



Chesapeake Bay Program
Science. Restoration. Partnership.

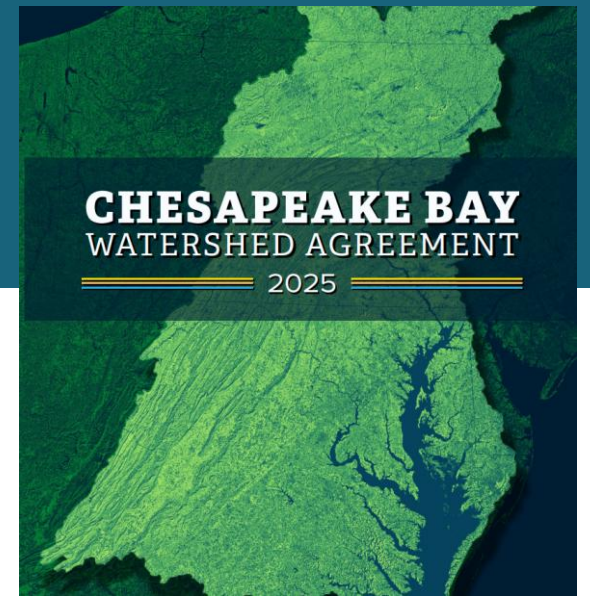
Healthy Forests: Proactive Strategies for Managing Threats and Promoting Conservation

Katie Brownson- USDA Forest Service
Craig Highfield- Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay



New Healthy Forests and Trees Outcome

Conserve, manage 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.



TARGETS

Tree Canopy: Conserve tree canopy within communities by reducing the rate of loss of existing canopy and planting and maintaining 45,000 acres of community trees by 2040 to achieve a net gain in canopy over the long term.

Forest Buffers: Conserve riparian forest by reducing the rate of loss of existing buffers and planting and maintaining 7,500 acres of forest buffers annually to achieve no less than 71.5% riparian forest cover by 2040 and 75% riparian forest cover over the long term.

Forest Conservation: Achieve a net gain in forests over the long-term by reducing the rate of forest conversion to other land uses by 33%, permanently protecting a total of 9 million acres of forested land, and planting, maintaining and managing 202,000 acres of new forests by 2040.



What is a healthy forest?

A healthy forest is a resilient forest!

Conserving Chesapeake forests will require a holistic approach

- Strategic land protection – acquisitions and easements
- Land use decision support – empowering local decision-makers to conserve trees and forests
- Active forest management, stewardship and restoration to support functional and resilient forest ecosystems

Healthy Forests: Proactive Strategies for Managing Threats and Promoting Conservation – Feb 25-26, Frederick MD

Organizations Represented:

USFS
NOAA
USGS
NRCS
EPA
NPS
DC DDOT Urban Forestry
Delaware Forest Service
Maryland Forest Service
PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry
PA DEP
PA Department of Agriculture
PA Game Commission
Virginia Department of Forestry
WV Department of Forestry
City of Frederick
City of Baltimore, Forestry Division
Chesapeake Bay Commission
NFWF

Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
Chesapeake Research Consortium
Upper Susquehanna Coalition
Stroud Water Research
The Nature Conservancy
American Bird Conservancy
Neighborhood Space
Potomac Conservancy
Delaware Center for the Inland Bays
Pennsylvania Forest Stewards
University of Maryland Extension
Finley Center for Private Forests, PSU
Smithsonian Environmental Research Center
UMBC
George Washington University
Allegheny Hardwoods Utilization Group
Moonlight Forestry Consulting
Pennsylvania Hardwood Development Council
Foundation for Sustainable Forests

