Chesapeake Bay Program

*Science. Restoration. Partnership.*

# Forestry Workgroup Meeting Minutes

**August 6th, 2025 | 9:00 am - 11:00 am**

**Meeting Materials**

**Attendees**

Adrienne Kotula, CBC
Alanna Crowley, MD DNR
Alexis Dickerson, Potomac Conservancy
Anne Gilbert, MD DNR
Anne Hairston-Strang, MD DNR
Ashley Traut, GBWC
Brendan Durkin, DC DOEE
Camila Rodriguez Tolentino, USFS
Caroline Kleis, CRC
Chris Peters, PA NRCS
Cotton Randall, USFS
Craig Highfield, ACB
Emily Beach, CC
Emily Heller, CBPO EPA
Eric Hughes, CBPO EPA
Erica Carlsson, DC DOEE
Frank Rodgers, Cacapon Inst.
Helen Golimowski, Devereux Consulting
Jenna Talbot, DE DNREC
Jeremy McGill, WV DOF
Katie Brownson, USFS
Lara Johnson, VA DOF
Lydia Brinkley, USC
Marilyn Yang, CRC
Matt Keefer, PA DCNR
Meghan Noe Fellows, DE Center for the Inland Bays
Nancy Sonti, USFS
Ned Brockmeyer, PA DCNR
Patti Nylander, VA DOF
Peter Claggett, USGS
Rick Turcotte, USFS
Rob Schnabel, CBF
Robbie Coville, PA DCNR
Ruth Cassilly, UMD CBPO
Samantha Cotten, DE DNREC
Sarah Brzezinski, EPA CBPO
Taryn Davidson, DE FS
Teddi Stark, PA DC

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| **9:00** (5 min) | **Welcome and Introductions** – *Anne Hairston Strang (MD FS, FWG Co-Chair)*<br><br>For roll call purposes, please enter your name & affiliation in the chat box. Call-in participants are requested to identify themselves verbally. |

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| **9:05**<br>(10 min) | **Announcements** – *Katie Brownson (USFS, FWG Coordinator)*<br>● Update on Tree Canopy Fact Sheets and Storymap<br>● The public comment period for the draft revised Watershed Agreement will close on September 1st! Everyone is welcome to submit comments via email to comments@chesapeakebay.net. For more details please visit the page here.<br>● **Meeting changes**:<br>○ September FWG meeting changed to **September 10th**<br>○ October FWG meeting changed to **October 8th**<br>● Staffer update: With Marilyn Yang departing from the Bay Program to start her masters, STAC staffer, Allison Welch (awelch@chesapeakebay.net) will be covering the September 10th FWG meeting until the new staffer is hired. |
| **9:15**<br>(20 min) | **Agroforestry Expert Panel Evaluation Group (EPEG) Recommendation Approval** – *Katie Brownson (USFS, FWG Coordinator)*<br><br>Katie provided a brief overview of the recommendations from the Agroforestry EPEG to credit Silvopasture and Alley Cropping practices for their water quality benefits in Phase 7 of the watershed model. The workgroup was then asked to approve the EPEG's recommendations.<br><br>**Discussion**:<br>Rob Schnabel (in chat): Yes! Approve this practice!<br><br>Robbie Coville (in chat): Agreed Rob, shade is a precious co-benefit that can add momentum to our water quality efforts. Big thanks to Katie, Eric, and especially Ruth Cassilly who helped this EPEG move along swiftly while also thoroughly!<br><br>Rob Schnabel: It's a practice that's starting to take off, especially as we hit these really high temperatures, farmers are really starting to add these trees and more trees everywhere is a good thing. So thank you.<br><br>Anne Hairston-Strang: As Rob said, interest is growing in this as a really practical matter of adapting agriculture to current conditions. When MD did a statewide evaluation of carbon outcomes, one of the things that was a big win if adopted was the addition of trees on ag land where you can maintain ag production, but also add more carbon storage without sacrificing land use necessarily.<br><br>Rob Schnabel: We're finding more row crop farmers are actually taking out hedgerows and taking out more trees to kind of gain more land, which is in somewhat in direct contrast when we talk about water quality benefits, but also like what you said about the humongous climate benefits. Not to mention the biodiversity of the whole system.<br><br>Eric Hughes (in chat): Great to hear the enthusiasm! Thanks, all - and thanks to Katie for all of her work on this. Katie, I need to jump to another meeting but would be happy to help address any questions after the call.<br><br>Katie Brownson: Huge kudos to Eric Hughes for all his help in getting this across the finish line and Ruth Cassilly who was instrumental in helping us instigate this whole process.<br><br>Ruth Cassilly (in chat): Thank you Robbie, Eric, Katie, and all! |

