



Protected Lands Workgroup
August Meeting

Tuesday, August 12 – 2:00 – 3:00 pm

Meeting Location: Virtual

Meeting Link:

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Meeting ID: 210 289 874 156 6

Passcode: em7wc7WY

Attendance:

Sophie Waterman, USGS
Coral Howe, USGS
Daniel Koval, CRC Staffer
Michelle Katoski, USGS
Peter Claggett, USGS
Katie Ayers, EPA
Emily Heller, EPA
Maggie Woodward, CBC
Greg O'Connell, CBC
Leonard Gore, BLM
Katie Brownson, USFS
Faren Wolter, FWS

Michelle Campbell, DC DOEE
Cassie Davis, NY DEC
Sara Coleman, MD DNR
Cheryl Wise, MD DNR
Ashley Rebert, PA DCNR
David Boyd, VA DCR
John Rowe, WV Division of Forestry
Becky Gwynn, VA DWR
Katie Lautar, Baltimore Greenspace
Ben Alexandro, Chesapeake Conservancy
Chase Douglas, Chesapeake Conservancy

Meeting Materials: (can be found on the [meeting webpage](#))

- [Call For Chair](#)
- [Protected Lands Targets Timeline Document](#)
- [Protected Lands Targets Visual](#)
- [Protected Lands Indicator Presentation](#)

2:00 PM Welcome/ Introductions

Daniel Koval: We will get started in a few minutes. I want to note that all attendees will be joining the meeting with mics and cameras disabled as a new security measure happening across the bay program.

Sophie Waterman: If you could all put your name and affiliation in the chat, that would be great. As Daniel mentioned, new security protocols when it comes to video and audio and Daniel will jump into that here in a second. We will give folks another minute to join.

2:05 PM Announcements

Daniel Koval: As I said before, the bay program is establishing some new security protocols, as there have been some problems in previous meetings with unwanted guests and we are doing what we can to make sure that doesn't happen in as many meetings as we can. People will be starting the meeting with mics and cameras disabled. If you want to join the discussion, you can raise your hand and we will individually turn on your camera and mic capabilities. It will be a little new, but hopefully we can get it to work smoothly moving forward.

Sophie Waterman: There are a few announcements to go over: First, we are still chairless. We are seeking leadership from the workgroup! If you have the capacity to take on a leadership role with the workgroup, we would be so ecstatic. [Please check the document attached](#) to the agenda for details on the role. It would be an opportunity to spice up your resume and be part of a great group to lead this workgroup. If you are interested, please reach out! Next, the public comment period is still open. Please feel free to utilize the beyond 2025 webpage - it has all information needed to submit comments for the revised agreements. We will be getting them back in early September and will try to incorporate them into our targets and overall language. We encourage you to use that avenue to provide comments.

Next, there is a management board meeting on August 14th; they have asked us to provide a [timeline](#) on when we will be completing each of the targets in the outcome. We submitted a document to them that goes into the nitty gritty of how we plan on addressing and defining each target. The overall gist is that we are taking a longer approach to define each target. [This visual](#) shows that In September, we will be talking about our forest lands target, and the forestry workgroup will be joining our September meeting to provide insight and feedback to us on potential acreage options. The next target we will work on is the wetlands target, taking the late fall into December. Next is greenspace, and the reasoning for March 2026 is to dovetail with the public access targets that need to be defined. Next is agricultural lands. The tribal lands and watershed health go out to 2027 purely just to buy us time. I'm not sure if the management board will allow us to have that extended period, but I want to make sure we have the time to get it right. We will get feedback from the management board on the 14th, but as of right now this is the timeline. Any questions?

Faren Wolter, from chat: Helpful visual - thanks!

Cheryl Wise, from chat: Will we get an email with this info on timing of targets?

- **Daniel Koval, from chat:** Yes, I'll include this in my follow up email after this meeting.
- **Faren Wolter, from chat:** Include a brief context re: how some of the work is timed to align with other WG deadlines...and why a couple have longer horizons.
- **Katie Ayers, from chat:** This doc for the target timeline also contains this information (on the meeting calendar page for today)
<https://www.chesapeakebay.net/files/documents/Protected-Lands-Outcome-Target-Timeline-Final.pdf>

Ben Alexandro: My question is about the comment period: what is the plan for reviewing those comments and feedback from the public so that it can integrate into what we do here?

Sophie Waterman: The first one we will address is the forestry number. Once we have that conversation with the forestry workgroup, we will also be consulting those numbers. I don't know how the management board plans to deal with us potentially having edits/changes from the public comment period. As it stands right now, this is how we are presenting it to the management board but we do have an extended period of time to incorporate that feedback with the priority of the overall protected lands acres. And that will be a note to the management board, by August 23, we will have a number that the jurisdictions would like to see, but may go back to the drawing board if there are several public comments about that number. And the forestry comments could change what the metric is as well based on comment.

John Wolf: Is Ben asking more generally about how we are responding to the review team?

Ben Alexandro: Yes, I want the public to make sure they feel like we have heard them and are thinking about that as we go through this.