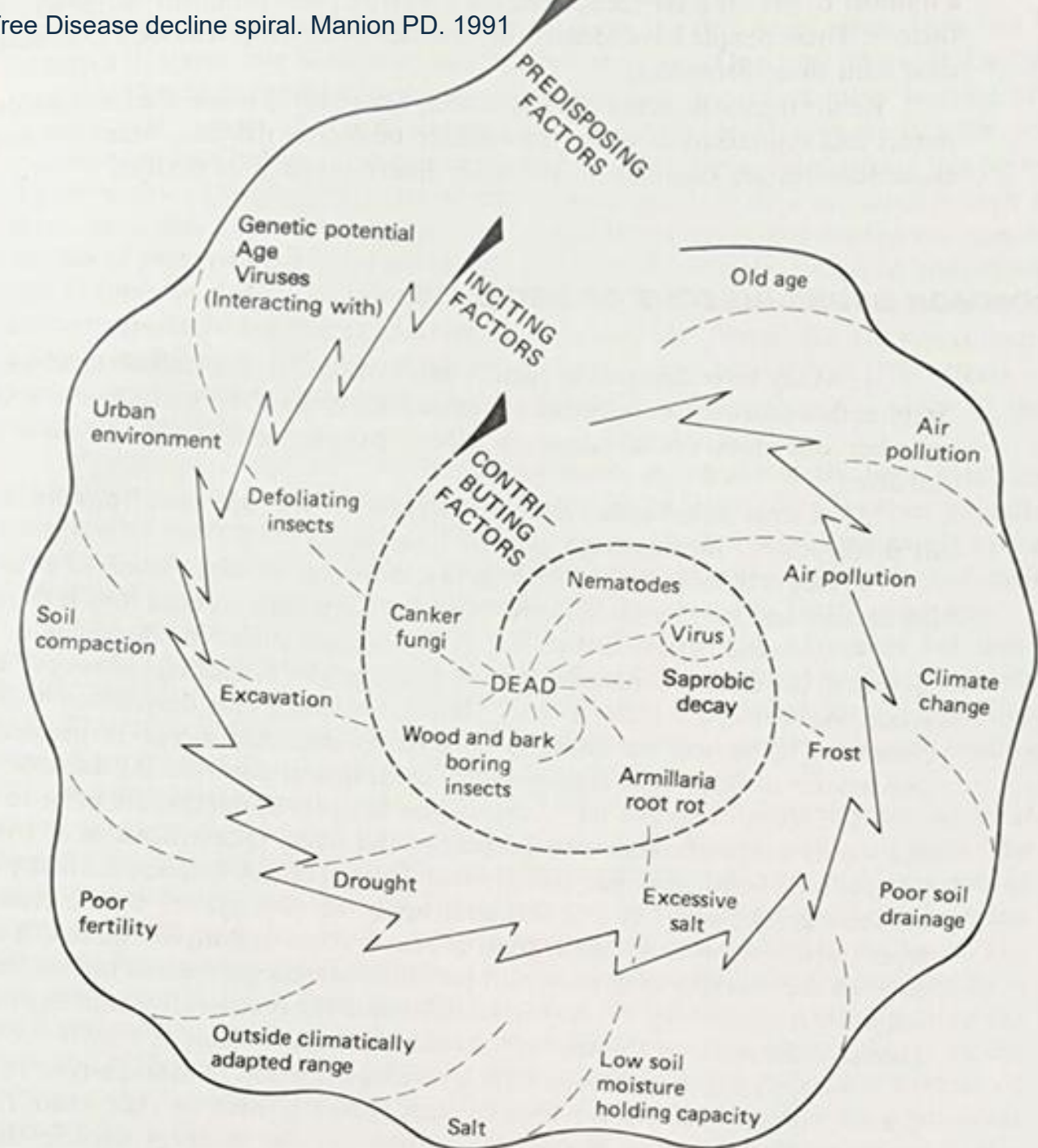


Workshop Objectives:

- Identify major stressors to forest health in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and evaluate how they affect forest resilience, water quality and Chesapeake Bay goals
- Explore proactive management and stewardship strategies (e.g., silviculture, invasive species control, policy tools, and community engagement) to strengthen forest conservation beyond traditional easements and develop actionable recommendations for the Partnership.

Forest health stressors

- Current forest conditions and a myriad of stressors impact forest health
- Forests are most resilient to the stressors we can't control when we manage for the stressors we can control
- People can exacerbate stressors through unmanaged recreation, dumping, and invasive species spread
- Social/economic factors also influence forest condition and management