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| | Katie Brownson: Does anyone have concerns about approving this recommendation to move forward?<br><br>Anne Hairston-Strang: Hearing none and understanding that we have a quorum, we should be good to go.<br><br>Katie Brownson: Thanks everyone, if this does get approved, this practice will be eligible for states to start tracking, at least for planning purposes when you do your annual reporting. Therefore, we'll be able to start building up that historical record of practices, but the crediting won't happen until phase 7.<br><br>Rob Schnabel: When will this be on the agenda for other groups for approval?<br><br>Katie Brownson: Watershed Technical is tomorrow, and then they will be sent to the Agricultural Workgroup, and finally the WQGIT. If any modifications are made in those groups, they will be sent back to the FWG for the September meeting for us to confirm whether they are acceptable. We'll include this in the recap email with the meeting links.<br><br>DECISION: The FWG **approved** the EPEG recommendations to credit silvopasture and alley cropping practices for their water quality benefits in Phase 7 of the watershed model.<br><br>POST MEETING UPDATE: These recommendations were approved by the Watershed Technical Workgroup, Agricultural Workgroup, and Water Quality GIT. |
| **9:35**<br>(10 min) | **Request to Reclassify Barren Land Uses as Construction** – *Peter Claggett (USGS)*<br><br>Peter presented a proposal to reclassify barren land uses as construction. Overview of the proposed Phase 7 approach for construction land use<br><br>Summary of the proposal:<br>● All mapped barren lands that later became developed would be classed as construction (this includes harvested forest barren and natural succession barren lands, even in rural areas).<br>● This process would override timber harvest mapping decisions made previously by the FWG but would likely have minimal impact on the extent of the "harvested forest" class in CAST.<br>● This new methodology maps 106,683 acres of "construction", including 5,519 acres of mapped harvested forest that would be reclassed as construction based on data showing these sites were later developed (this represents 0.8% of all mapped harvested forest).<br><br>**Discussion:**<br>Rob Schnabel: When you model the developed areas, are you only counting the pollution impacts of just that acre versus the hydrology that's causing stream bank and stream bed erosion that's associated with tree clearing that happens down the road when we get MS4 credits for.<br><br>Peter Claggett: Great question, my side of the modeling equation just looks at the footprint change, but I would suspect that the watershed modeling group would say that the loading rates from impervious surfaces factor in some of the hydrological |

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| | downstream effects, to the extent to whether this is true I can't comment on, but I think that's how they would respond.<br><br>Rob Schnabel: Who from the modeling team could I reach out to?<br><br>Peter Claggett: Maybe Lewis Linker, Gopal Bhatt, Joseph Delesantro, but first I would reach out to Olivia Devereux since she's the expert on CAST.<br><br>Katie Brownson: Thanks, Peter. Does anyone have other concerns with this? Seems like this is a pretty minor shift in the justification. If we don't hear any concerns from the group, then we can let Peter proceed with what is outlined here.<br><br>*No other concerns or questions were raised.*<br><br>DECISION: The FWG approved the proposed construction mapping rules for Phase 7 which would change areas previously labeled as "harvested forest" that were later developed to be mapped as "construction". This change will only affect 0.8% of mapped "harvested forest" and will override the existing timberharvest mapping rules. |
| **9:45**<br>(15 min) | **Round Robin/State Updates**<br><br>Each jurisdiction and organization was given two minutes to present on a couple priority items and updates:<br><br>**Maryland**<br>Anne Hairston-Strang:<br>● Highlighted a MDE partnership with counties around MS4 permitting where counties help take care of planting and maintenance at local and state park lands, and in return they get the storm water credits for their MS4 permit. This partnership started in Howard County and now Baltimore, and is an example as another potential funding source out there.<br><br>Rob Schnabel: Is this state land that the county is providing funding and maintenance for?<br><br>Anne Hairston-Strang: The first one was yes, but it can be county land too.<br><br>**Pennsylvania**<br>Teddi Stark:<br>● Planning is currently limited with no state budget.<br>● The recent grant round received about $10 million in requests across programs like urban forestry and watershed forestry, but only around $7 million is available, thanks in part to a one-time boost from the Monsanto settlement, which supports buffer projects. Grant awards are being finalized and will be announced in the fall. The next grant round opens in January but will have less funding without Monsanto support. For now, things are in a holding pattern until the state budget is resolved.<br><br>Ned Brockmeyer: |

- We're still waiting on state approval to hire using remaining federal funds from the IRA. No major updates otherwise, though we are starting some direct contracting with IRA dollars, which is an exciting development.

Robbie Coville:

- The Bureau of Forestry is also partnering with the Alliance on an IRA-funded cost-share project focused on forest resilience, with significant water quality benefits expected. It's in a soft launch phase now, with a full launch planned for this fall. Although the state budget delays are constraining federal fund use, the Alliance is moving forward with hiring and implementation.

