



## Protected Lands Workgroup Meeting

June 9, 2026  
2:00-4:00pm

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### Meeting Minutes

#### Meeting Materials:

- Materials will be posted to the [meeting webpage](#) as they become available.

**Purpose:** Discuss the process for drafting management strategies and goals/metrics for the greenspace target.

#### Welcome and Introductions

**(2:00 - 2:15pm)**

Place your name and affiliation in the chat

*Ice Breaker: What is your favorite in season produce?*

#### I. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

**(2:15 - 2:40)**

- Lead: Daniel Koval, CRC; Nick Staten, CRC; Christina Garvey, CRC
- This presentation covered a CBP Staffer-led research project on Marine Protected Areas in the watershed which culminated into a written report detailing background information of MPAs, current states of living resources in the Bay, and what MPA designation could mean for surrounding areas. This is an informational report with the intent to be located under the

Protected Lands Workgroup webpage as a project.

Requested Action: Non-decisional

Materials: [Marine Protected Areas Presentation Slides](#)

### **Key Points:**

- MPAs can be designated for multiple different purposes:
  - Ecological preservation and restoration
  - Protecting cultural heritage and/or historic resources
  - Protecting threatened species / fisheries
- MPAs can have pros and cons on local communities.
  - Pros include: increased tourism opportunities and benefits to the local economy, spillover effects of protection on fish populations, and potential increased access, education, and research opportunities.
  - Cons include: increased development and crowding to account for tourism, impacted access for fishing communities, feelings of distrust among locals toward the government agencies, and potential decreased access to the resources.
- Many different types of MPAs exist, with different federal agencies managing different types. FWS, NOAA, and NPS are the most common federal agencies to be managing MPAs. Four types of MPAs that stood out in this research are National Marine Sanctuaries, National Parks, Marine National Monuments, and Wildlife Refuges.
- Out of the 18 National Marine Sanctuaries in the US, only one is in the Chesapeake Bay watershed: [Mallows Bay-Potomac River National Marine Sanctuary](#), established in 2019, co-managed by NOAA, State of MD, and Charles County. This site was designated to protect the historical resources of the WW1 ship remains that are now part of the marine ecosystem in the area.
- Several National Wildlife Refuges, managed by FWS, are located in the Chesapeake Bay.
- Other types of MPAs beyond federal designated sites in the Chesapeake Bay include Oyster Restoration Areas in Maryland and Virginia, which restrict oyster harvesting in different ways.
- The Chesapeake Bay has been designated a [Hope Spot](#) by the international non-profit Mission Blue, which brings awareness of the region's important resources to a global audience

### **Discussion:**

**Jeff Lerner:** We have been traditionally focused on land protection in this group. I'm curious about the linkage between MPAs and land use, and if you came across any examples of if there is an attempt to conserve the landscape as a way to make the marine areas healthy as well.

- **Nick Staten:** In SAV areas, there is lots of extra permitting that needs to happen for things like living shorelines, etc. I do know there are lots more regulations and permitting requirements surrounding important habitats like this.

**Claire Jantz:** I'm wondering about the international designation mentioned. What does that mean? Is it more awareness raising and leverage, or does it bring more resources?

- **Nick Staten:** The way that Mission Blue phrases it is they designate places across the world that they believe to be some of the most important ecosystems to the overall health of our oceans. They bring in additional resources in the forms of new documentaries, new

expeditions, etc. There are grant mechanisms associated with them, but from my research and interviews with people from Mission Blue, these grants are more for Hope Spot Champions - there are two of them with this designation: the University of Maryland has one, which has partnered with the Rappahannock Tribe to do oyster restoration, and the Explorers Club to launch an expedition off of Gwen Island in Virginia.

**Ken Hyer:** I've always had a question of why there aren't more marine sanctuaries in the bay, and like the idea of exploring it with the protected lands workgroup.