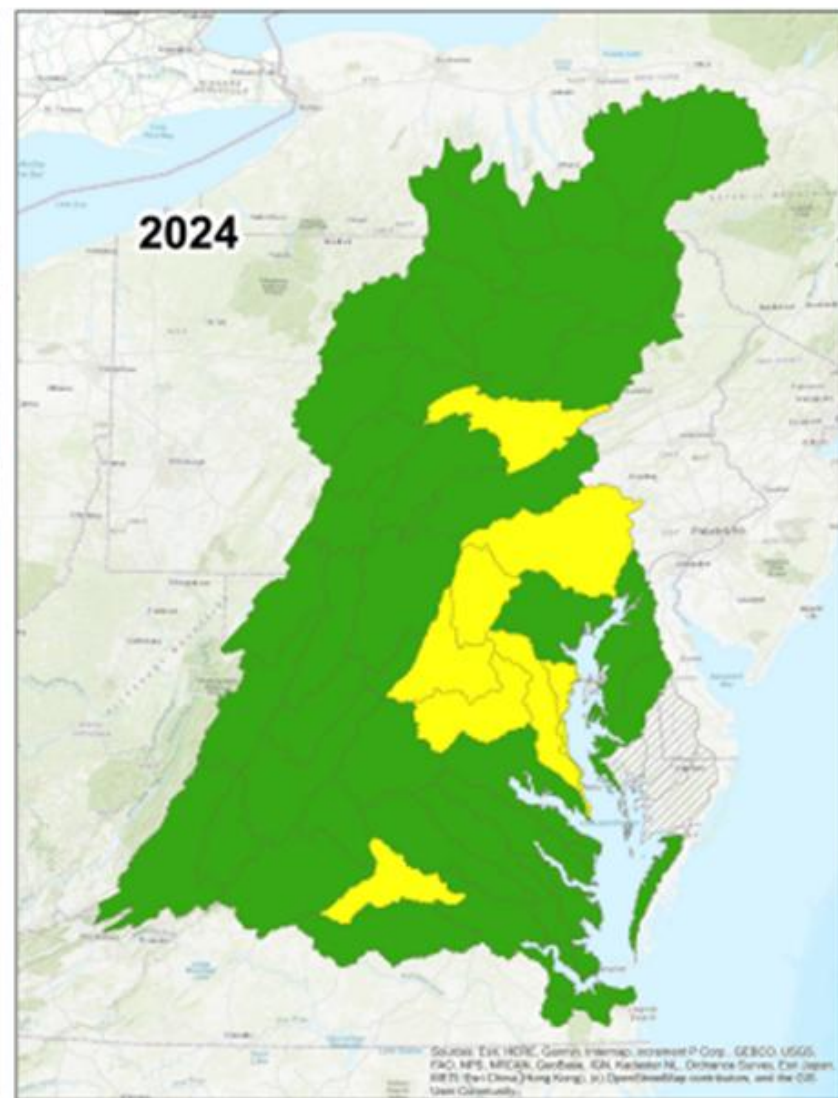
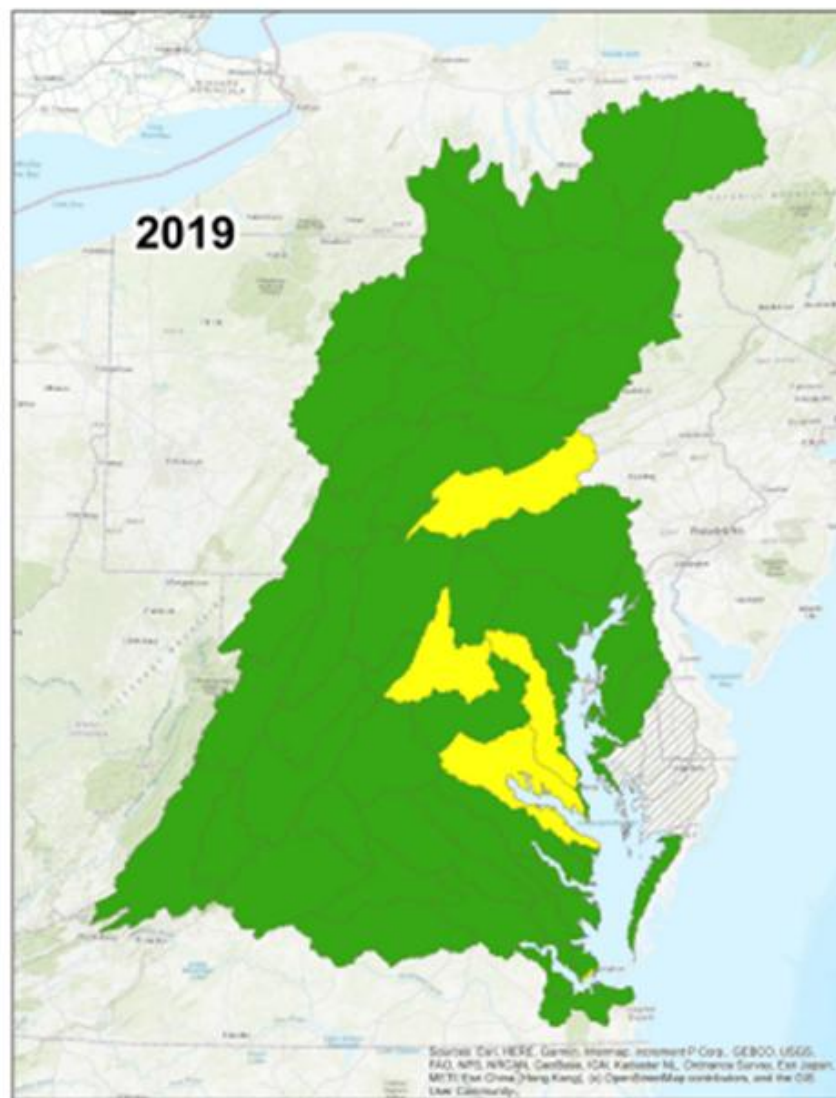