**New York**

Lydia Brinkley:

- Also experiencing significant delays in funding, both at the state and federal levels, sometimes waiting up to 18 months after being awarded funds before contracts are finalized. Additionally, new federal requirements, like NEPA reviews even for small-scale tree planting, are extremely numerous and beginning to take a toll.
- Despite this, they are preparing for:
    - October 2: Upper Susquehanna Watershed forum
    - October 14: Launch of agroforestry training series, starting with a silvopasture installation for technician education
    - Hiring a new team member if grant funding comes through

**West Virginia**

Jeremy McGill:

- Also experiencing ongoing funding delays.
- Leading the update of West Virginia's five-year State Forest Action Plan and its key highlights:
    - If you are a West Virginia cooperator with projects you're especially proud of—or have compelling photos of your work—please share them for possible inclusion in the plan.
- The draft version of the plan needs to be finalized by November, but submitting materials sooner would be greatly appreciated to allow ample time for review and refinement.
- Given the increased fire activity and the approaching fall fire season, completing this update promptly is especially important to inform planning and preparedness efforts.

Frank Rodgers:

- Currently collaborating with WV DEP to identify any available state funding to support our fall programming while we wait for Chesapeake Bay and USFS funds to come through. Right now, about three dozen schools and community groups have signed up for fall planting, but we don't have funding yet to purchase trees.
- In the meantime, we're working with mayors and superintendents to develop planting plans and review previous plantings. We're staying busy with planning and progress reviews and are hopeful to secure funding in time for a successful fall planting season.

**Virginia**

Patricia Nylander:

- Riparian Forest for Landowners Program:
  - Launched the first round of a zero-cost riparian buffer establishment program for private landowners statewide
  - Partner-driven, covering outreach, planting, site prep, and one year of maintenance.
  - Completed 85 projects totaling about 170 acres, close to the internal goal of 200 acres.
  - Launching a second round soon; proposals will be ranked tomorrow. The program will follow the same statewide, partner-based implementation model.
- Virginia Solar Mitigation Program:
  - Recently launched program managed by the Virginia Department of Forestry (launched about a month ago)
  - Applies to utility-scale solar projects converting agricultural or forest land.
  - Projects must mitigate land conversion either onsite or offsite via perpetual easements within designated state districts.
  - If offsite mitigation isn't possible, developers pay an in-lieu fee managed by the Department to fund easements in the same district.
  - For more details, Amanda Sheps (Office of Working Lands Manager) can be contacted.

Katie Brownson: I know the CCP has been interested in a conservation mitigation program with all the solar development happening and I'm sure they would be interested to learn more about that program.

**Delaware**

Tayrn Davidson:

- Like many others, our funding was put on hold, so we couldn't fund any new grant projects for this cycle. However, we were able to fund two existing grant programs with secured funding:
  - Ash Tree Removal Grant Program
  - Invasive Species Removal (Bradford Pear and Tree of Heaven)
- Last September, we opened our IRA grant program for communities and municipalities. We received 17 applications totaling about $540,000, which uses up most of the IRA funds awarded. Approximately $58,000 remains. The quick turnaround and response for the IRA program was a positive surprise.
- We hope to hold the annual arborist and tree care seminar again in 2026, depending on the availability of FY25 and FY26 funding.

**Washington DC**

Erica Carlsoon:

- Like everyone, we're facing budget challenges, though ours are more tied to the local council. Our tree funds support tree planting, which is great, but there's a risk they may not be available in future fiscal years or could be reduced.
- For FY26, however, we currently have the majority of our budget secured.

**Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay**

Craig Highfield:

- The Chesapeake Coastal Bays Trust Fund has funded the Healthy Forest Healthy Waters program, a collaboration with Maryland Forest Service and Maryland Forestry Foundation (which covers 326 acres of upland and buffer plantings for the next year.
- This fall, PA is set to plant about 100 acres of new buffer, and Virginia about 33 acres.
- PA Woodland Resilience Enhancement Network (PWREN) Program
    - PA also had a soft launch of the PWREN program, a US Forest Service–funded cost-share program for forest management activities. The hard launch will be in September
    - The Alliance recently hired a new staff member to coordinate the PWRENprogram in PA.

**Potomac Conservancy**

Alexis Dickerson:

- This is not an update from me per se, just raising this to everyone's awareness—the Indigenous Conservation Council (ICC) has a petition circulating. They are asking Bay Watershed Agreement leadership to formally recognize federally recognized tribes and acknowledge Indigenous leadership, as they feel they currently don't have a seat at the table.
- The petition is seeking support, especially during the public comment period. Other groups are also looking at different aspects of how the agreement will be updated and changed
- The Potomac Conservancy has been sharing this petition, and we're sharing it as well on behalf of the ICC partners. If anyone is interested, here is the petition: https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/give-tribal-nations-a-seat/

**US Forest Service**

Cotton Randall:

- Just a quick update: Camila Rodriguez is on this call. She's an intern helping us with watershed forestry activities across Region 9, including Forest Service state, private, and tribal forestry, as well as some Great Lakes projects.
- She'll also be working with Lara Johnson to develop a case study for the State of Chesapeake Forests Storymap. We're excited to have her supporting our work during her internship, so if you see Camila around, that's a bit of background on her.