- **Jeff Lerner:** Great comment, and I suggest that this is something to look into a little bit more as a workgroup. I think we are open to a wide variety of protection tools for this workgroup to consider.
- **Claire Jantz:** I agree it's something to look at, but the PSC is asking us to be laser focused on the outcomes. As long as we can tie it really close to the protected lands outcome, then I think we should definitely do it.
  - Ken Hyer: Well said, and I agree. I like the idea of it as a consideration to think about in formation of the management strategy. But we need to stay tied to the PSC instructions and priorities, so I'm hoping this is a 'yes, and' to explore.

**Sarah Brzezinski:** I'd recommend looping NOAA

- **Hilary Bell:** Agree with Sarah and we may need to loop in some others

**Nick Staten:** If you would like to checkout our report:

[https://www.chesapeakebay.net/files/6\\_8\\_2026-Staten\\_Garvey\\_Koval-Final-MPA-Report.pdf](https://www.chesapeakebay.net/files/6_8_2026-Staten_Garvey_Koval-Final-MPA-Report.pdf)

- Blog post on Hope Spot designation: [Renowned oceanographer Dr. Sylvia Earle brings global attention to the Bay as a "Hope Spot"](#)

## II. Watershed-Based Initiatives

(2:40-3:00)

- Lead: Jeff Lerner, EPA, PLWG Chair
- Participants learned about watershed-based initiatives around the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Example Watershed Based Initiatives include:
  - [Chesapeake Conservation Atlas Data Viewer](#)
  - [Sentinel Landscapes Partnership](#)
  - [Delmarva Restoration and Conservation Network](#)
  - [Whole Watershed Program](#)

Requested Action: Non-decisional

Materials: [Watershed and Landscape Scale Conservation Initiatives Presentation Slides](#)

### **Key Points:**

#### 1. Sentinel Landscapes:

- Managed by Dept of Defense / War
- Large landscape initiatives focused on maintaining military readiness at installations

- Interested in protected in ecological benefits associated with these areas
  - Best way to provide a buffer around a military installation is to protect natural lands / working lands
  - August meeting will include more in detail discussion on these projects
2. **Delmarva Restoration and Conservation Network**
    - Collaborative of state, local, and federal government agencies and NGOs working to identify important places to protect and restore
    - Could be beneficial to connect with this group and learn about their efforts
  3. **PA Conservation Landscapes**
    - Group of conservation landscapes identified in PA since 2004; they don't all overlap the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, but as a whole they are working on driving strategic investment and actions around sustainability, conservation, community revitalization, and recreational projects
    - 2019 report that came out talking about what worked from these initiatives
  4. **MD Whole Watersheds**
    - New initiative established in 2024
    - Created to provide collaborative, science-based approach to accelerate restoration of the Chesapeake bay and Atlantic Coastal Bays
    - 5 year pilot program targeting 5 sub watersheds (Antietam Creek, Baltimore Harbor, Newport Bay, Severn River, and Upper Choptank)
  5. **ICPRB Land Prioritization Mapping**
    - Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin
    - Map shows priority areas for land protection in order to protect water quality
    - Great exercise for figuring out what land areas are important for drinking water
    - Have ICPRB come and present on this project

## Discussion

**Jeff Lerner:** The hope is to have people from a number of these initiatives come talk to our workgroup about their work, and how we can collaborate.

**Claire Jantz:** As we've watched trends of land protection, moving from big federal and state land acquisitions to private conservation easement types of acquisitions, that the large landscape approach that incorporates working lands and local governments to adopt protective zoning ordinances, I think that is a big pathway that sometimes gets ignored in conversations around land protection that tend to focus on fee-simple stuff. PA DCNR folks would be happy to come to talk about the Conservation Landscape program. Another group to look at is the Appalachian Trail Partnership, looking at HUC10 watersheds that intersect that Appalachian Trail, important headwater areas, fostering collaboration and network approach to land conservation.

**Sophie Waterman:** We will be talking about sentinel landscapes in our August meeting, which will complement our Ag lands conversation, as sentinel landscapes are also focused on protecting working lands.

### III. Management Strategies Update

(3:00-3:30)

- Lead: Sophie Waterman, USGS, PLWG Coordinator
- Participants heard about the timeline for drafting management strategies and what is asked from the workgroup throughout the process.