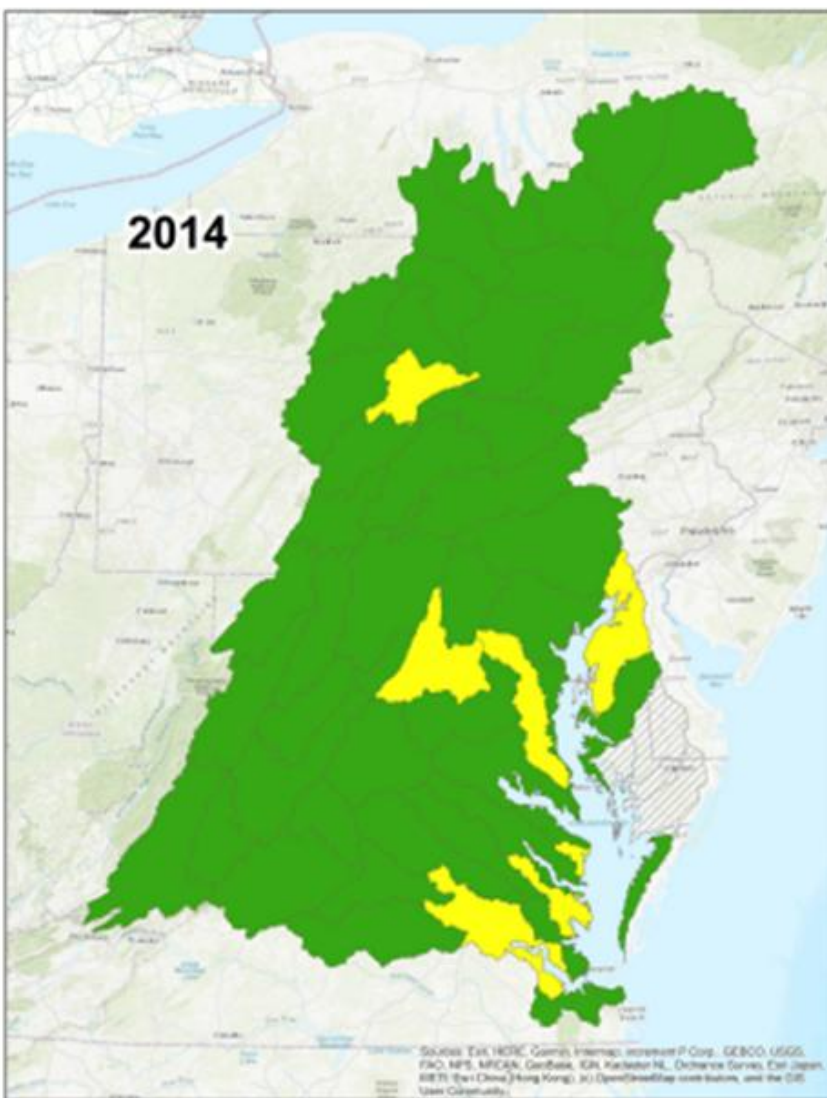
Percent Mortality