**Chesapeake Bay Foundation**

Rob Schnabel:

- We're hosting the **Beyond Sustainable Regenerative Farm Tours** again this year in Frederick County, partnering with Mobilize Frederick. Last year's tour was popular, with county officials attending.
- The tour visits two farms with stations on water (including a rain simulator), grazing practices, climate/soil health, biodiversity (beekeeping, bird boxes), and farm economics—highlighting that only about 30% of Frederick farms are profitable, which affects land development pressures.

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| | • This year, we're partnering with Future Harvest and American Farmland Trust to include the tour in their legislative farm tour, bringing more state officials. The goal is to show ecosystem services in action, like silvopasture and tree planting, with farmers sharing their experiences.<br>• If interested, email me to join—Mobilize Frederick will handle sign-ups.<br><br>Rob Schnabel (in chat): Quick CBF update - 2nd Annual "Beyond Sustainable - Regenerative Farm Tours" scheduled for October 23rd in Frederick Co, MD 2 Regen farms with stations focused on Water, Climate, Biodiversity and Economics. We planted 3,200 trees for beef grazing farm at Hedgeapple Farm which will be one of the farms. Goal is to educate decision makers. Mobilize Frederick will handle sign ups for me.<br><br>Robbie Coville (in chat): I don't see Francis Smith on here but this sounds like the kind of thing his nutty efforts would be a good fit for. Also great to hear of that economic focus, as a key part of avoiding farm/forest loss.<br><br>**Chesapeake Bay Commission**<br>Adrienne Kotula:<br>• I'm the new CBC FWG representative and serve as the CBC VA Director. I'm happy to be on the forestry route and look forward to hearing what's been going on the ground.<br>• Our September meeting is coming up, where I'll be presenting an update on tree canopy to the full Commission. We're excited to soon release updated municipal tree canopy fact sheets, which we plan to share with all legislators. The meeting will also include a farm tour to discuss conservation practices implemented there. Additionally, we're deeply involved in the Bay Agreement refresh and governance discussions. |
| **10:00**<br>(40 min) | **Developing Recommendations for the Forest Conservation Target** – *Katie Brownson (USFS, FWG Coordinator) and Marilyn Yang (CRC, FWG Staffer)*<br><br>Marilyn reviewed a summary of the state's forest conservation efforts previously presented to the FWG (slides 1-3) and then Katie provided and update on the draft forest target under the Protected Lands Outcome that currently is "under construction" and will be further discussed during the upcoming Protected Lands Meeting on September 2nd (2-4pm) where the FWG is encouraged to attend (slides 4-5).<br><br>Katie then led a discussion on establishing the new forest conservation numeric target underneath the proposed Healthy Forests and Trees outcome by first providing background on recent progress and then proposing several options for the FWG to consider (slides 8-11).<br><br>Summary of the proposed numeric target options (*Please note this summary just references the options discussed during this meeting. It was determined at the end of the call that the FWG voting members would convene a follow-up meeting to consider other options and draft new language*):<br><br>1. Option A: 110,000 acres by 2035<br>a. 58,316 additional acres planted |

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| | b. 5,301 acres/yr needed on average 2025-2035 (11 years)<br>c. Somewhat above average planting rate<br>d. Would compensate for 38% of current average annual rate of loss<br>2. Option B: 120,000 acres by 2035<br>a. 68,316 additional acres planted<br>b. 6,210 acres/yr needed on average 2025-2035<br>c. Above average planting rate<br>d. Would compensate for 44% of current average annual rate of loss<br>3. Option C: 130,000 acres by 2035<br>a. 78,316 additional acres planted<br>b. 7120 acres/yr needed on average 2025-2035<br>c. Well above average planting rate, but also well below highest annual planting number<br>d. Would compensate for 51% of current average annual rate of loss<br><br>**Discussion:**<br>Katie Brownson: I want to open up the floor for folks to have comments, we're hoping to come in alignment towards one of these options today and if we don't, we need to convene a subgroup because the Management Board wants us to have recommendations for these targets by September 4th.<br><br>Erica Carlsson (in chat): Option B!<br><br>Tayrn Davidson (in chat): B<br><br>Rob Schnabel (in chat): Is the 7,120 acres net gains?<br><br>Rob Schnabel: So the 7120 acres, is that a net we're proposing 7000 acres of net gains or is that just planted?<br><br>Katie Brownson: Yeah, so this is just planting. These are a planting goal.<br><br>Rob Schnabel: Did we have a riparian goal of 7500 acres? That's more than this.<br><br>Katie Brownson: Yes we did, that's a really good point, so maybe we need an Option D.<br><br>Rob Schnabel: I think it makes sense to base our long-term planning on the science we've already discussed, like the data I shared with you earlier. Specifically, we could use the CHWA 2.0, which includes a target for overall forest cover to support watershed health. If I remember correctly, that assessment identified 63.6% forest cover as the goal. We could calculate how many acres we need to plant or restore each year over the next 10 years, or by 2040, to reach that target. Does that approach make sense?<br><br>Katie Brownson: I'm following you, but I looked at the gap between where we are with forest cover and that 63.6 and it's over 1,000,000 acres and I was having a hard time making sense of what a planting target would be that would get us there. I'm sorry for not seeing this disconnect at first, you're right, there's no internal logic within our targets if our forest planting target is less than our first buffer target. |