Requested Action: Non-decisional

Materials:

- [Protected Lands Workgroup Management Strategies Info Presentation Slides](#)
- Writing Templates:
  - [Workplan Example Backyard Birds 2026 04 02 FINAL](#)
  - [Workplan Template 2026 04 16 FINAL](#)
  - [Management Strategy Example Backyard Birds 2026 04 16 FINAL](#)
  - [Management Strategy Template 2026 04 16 FINAL](#)
  - [MS Timeline 2026 04 16 FINAL](#)

#### **Key Points:**

There will be one Strategic Plan for the overall Chesapeake Bay Program partnership. Each Goal Team will have their own management strategy, presented as chapters within the Strategic Plan. Each outcome within the goal teams will have sub-chapters within their respective Goal's management Strategy.

- Information will include monitoring progress, assessing and reporting progress, ongoing programs and actions, addressing changing environmental conditions, partnership engagement, signatory and partner programs, and steps for achieving greater participation in the outcome.
- Timeline: Drafting through summer/ fall. Draft writing will need to be finished in September so the Healthy Landscapes Goal Team Leadership can review and provide last feedback in October before it is presented to the Policy Steering Committee in November.
- Monitoring Progress and Indicators:
  - Protected Lands Indicator will continue, and some other datasets used will include Chesapeake Bay High Resolution Land Use / Land Cover data, riparian buffer zones data, and USFWS national wetlands inventory.
- Actions and Priorities: Lots of overlap among jurisdiction Wildlife Action Plans, Outdoor Recreation Plans, and Forest Action Plans
  - Similar actions: protecting, restoring and connecting key habitats; expanding research, monitoring, and data systems; building partnerships, capacity, and public engagement; strengthening policies, regulations, and funding mechanisms; and managing major threats across landscapes.
- Situational Analysis
  - Identifies challenges that will impact progress towards attaining the protected lands outcome and targets
    - Scientific, environmental, fiscal, or policy related influences

## Discussion

Situational Analysis Questions to Consider:

- Which top three challenges do you see as most likely to slow progress toward the outcome and targets in the next six years?
- What is going to influence your work over the next six years?

Snapshot of signatory programs:

- Seeks to recognize contributions of signatory partners and understand existing funding that is out there.
- Biggest ticket items
- Any programs that help move the protected lands outcome forward

**Link to canva board for thoughts:** <https://canva.link/m9uju7x2n2jkk0d>

**Ken Hyer:** Idea of signatory programs: want to echo that we are trying to find the right balance point of listing the substantial programs that contribute to achieving our outcome, while acknowledging that there are many small programs that do work as well. Identifying the major programs will be the focus, but knowing there is a cutoff and we might not get them all. The workplan can also add information on other programs and opportunities.

**Katie Brownson, in chat:** For the signatory programs- are you just focused on programs that pay for permanent land protection? If so, we may need some additional filtering for those federal programs

- **Jeff Lerner:** I think some programs are not permanent, like CREP (Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program). To me, there is a spectrum of ultimately getting to a more permanent protection and there may be important programs that we need to consider that get landowners into the idea of protection.
- **Sophie Waterman:** Yes, maybe recognizing that spectrum is something we include in our management strategy
- **Hilary Bell, in chat:** Maryland has a state program that piggy-backs on federal CREP contracts and makes the practices permanent through conservation easements.

**Jeff Lerner:** The question about permanent land conservation is a good one. There are lots of different tools and funding pathways out there, but one idea to put out there is that in addition to thinking about protecting land, it might be useful for us as a group to think about programs that can support the capacity of organizations to exist and function. My sense is that finding resources that help in that regard can be helpful in terms of leveraging funds. If you don't have people who can talk to landowners, people who can put together applications, you won't be as successful. So programs like LSR (Landscape Scale Restoration), etc., might not be for permanent land protection, but a piece of it would advance the overall effort forward.