Cassie Davis: I'm on the review team and we are going through each and every comment as we receive them; we are all assigned different comments. Spoiler alert, one of the comments we had was on all the different dates we are proposing, and if there was a push to have just one date for all of the different targets, like a 2040 date, for all proposed targets/outcomes. For this in particular, why I raised my hand, is there any appetite for having one proposed completion date for all of these? If we finish early, that's great, but I could see it getting a little confusing with having different completion dates for different targets.

Sophie Waterman: This was a push by the management board to try to chip away at it, and I interpreted it as what can we realistically do. There was a push to try and define these numbers as quickly as possible.

Ben Alexandro, from chat: Do you mean having a completion date in terms of when we have numbers for the goal or a unified completion date as in when the outcome will be completed (e.g. 2040)?

Ben Alexandro, from chat: Will all the comments be available for all of us to review and look over at some point? If so, do you know when?

- **Cassie Davis, from chat:** That is a good question, Ben. I will reach out to Rachel on that.

Katie Brownson: I wanted to share that I heard that at the management board meeting this week, they will be discussing a deadline to have outcome targets to be submitted for inclusion in this iteration of the watershed agreement. The forestry workgroup intends for this to be in the agreement, so we want that to be completed in time. Ben, the timeline for having initial targets done was maybe not completely aligned with the time it would take to review public

feedback, and my discussions with MB for forestry workgroup was to have initial comments included with an ideal target, and if we need to re-evaluate based on public input we have latitude to do that. The completion date I was referring to was for language for the agreement.

Sophie Waterman: Any other questions on the completion deadline? And like I said, the management board meeting is on August 14th if you would like to listen in.

The next announcement is the technical assistance project. The bay program has been offered assistance from Local Concepts organization to help with network building. I have applied to be part of a cohort to better foster mutual learning and better serve the workgroup. If you would like to be a part of the process and project, please let us know! I'm not sure what that will look like yet, or of the exact timeline, but it should be somewhat soon as it is supposed to start in September.

Faren Wolter, from chat: I'd love to participate in the network committee, let's connect re: time & task/work expectations. I have a couple of time-intensive commitments this fall/winter, so trying to set limits for myself 🙄

Sophie Waterman: Next, our next meeting is September 2nd and will be a joint meeting with the forestry workgroup. They will provide feedback, expertise, and input on the forest lands target.

Lastly, we are meeting with jurisdictions to get an understanding of how you all are feeling of the beyond 2025 effort.

2:20 PM 2024 Protected Lands Indicator and the Future of Protected Lands Data Collection - Coral Howe, USGS

[Click Here for Presentation Link](#)

For those who don't know, I'm Coral Howe with USGS. I've been working with aggregating data for the protected lands indicator. I'd like to start by acknowledging that this has been an evolving process and we have come a long way. We are still working tirelessly to make it better and as accurate as possible.

We have heard from past experiences that there are still things we need to clean up in the data. Some of those issues are the states not having a consistent schema, or the schema has changed with each state across different iterations of the indicator. We are trying to figure out solutions to streamline the process. Some important fields like OWN_TYPE (type of owner of the property) are not always fully attributed. There has been interaction with some of the jurisdictions to clarify some of those numbers. There is still work to be done for quality control but we are making progress.

We did a first draft of the indicator at the beginning of the year, and most of the feedback we got from jurisdictions was changes in the original script.

One issue we have heard in the past but came up again is that some boundary corrections done by jurisdictions are not being reflected in the new indicator because we keep bringing the previous boundaries. We made some changes in the script to allow for the current state data to be authoritative and assume any corrections are reflected in the new data.

We removed the legacy indicator (2022's indicator), but we found that we are missing a lot of protected data. We had to do some detective work to try to identify what properties we were missing. An example is Jefferson County, WV, which is the region I'm located. First we thought it was The Nature Conservancy (TNC) data, but it turns out it was from the National Conservation Easements Database (NCED). Both datasets were missing properties, and the National Conservation Easement Database is no longer funded, but everything is in the USGS PADUS dataset. We are filtering anything that was contributed by that easement database and adding it to our protected lands database.

So all that to say, we removed the 2022 indicator because of issues with boundary corrections. But then, we had to add some missing information from TNC data, and NCED data extracted from PADUS.

Right now, we have increased the number of acres protected. We are not quite at 2 million acres yet, but we are still going to reach out to jurisdictions to make a review on the final draft. We have found lots of missing areas and want to make sure they are not errors of omission and want to give jurisdictions one last chance to go over the data. Otherwise, we are at 90% of our goal.

We will be asking jurisdictions to review the data packages: 1) state provided data, 2) current version of the Protected Lands Indicator, 3) PADUS 4.1 dataset for the state, and 4) the 2022 Protected Lands Indicator. I created a shapefile that highlights the areas that are different from the previous 2022 indicator to the new indicator to help facilitate that process. This will let us update the data if something is missing due to errors, or because it should be omitted.

Sophie Waterman: This slide is an example of changes from PLI 2022 to 2024; there are some areas that did show up in 2022, but not in 2024, indicating that there may be omissions in the data set. Additionally, as we move forward with this work, we will be looking to create a GIS Community of Practice to work towards standardizing the protected lands data from each jurisdiction.