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| | Meghan Noe Fellows (in chat): And in addition - how much land is even available for planting at this point?<br><br>Rob Schnabel: Also, if we looked at the MS4 acres required across counties and jurisdictions (the impervious acre credits they need) and considered using that funding source to support new buffer plantings and potentially protect existing forests, there could be a real opportunity there. It's easier said than done, I know, but if we're truly leveraging all available resources, it seems like a path worth pushing. I always advocate for aiming higher rather than settling for less.<br><br>Matt Keefer: For option B, the 120,000 acres is planting plus conservation?<br><br>Katie Brownson: So the 120,000 is the planting and maintenance piece and that's looking at the gain side of the equation. The loss side of the equation would be looking at the imagery and then when we develop our management strategy, I think there would be another suite of activities around reducing the loss. And then the permanent land protection piece is going to be captured by the Protected Lands Outcome.<br><br>Matt Keefer: Okay I was confused, I was interpreting this as if we plant 68,316 acres and then conserve whatever that balance is, 52,000, our overall goal is 120,000, but that's not how to interpret this,<br><br>Katie Brownson: So it's 120,000 acres by 2035, but I went back to 2014 to give us our baseline, so we're using the same baseline for this target as for our tree canopy target. That gap of 68,316 acres is the difference between what we've already done up to 2024 and what we still need to do to reach 120,000 by 2035. Does that make sense?<br><br>Rob Schnabel (in chat): Option D - Plant 15,000 acres (7,500 of which is riparian)<br><br>Erica Carlsson (in chat): (In response to Rob): Is 15K too little?<br><br>Matt Keefer: But just planting?<br><br>Katie Brownson: Yes<br><br>Matt Keefer: But then as we report acquisitions and easements that sort of permanent protection that would be separate?<br><br>Katie Brownson: Yes, that would be separate in the Protected Lands target for forests.<br><br>Anne Hairston-Strang: So Katie, we'll have to follow-up with these numeric targets if we want to consider the buffer planting as a subset.<br><br>Katie Brownson: It's additional, so there will be the buffer planting target and then the planting target underneath this outcome will include forest buffers, but also forest urban planting and ag tree planting, so it should be higher than the forest buffer target.<br><br>Anne Hairston-Strang: So you'll circulate another option? |

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| | Katie Brownson: Yes<br><br>Anne Hairston-Strang: Do we have a conservation target for Protected Lands?<br><br>Katie Brownson: Yes, so that's what we are going to talk about at the next Protected Lands Workgroup meeting on September 2nd and that'll be an acreage target for total areas of total protected forest forest acres.<br><br>Matt Keefer: (Referring to slide 8) So what we're seeing on this slide is simply what we would be achieving through planting?<br><br>Katie Brownson: So the outcome target language that we currently have out for public review is to "reduce the loss of forests to development" so when we do our management strategy there will be focus on that part and then the "plant and maintain X acres of new forest" is just getting at the gain side of the equation, so that we can meet the long-term goal of achieving a net gain in forest cover, both through planting and other activities that are reducing the loss of forest. That's how we framed it for the public comment period.<br><br>I understand though that it's a forest conservation target, but here we're kind of zeroing in on planting, which seems pretty narrow, but when we look at the bigger picture of the outcome language and the strategies that we're going to need to develop to towards towards the full outcome target, it's going to be a lot more than the planting piece, that planting piece is just helping us to get a grasp on gain side of the equation.<br><br>Matt Keefer: Just so I'm understanding this so we can explain the PSC, so considering the way the outcome is currently written, there are still 3 components:<br>1. We are going to plant trees<br>2. Develop strategies to minimize losses and conversion<br>3. Permanently conserve forests through mechanisms like acquisitions and easements<br>So there are 3 parts?<br><br>Katie Brownson: Yes, so the third part (protection) is captured in the Protected Lands Outcome and if we thought there was value in moving the protected lands component under our outcome then we could put that in a comment later.<br><br>Rob Schnabel (in chat): I will be away for the Protected Lands meeting but folks attending, the Chesapeake Healthy Watersheds Assessment stated having AT LEAST 63.6% of watersheds forested was critical for healthy watersheds Chesapeake Healthy Watersheds Assessment<br><br>Matt Keefer: I guess structurally that would be hard and not worth the effort given how the Bay Program is structured, but I think we can still include that body of work as part of ours while elevating forest conservation in the agreement and having that broader perspective which should include conservation.<br><br>Anne Hairston-Strang: I know what we did before was try to align with the Protected Lands Outcome, but then we weren't paying much attention to it once we stopped doing internal reporting and I think it's clear we need to pay more attention to it. |