- **Hilary Bell, in chat:** Agree on capacity and continued need for technical expertise
- **Sophie Waterman:** Capacity might be critical for low-hanging fruit idea as well. We will need workforce for this

**Katie Brownson:** I think recognizing that in the healthy landscapes goal, we will have lots of

programs that can support multiple outcomes, maybe not directly but at least indirectly. The landscape skill restoration program does not fund conservation, but it does support capacity. Capturing that under healthy forests and trees, with the broader Goal Level chapter, we can point to the connections between highlighted programs. And some outcome sub-chapters could be pointing to others in other outcomes, without trying to replicate it.

- **Sophie Waterman:** Agreed, we will look at being strategic about the outcome vs the goal team level discussion within the management strategy and outcome sub-chapters.

#### **IV. Greenspace Target - Goal Setting (3:30-3:55)**

- Lead: Sophie Waterman, USGS, PLWG Coordinator
- Participants reviewed baseline metrics for urban and community greenspace, potential acreage goals, and additional greenspace metrics that could be tracked. This opened discussion on how the workgroup might focus its tracking, and how the protected lands workgroup and public access workgroup will track protection and access of greenspace.

Requested Action: Non-decisional (discussion and presentation only, decision to be made in summer 2026).

Materials:

- [Greenspace Target Discussion Presentation Slides](#)
- [Trust for Public Land Presentation Slides](#), for review

#### **Key Points**

- Proposed timeline for developing protected lands targets can be found on slide 2 of the [Greenspace presentation slides](#)
- Final Definition of Urban and Community Greenspace:
  - Urban and Community Greenspaces are publicly accessible lands in census-designated places and urban areas that provide opportunities for both passive and active recreation while offering exposure to nature. These public spaces deliver human health, community, and environmental benefits and include, but are not limited to, parks, trails, gardens, sports fields, waterfronts, outdoor gathering areas, and natural landscapes like forests or grasslands.
  - The intention of this definition is to best include places where people live (e.g. not just ‘urban’ areas or cities, but also populous areas in more rural areas)
- Baseline numbers:
  - 7.2% of lands within Census Designated Places and Urban Areas are protected.
    - 510,268 acres out of 7,002,790.96 acres
  - See [slide 8 of the greenspace presentation slides](#) for a land use breakdown.
  - We need better attribution of public access data for the public access workgroup to better get at their access target.
- Literature Review:
  - World Health Organization suggests 9 square meters of green space per individual (50 square meters per capita)
  - UN-Habitat research has found that well-functioning cities have about 50% of their surface dedicated to public space, with a third of that for nature (15%

overall)

- Target examples, with those numbers:
  - 15% of census designated places and urban lands is 1,050,419 acres. In this scenario, our target would read something like:
    - “By 2040, protect an additional 540,150 acres of community and green spaces in the urban areas and census places footprint”
  - 10% of census designated places and urban lands is 700,729 acres. In this scenario, our target would read something like:
    - “By 2040, protect an additional 190,011 acres of community and green spaces in the urban areas and census places footprint”
  - We could also look at specific land uses within greenspaces. For example, do we want to have a target for just forested greenspaces?
- Public Access Component:
  - See Will Klein from Trust for Public Land’s [presentation slides here](#). Starting at slide 12 highlights three different possibilities of tracking access to a greenspace site.

### **3 examples of 3 scenarios, depending on what the goal is:**

1. Goal is to protect the most amount of urban acreage
  - a. Ex: go from 300,000 acres to 350,000 acres
  - b. Tracking would require acreage numbers of greenspace
2. Goal is to protect land near the most people
  - a. Ex: 2 million people within walking distance of a greenspace that is protected.
  - b. To meet this goal, 500 sites would need about 4,000 people per site within walking distance
  - c. Tracking would require:
    - i. The sum of people around the space
    - ii. A 10 Minute Walk Network Analysis (such as [TPL’s Parkserve tool](#))
3. Goal is to increase the amount of people who live within a 10 minute walk to a greenspace. This incentivizes greenspaces in park access gaps (places where people have no urban and community greenspace within a 10 minute walk)
  - a. Increase 10 Minute Walk gap from 60% to 68% (1 million more people)
  - b. Note: Sites in these geographic gaps would be the ones to move the needle on that goal. Added urban and community greenspaces in areas with already existing greenspaces would not change the progress to the goal that much. TPL does not track in this way.
  - c. Tracking would require:
    - i. The sum of people around the space
    - ii. A 10 Minute Walk Network Analysis
    - iii. Completed inventory of existing urban and community greenspaces

## **Discussion**

- **Sophie Waterman:** I want to open conversation up about what the protected lands workgroup would want to focus on. Options include focusing on just acreage, or on protecting lands near high amounts of people, or on specific land uses of the lands, among

others.