Katie Lautuar: I have a question regarding the counting of protected lands. Are you including federally protected lands as the assumption that park land is protected? Could you explain more given the current administration, how that measure is defensible?

Coral Howe: There are different types of federally owned properties: designations and proclamations. We are removing those because they are not reflecting the ownership. In

theory, I can't talk for the administration, but these are protected under law and we cannot predict what is going to happen. It is assumed that they are protected under current definitions. But I understand what you mean.

Katie Lautar: I just want to go on formal record that establishing parkland as protected without strong conservation easements does not seem to me, because of the way that laws can change and administrations can change and how often we see parkland reassigned at a local level, that that is not a safe measure.

Sophie Waterman: Are you talking about the definition of protection overall, as in what should we be counting?

Katie Lautar: Correct. I think you are counting things that are not necessarily protected permanently. If you are counting a city park in Baltimore that is city owned, it is not necessarily protected, and that is true across many counties; I'm in a land trust coalition and many echo this sentiment. The other thing I would ask is what is the mechanism you are using to collect protection data? Could you remind me of that?

Coral Howe: We get data from the jurisdictions after the protected lands workgroup puts out a data call request.

Katie Lautar: What state agencies do you get it from? I'm not sure if local land trusts know that whatever state agencies you get the data from is going to govern how you quantify their conserved lands.

Sophie Waterman: The agency varies. This is something we are hoping to address in the community of practice for GIS as well; to call attention to that. It is an interesting case study on data management.

Katie Lautar: I get one request and a couple of reminders from a partner at a state agency, but I don't know if that request comes with a statement saying 'if you don't submit this, it won't go into a database calculating the protected lands overall'. It may not be completely clear that if you don't send this, it won't be considered in the metrics for chesapeake bay protection or state wide protection metrics.

Sophie Waterman: Just to understand that data workflow, we will hopefully be having a project related to some of our attributes, like date of establishment specifically. The lack of date of establishment means we can't track protected lands over time. We will hopefully be able to do a project related to that, and a part of that project will look into what the hangups are for data collection and how we can get it flowing more efficiently. Because you're right, this is important and folks should be aware that their data will end up in places like this to get counted towards the overall watershed goal. That is something of note that is on our radar and hopefully we can learn how folks across the watershed are doing this to ensure every acre gets counted.

Ben Alexandro: Thanks for this presentation; at the last meeting, it looked like we might make the 2 million, but it sounds like as some of this data improvement happens or as we get 2025 data, that we might get there anyways? My question is that it seems like the PADUS data is not as good as the data that the workgroup has. If so, how do we get them to use our more accurate data?

Coral Howe: One of the biggest comments we got is that it is hard to make corrections to PADUS data, and that is something they've been working on and collaborating with PADUS folks.

John Wolf: We have met with PADUS people over the last year, and will have further collaboration. We've exchanged data with them, as PADUS is used in national tracking systems. After this data call is complete, we should reconnect with them and make sure they have access to the best available data we have been able to assemble. They have a working relationship with USGS here, and we are able to collaborate particularly on the date of establishment. We will be having a conversation with some of the data aggregators from MD, so Katie, we will make sure to bring up your concern about how local land trusts may not have data counted.

Katie Lautar: And I want to reiterate, I do believe the state tries to get it from each of us, though it just might not come with such clarity of everything that it is being included in. Happy to talk more about that.

Katie Brownson: For timeline discussion, it sounds like you guys are still finalizing data. So, when is that data going to be ready to guide the development of targets?

Sophie Waterman: The overall acreage target number is not hanging on this. The hope is by Aug 22nd, we will have something quick to turn around and do analyses for forestry. The data will be released to the public some time in September. But the overall protected lands goal does not hang on this number like the forestry one does, and we can do internal analyses in late August.

Katie Brownson: As a follow up, is the plan for you and Daniel to meet with state leads to determine acreage number?

Sophie Waterman: Yes, we should be wrapping those up by the end of August and have something to share to the workgroup and the Sept 11th management board meeting.

I want to thank the states and jurisdictions for taking the time to review the data. You all know your data best and we want to make sure it is all counted. 90% is still a huge achievement, so don't feel too discouraged!

Daniel Koval: I have one more announcement on the leadership updates for not just the workgroup, but the Stewardship Goal Implementation Team (GIT). The new Stewardship GIT Coordinator is Emily Heller, with EPA.

Emily Heller: Nice to meet you all! I'm here to help coordinate all things under Stewardship / Engaged Communities during this transition time.

Daniel Koval: There have also been two Stewardship GIT Chairs announced in the last management board meeting: Julia Wakeling and Julie Lawson, both with DC Dept. of Energy and Environment (DOEE). Right now, the Protected Lands Workgroup may be moving to the Healthy Landscapes group as the structure of the different teams changes, but it is important to know for now while we are still underneath the Stewardship GIT.

Sophie Waterman: And if you, too, want to be a chair, and be a part of this amazing chair community, let us know!

2:55 PM Adjourn