Katie Brownson: And I think part of the advantage of having the land protection piece in the Protected Lands Outcome is that the Protected Lands Workgroup is in the business of land protection and trying to get them to focus more on forests is also a good excuse for us to better infiltrate this somewhat separate community of folks, but it will require us to be more intentional about collarboating and integrating our work with theirs.

Katie Brownson (in chat): Option D: 140,000 acres- 8,028 acres planted annually

Katie Brownson: So I put an Option D in the chat for folks to consider in the chat which is basically one step above Option C that would get us to needing 8,028 acres planted which would get us above the 7500 acres.

Erica Carlsson (in chat): Option D: 140,000 acres- 8,028 acres planted annually - to include the Riparian? How much would the riparian be?

Erica Carlsson: So it's 7500 acres annually for the riparian right?

Katie Brownson: Yes

Erica Carlsoon: Isn't there more opportunity to plant upland than riparian or is the majority riparian?

Katie Brownson: So I'm looking at the proportion of the forest plantings that are in forest buffers and it looks like it varies a bit between the jurisdictions. So for example, Delaware is doing more upland stuff and maybe only 60%-75% of their forest plantings are riparian. Maryland ranges from 70 to 82%. New York is almost 100% buffers. Pennsylvania is on that higher end, high 80s in buffers. Virginia is lower, it's a % more in the 30s for buffers and then West Virginia is about 70-75% buffers.

Erica Carlsoon: It just seems like a high percentage.

Katie Brownson: Yeah, but thinking about it in terms of opportunity, there are a lot more acres that are not riparian than there are acres that are riparian for sure.

Erica Carlsson: Maybe we should just do half of it, but it seems like 50%-60% can plant riparian.

Katie Brownson: When you look at what we've done historically, I think we're somewhere closer to between 75%.

Anne Hairston-Strang: There's a lot more upland planting acreage available, but we're trying to focus and encourage the buffers and urban tree canopy as a target.

Katie Brownson (in chat): Option E: 150,000 acres- 8937 acres annually
This would be double our current average which is pretty high, it's been achieved which …

Katie Brownson: Yeah, so Option E to go up one more level would be 150,000 acres

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| | Anne Hairston-Strang: That's significantly above what we're planting now, even with our One Million Trees initiatives.<br><br>Rob Schnabel: I mean we haven't been leveraging our ag preservation programs and things like that to both incentivize and perhaps require buffers. That's been in some of our past language that we need to really leverage those opportunities where public resources are already being spent.<br><br>Erica Carlsoon (in chat): 8625 would be 15% of the total for upland<br><br>Anne Hairston-Strang: We sort of have done the stretch goal the last time around and it did not serve us well.<br><br>Matt Keefer: That would include legacy mind lands though right?<br><br>Anne Hairston-Strang: Absolutely, but those are usually expensive acres and we also have to be realistic about some of our budget environments.<br><br>Matt Keefer: Oh yeah, I just wasn't thinking about all the lands there for a second.<br><br>Katie Brownson: So if we have an annual goal of 7500 acres per year for forest buffers, it seems like whatever target we set needs to be above and that will make it be an ambitious goal. Maybe something like Option D would get us above those acres, but hit that sweet spot?<br><br>Matt Keeefer: So that's almost double? Is 4600 our average?<br><br>Katie Brownson: Yeah, that's our average.<br><br>Anne Hairston'Strang: I think that's pretty ambitious.<br><br>Erica Carlsoon (in chat): Basically we are looking at 10 years?<br>Anne Hairston-Strang: Do we need to revisit the buffer goal?<br><br>Rob Schnabel: Well the buffer one was to get net gains, you know cut the bleeding in half and continue planting the same rate, am I remembering that correctly?<br><br>Robbie Coville (in chat): The goals here are inclusive of buffers being planted, right? So the 8937 acres per year is the buffer goal plus 1,437 acres upland or additional buffer?<br><br>Jeremy McGill (in chat): Are we capturing the ARRI Program plantings?<br>Anne Hairston-Strang: If we cannot revisit the buffer goal can we agree to put in a placeholder for Option D? So additional upland acres and maybe even if we don't get all the buffers we'll still get all of the upland.<br><br>Rob Schnabel: I don't know what kind of language goes with this, I know we're pushing for an acre goal, but it's certainly an opportunity when we mention the higher upland |

