a bi-monthly basis?
- Do we move to an ad hoc basis?