- **Ellen Shepard:** If you take the acreage goal, it seems like it would also be able to track other things like access gaps. So if you just did an acre goal, which seems easy to explain, then are you also meeting the goals of those other proposed options?
  - **Sophie Waterman:** Yes, it is the access question that is most key in the other two proposed options. Strictly acreage of protected lands is important for things like urban heat island affects but it wouldn't track access without other information being needed. Also acreage isn't always the most important factor; so is it important for the protected lands workgroup to have that access component? Where should we define that target?
- **Ellen Shepard:** Why wouldn't it deal with the access piece?
  - **Sophie Waterman:** The issue with that is we don't have fully attributed public access within the protected lands data. So at the moment, there are gaps in understanding what protected lands are publicly accessible that would need to be addressed.
- **Ellen Shepard:** VA had legislation this year setting goals. They did a 20% goal statewide for land protection, and a 10% goal of urban land protection. Not sure if that's the right goal for this group, but it is exciting that we are talking about setting this urban goal statewide as well. Right now, VA is 6% for urban land protection, and 12% for general land protection
  - **Sophie Waterman:** 10% would be consistent with some research out there, so that is exciting to see.
- **Jeff Lerner:** Not sure how easy to do spatially, but thinking of the ways that some of these urban areas can be also functional in dealing with top line issues that communities are dealing with (flooding, water quality, etc.), so when you put a stormwater park into a community you could be hitting a number of benefits. Trying to think of how to get multiple benefits by the protection we do

### **Next steps:**

**Be prepared to discuss the following questions in one on one meetings as we begin drafting management strategies:**

- Given the different target options, which do you feel best aligns with the work your jurisdiction is doing?
  - Which target type would create the most meaningful change for the communities you serve?
  - What challenges or limitations in your jurisdiction's data, capacity, or current planning efforts would affect which target type is most realistic to implement?
  - Should it be an acreage target?
    - An absolute increase
      - Example: by 2040, protected X acres of greenspace
    - A percent increase
      - Example: by 2040, protected X% of greenspace in census-designated places and urban areas
  - Should it be a target number?

- Example: X number of green space sites by 2040
- Example: X number of people near greenspaces
- Public Access Workgroup: access-based target
  - Example: “Ensure that X% of residents in census-designated places live within a 10-minute walk of green space.”
- **Wrap-Up and Member Share-Outs** **(3:55-4:00)**
- Protected Lands Workgroup leadership will begin meeting with members one-on-one to discuss the greenspace target and other components that will be useful for drafting the management strategy sub-chapter (challenges, opportunities, ongoing programs, funding avenues, etc.).

- V. Adjourn** **(4:00pm)**
- **Next Meeting: August 4, 2:00-4:00pm**
    - **This meeting will focus on the Agricultural Lands Target**

**Attendance:**

Daniel Koval, CRC  
Sophie Waterman, CBP  
Jeff Lerner, EPA  
Ken Hyer, USGS  
Claire Jantz, PA DCNR  
Chase Douglas, CCP  
Maggie Woodward, CBC  
SARA Coleman, MD DNR  
Hilary Bell, MD DNR

Michaella Kuykendall, MD Dept of Ag  
Andrea Reese, Chesapeake Conservancy  
David Boyd, VA DCR  
Cassie Davis, NY DEC  
Ellen Shepard, VaULT  
Emily Heller, EPA / CBPO  
Sarah Brzezinski, EPA / CBPO  
Nick Staten, CRC  
Bella Konchar