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| | push the importance of watershed approach and protecting headwaters. Areas away from streams and higher elevation are important as well to maintain the hydrology.<br><br>Erica Carlsoon (in chat): Option F: 86,250 acres- 8625 acres annually<br><br>Jeremy McGill (in chat): https://www.osmre.gov/programs/arri<br><br>Matt Keefer: It might be good to brainstorm also what do we mean by upland, certainly it includes legacy mine lands, converting turf grass to forest, but what other land uses are we talking about? Ag to forest?<br><br>Katie Brownson: Yeah I think all the ag tree planting would be included in that. Jeremy, I think the mine land restoration could count, I don't know if you guys are reporting that or not to the Bay Program, I don't know how they are handled currently. I don't think the ag tree planting BMP can be applied to abandoned mine land, that might be something for us to look at. (*Note there is an Abandoned Mine Reclamation BMP that we did not discuss at the meeting*)<br><br>Erica Carlsson (in chat): I would vote for lowering the buffer goal<br><br>Robbie Coville (in chat): Pasture land and other ag lands<br><br>Patricia Nylander (in chat): Ag (marginal pasture), sometimes cropland<br><br>Matt Keefer: I think the planting density rates are comparable to a buffer planting and I think the assumption is that over time you know canopy forms and so it should be intuitive.<br><br>Katie Brownson: It'll at least be picked up in the imagery.<br><br>Matt Keefer: Right, so from a numbers counting perspective, do we count these towards this goal, maybe that's another exercise but I think it would/should. For ag tree planting, so that BMP would count or be defined as forest cover which is different from how we calculate urban tree canopy planting? So that wouldn't count for this right?<br>Katie Brownson: Yeah, so urban forest planting would count as a BMP, but urban tree canopy planting would not.<br><br>Matt Keefer: But ag tree planting that's not individual trees, that's more of continuous forest planting like an upland buffer?<br><br>Katie Brownson: Yeah, I mean that's how it gets credited in the model as a conversion to forest, such as land taken out of production and reforested so it comes out of the ag land use footprint.<br><br>Matt Keefer: So that would be good to define that further because I think Pennsylvania has seen a lot of those acres being reported and I think we've asked what are the sources, are they fence rows, are they agroforestry, are they wind breaks? And all of these I think contribute and count, so characterizing how we're going to come up with those upland planting acres might be helpful. |

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| | Robbie Coville (in chat): I think it's notable that silvopasture-by-planting can be credited (if EPEG recommendation passes). There is a huge need for shade in pasture, and this is a significant opportunity for plantable space.<br><br>I also think Rob's point about working with MS4, and other water quality incentives, is important to promote more trees. But I understand that is more about urban tree goals and not going to help much with these forestry acres? Upland (as in headwaters) planting for source water protection seems like a more relevant driver<br><br>Erica Carlsson (in chat): Here's my thought. Buffer (riparian) – 5,100 per year. Upland/other – 900 per year.<br><br>Katie Brownson: Yeah and I do think we have space to work on that after the agreement is signed. I know it's hard when you're trying to set a target based on incomplete information, but when we go to develop indicators there's this whole process like we did for the tree canopy indicator a few years ago to get into the nuts and bolts of what we're counting and not counting.<br><br>Matt Keefer: I just want to be careful that we don't set the goal and then have to defend or talk through wanting to take more ag lands out of the question, so if it's by promoting agroforestry, wind breaks, things already happening and certainly lawn conversion, but for the ag piece we need to be specific by what we mean by that.<br><br>Katie Brownson: Another thing for us to consider, for some of the other outcome targets they're intentionally not making them numeric targets, so we could consider having something like "reduce the loss of forests to develop to work towards net gain" and we could consider whether a numeric target is even appropriate given all the nuances here that are hard to capture.<br><br>Robbie Coville: That's an interesting point you just raised, but I was going to ask how would we credit say ag plantings. So now we have that silvopasture and alley cropping EPEG and if we have more silvopasture being planted, how would we capture that towards this goal, would it be a heavy lift of new reporting systems state by state and would it apply here?<br><br>Katie Brownson: That's a good point and I don't know yet because I think under our definition of BMPS, if we look at BMPs that are converting land into forested land use, then silvopasture and alley cropping wouldn't quality, but I think we would need to have a conversation about whether we want to capture agroforestry practices on the gain side of this equation.<br><br>Robbie Coville: I would advocate that as a really important piece here, because to your point Matt about where we would make these gains, well I think shade in pasture is a huge opportunity. And Rob also pointed out it seems there may be a lot of other tree planting that may fall under this numerical goal. I guess I would agree then that a net gain would be a better goal and to an extent maybe even maybe more ambitious than even 9000 acres added per year if we're losing 15k per year. But really, that's what we want to see and it would push us to do more around where we're losing forests. |