0 - 2

2 - 3.5

No Data (not included in output)

Oak Species Mortality by HUC8 Watershed in the Chesapeake Bay



Percent Mortality



NoData (no Ash, or not included in output)

Ash Species Mortality by HUC8 Watershed in the Chesapeake Bay

2014

2019

2024

Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeBCO, IGN, Kartchner NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Swi China (Hong Kong), Swi (OpenStreetMap contributors), and the US User Community

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2023 Chesapeake Bay Drainage Insect and Disease Damage Map

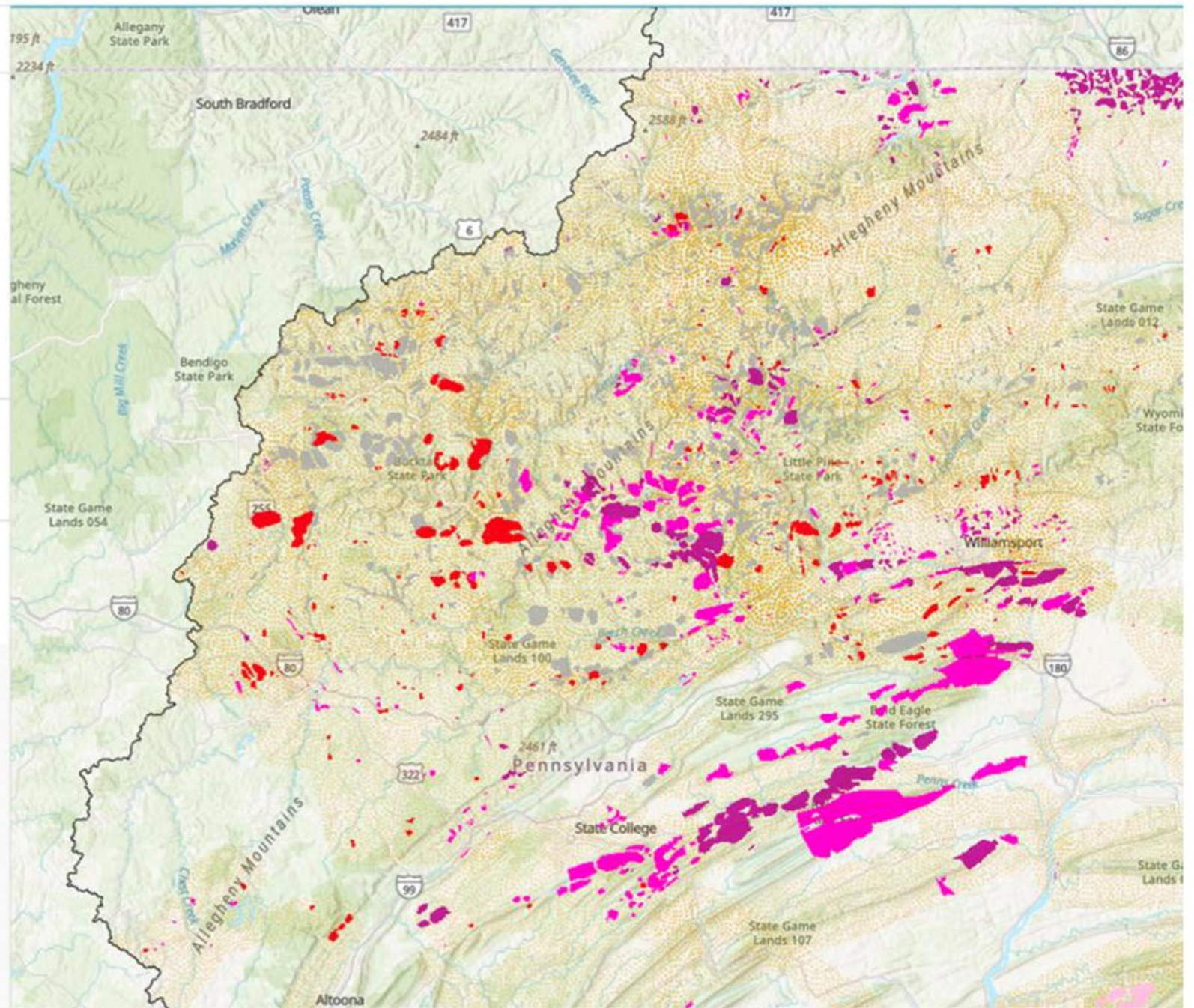
Legend

Damaged Areas

- Defoliation <50% of leaves defoliated
- Defoliation 50-75% of leaves defoliated
- Defoliation >75% of leaves defoliated
- Mortality
- Mortality - Previously Undocumented
- Other

Flown Area

CB_basin_WBD



2023 Chesapeake Bay Drainage Insect and Disease Damage Map

Legend



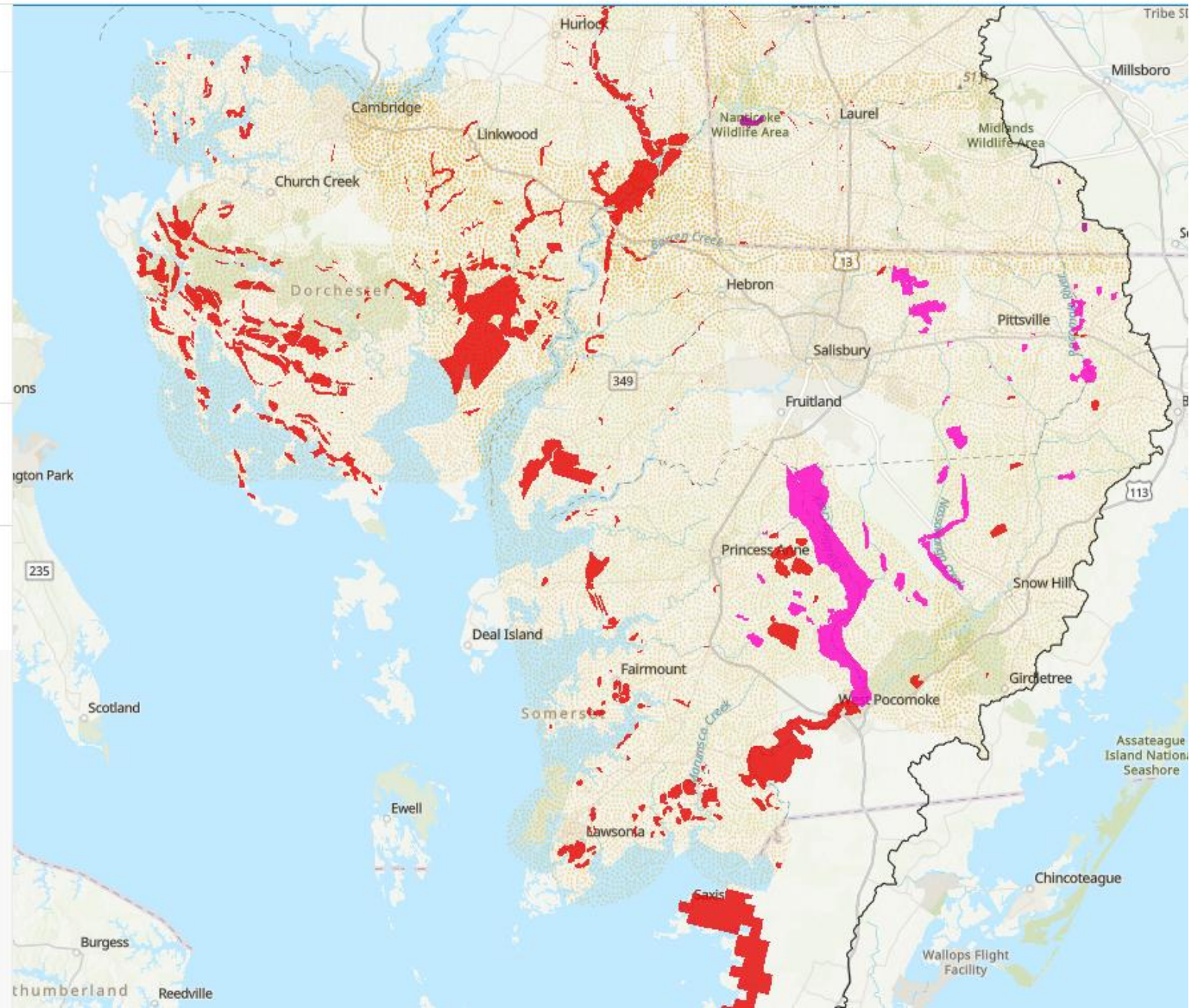
Damaged Areas

-  Defoliation <50% of leaves defoliated
-  Defoliation 50-75% of leaves defoliated
-  Defoliation >75% of leaves defoliated
-  Mortality
-  Mortality - Previously Undocumented
-  Other