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| | Craig Highfield: Matt brings up a good point, but to achieve those goals we're going to have to plant on ag land, we're already doing that now but we need to get ahead of it because a lot of the times the stuff we're planting upland forests, most of it is on ag lands it's a few acres here or there a lot are areas that shouldn't have been farmed anyways but is for tax credit stuff or absentee landowners or leased lands. There are times on farms when we are taking land out of production, but I don't know what the alternative is, some landowners want it for wildlife or lease land stuff, but the scenario is no different that we will need to plant on af lands.<br><br>Matt Keefer: Yep, so then it's about the messaging for sure.<br><br>Rob Schnabel (in chat): older farmers and isolated fields lead to upland forest planting<br><br>Erica Carlsson (in chat): Here's my thought: Buffer (riparian) – 5,100 per year; Upland/other – 900 per year<br><br>Katie Brownson: I will say that I would like to put the forest buffer edit conversation to the side because we just don't have time to open up that can of worms, so I think we need to focus on this target that's not defined. We already took a deep dive into those numbers and they are ambitious, but they're way less ambitious than they were previously.<br><br>Erica Carlsoon (in chat): Can we set up a follow up group meeting?<br><br>Katie Brownson: Yes, as for next steps I would like to propose setting up a follow-up meeting. I can work with Marilyn to do a Doodle and have a rep from all the states and at-large members so we can provide a proposal to come up with and then circulate to the whole FWG, but first it would be helpful to have a more focused discussion with the voting members to decide how we want to move forward. Does that sound good to folks?<br><br>Erica Carlsson: Yup<br><br>Patricia Nylander (in chat): Yes to meeting again<br><br>Lydia Brinkley (in chat): Yes<br><br>Katie Brownson: Well, thanks, everyone. I know it's a lot that we've been working through with all the revisions to the agreement. We're now kind of getting into crunch time and feel like if we don't put something forward, I think we're at risk of having things cut from the agreement. I think it's in our best interest to decide what we want and make our proposal. And the Management Board might come back with a counter depending on what we put forward and what we hear from public input, but at least we'll have our initial proposal that's in the mix.<br><br>POST MEETING UPDATE: A follow-up meeting with the FWG voting members was scheduled on 8/21/25 during which members in attendance agreed to move forward with the following: |

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| | • Maintain a numeric forest planting target, but in our communications, focus on conservation and make it clear that not all of the acres planted will be put under permanent protection<br>• Establish a numeric target for reducing the rate of forest conversion to other land uses (not including temporary transitions in land cover associated with harvesting activity)<br>• Re-work the outcome language to lead with the long-term goal of achieving a net gain in forests<br>• Establish planting and reduced forest conversion targets that will together support achieving a net gain in forests. Note the targets we set are very ambitious (for both reducing loss and increasing gains) but would still only get us to a very slight net gain<br><br>As a result, the group landed on the following draft language for the **new forest conservation target:** **Achieve a net gain in forests over the long term by reducing the rate of forest conversion to other land uses by 33% and planting and maintaining 155,000 acres of new forests by 2035.**<br><br>These numbers were calculated by looking at the current rate of loss and gains/planting:<br>• Loss:<br>  ○ Current annual rate of net loss: 14,020 acres<br>  ○ Reducing 14,020 by 33%= 14,020-4,626= **9,394 acres** target for the annual rate of loss<br>  ○ Note based on the two time steps we currently have available, we are showing a 13% increase in the rate of loss<br>• Gains/Planting<br>  ○ Additional planting needed to achieve 155,000 acres- 103,400 acres<br>  ○ Average annual planting needed 2025-2035= **9400 acres**<br>  ○ This would be a doubling of our current average planting rate (4700 acres/year)<br><br>This draft language will be discussed further with the larger group during the FWG September 10th meeting and at the Management Board meeting on September 11th. |
| **10:40**<br>(15 min) | **Discussing the Public Feedback Period & Next Steps** – *Katie Brownson (USFS, FWG Coordinator)*<br><br>*Ran out of time*<br><br>The public comment period for the draft revised Watershed Agreement opened on July 1st and will close on September 1st. For this agenda item, Katie intended to gauge interest in submitting a comment letter from the FWG. However, with the previous agenda discussion going over we didn't have a chance to get this agenda item. In the follow-up recap email to this meeting, we invited members to indicate interest in contributing to a joint letter, but we received no responses.<br><br>That said, FWG members and their organizations can submit individual comments before the comment period closes. |

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