Flown Area



CB_basin_WBD

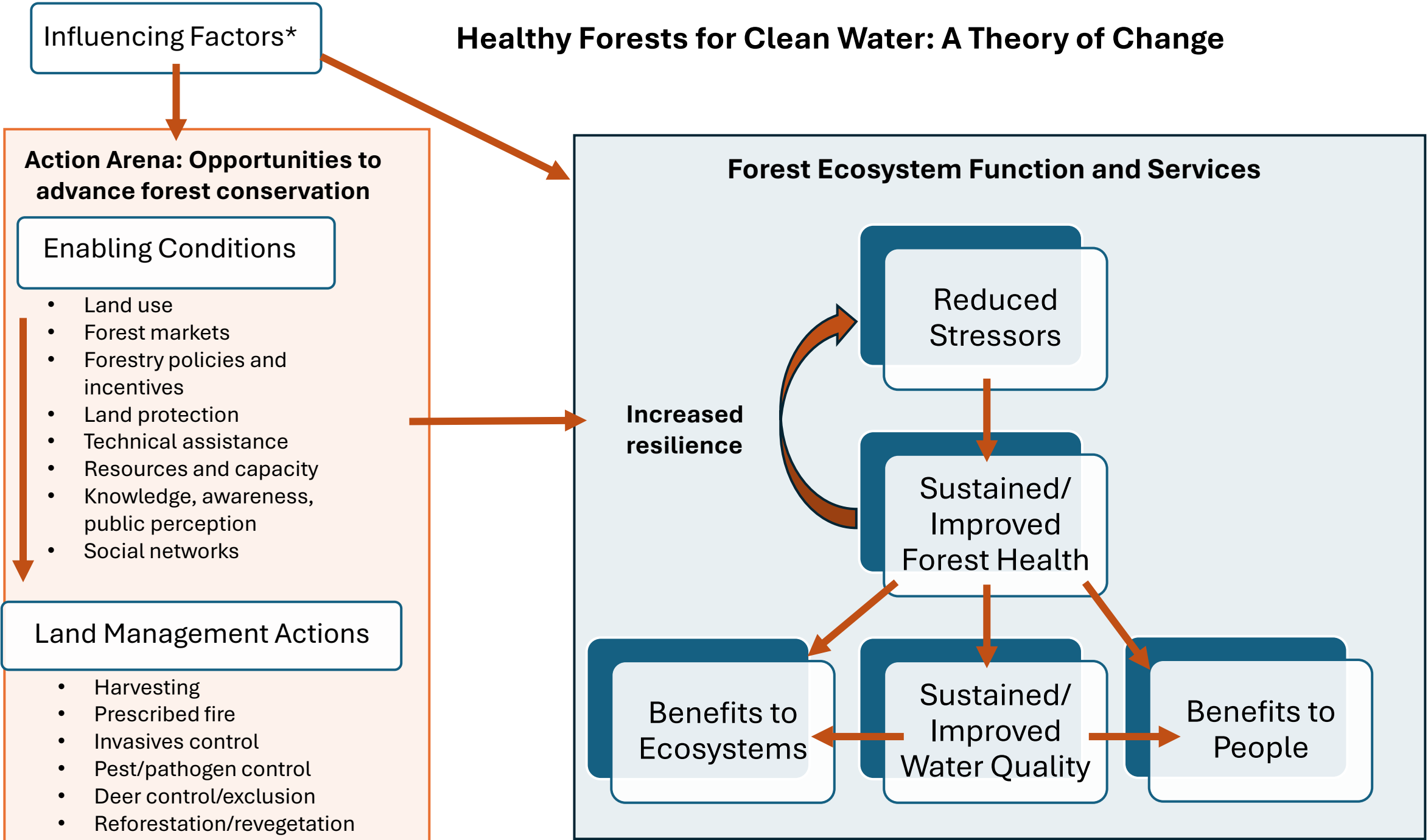


Rank the urgency and influence of each stressor (1=low, 5=high)



- 1 Invasive plant species
- 2 Forest pests & Pathogens
- 3 Deer Populations
- 4 Changing hydrologic regimes
- 5 Changing temperatures
- 6 Extreme weather events
- 7 Inadequate forest management

Healthy Forests for Clean Water: A Theory of Change



*Not within our sphere of control

Strategies for improving forest stewardship (or How to Love a Forest)



- How we communicate with the public and landowners is key!
- Improve public/landowner awareness through shared values and sound science
- Focus messaging on the role of stewardship in creating abundance – hope is more powerful than fear

Recommendation

- **Communications:** Develop and deploy a unified, positive, and compelling forest conservation communication strategy that positions healthy, resilient forests as essential to Bay restoration and rural economies, using consistent messaging amplified through partners and credible messengers.

Forests in the Chesapeake Bay States (NWOS 2023)

	Maryland	New York	Pennsylvania	Virginia	West Virginia
Forested Acres	2.45M Ac (31% of the state)	19M Ac (63%)	16.9M Ac (59%)	13M Ac (51%)	12M Ac (77%)
Privately Owned	2.2M Ac (89%)	14.4M Ac (76%)	11.5M Ac (68%)	9.8M Ac (75%)	6.5M Ac (54%)
Number of Ownerships	165,000	508,000	489,000	402,000	260,000
Cost Share	3.3% 10+ acres	0.5% 10+	2% 10+	6.2% 10+	3.9% 10+
Management Plan	11.6% (39.6% 10+)	2.6% (7.2% 10+)	2.1% (5.9% 10+)	4% (13.5% 10+)	4% (8.3% 10+)
Harvesting (includes firewood)	42%	78%	69%	79%	72%
Land Protection	4.1%	4.2%	2.3%	4.2%	0.7%
Top Reasons for Owning	Nature protection, Beauty, Privacy	Nature protection, Privacy, Wildlife habitat	Beauty, Wildlife habitat, Nature protection	Nature protection, Privacy, Raise a family	Nature protection, Beauty, Privacy

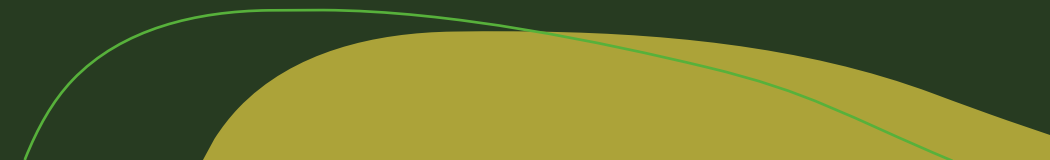
Recommendations

- **Strengthen and connect local and regional forestry networks** across the watershed, leveraging existing collaborative structures to support shared learning, rapid response, and more coordinated stewardship.
- **Build long-term, cross-sector capacity for forest management** by expanding the regional forestry workforce, increasing the availability of technical assistance, and sharing expertise to effectively scale forest management and restoration in the watershed.



Recommendations

Develop diversified, accessible, and scalable funding models that enable forest conservation and management—especially for small acreage landowners—and support long-term stewardship, maintenance, and innovation.



Strong wood markets= healthy forests

- Both large diameter/high grade markets and small diameter/low grade markets drive sustainable forest management
- Decreased exports and the closure of regional processing facilities have reduced regional market opportunities

Support development of diverse and sustainable forest product markets as a foundational driver of forest health, rural economies, and Bay restoration, including new market pathways for low-value woody material.

Recommendation

- **Advance an aligned and enabling policy environment that removes barriers to forest management**, reduces perverse incentives, and supports active, sustainable forest management across jurisdictions.

Land management actions



- Diversity is key at multiple scales to ensure resilience
- Multiple active management tools and long-term planning can be used to manage stressors
- ***Adopt an adaptive, landscape-scale forest management approach that focuses on resilience, long-term planning, species diversity, and connectivity, paired with consistent maintenance and invasive species control.***

Research Needs

- Improve understanding of how changing environmental conditions and forest degradation influence water quality in forested ecosystems (accounting for changes in phenology, productivity, invasive species, hydrology and nutrient cycling)
- Conduct a meta-analysis to determine whether there is sufficient ability and evidence to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy forests and separate land uses with distinct loading rates in the watershed model
- ***Invest in targeted research that improves understanding of forest condition, ecological processes, and management impacts to better guide Chesapeake Bay Program decisions.***



Thank you!

Katherine.brownson@usda.gov
chighfield@allianceforthebay.org



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