

PROTECTED LANDS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2ND DRAFT

OCTOBER PROTECTED LANDS
WORKGROUP MEETING

10/6/26



PROTECTED LANDS OUTCOME

Development and land conversion are among the top stressors facing the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. Permanently protecting lands from development is one way to combat the loss of forests, wetlands and other valuable wildlife habitat.

Outcome:

- Permanently protect critical landscapes within the Chesapeake Bay watershed to protect water quality, enhance biodiversity, support sustainable livelihoods, bolster local economies, honor cultural heritage and protect the mission and resilience of military installations.
 - By 2040, permanently protect at least an additional 2 million acres of land above the 2025 baseline of 9.3 million acres. The 2 million acres will include specific targets for: riparian forests; wetlands (including migration corridors); natural areas supporting healthy streams; agricultural lands; tribal homelands; and urban and community greenspace.
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TRIBAL HOMELANDS

- The Tribal Homelands Target was being developed with the Indigenous Conservation Council
 - The Indigenous Conservation Council Board has voted to withdraw from discussions and formal engagement with the Chesapeake Bay Program:
 - “While we were initially pleased with the spirit and intent of the Chesapeake Executive Council's Executive Directive issued on December 2, 2025, it became clear in a recent meeting that the Partnership is unwilling to give the tribes a seat at the table. This has been disappointing given that respect for tribal sovereignty was included as a core principle in the revised *2025 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*. When tribal leaders asked the reasons for the Partnership's decision, we were stonewalled regarding the basis of the Partnership's issues and concerns. Respect for tribal sovereignty is non-negotiable and must be demonstrated with action, not just words. As a result, the ICC Board has voted to withdraw from all discussions and formal engagement with the Chesapeake Bay Program until this basic and essential principle is met.” (*Public Statement from Our Board of Directors, 2026*)
 - The PLWG is going to pause development until we get direction from the Policy Steering Committee (PSC)
 - The PLWG has requested that the Healthy Landscapes Goal Team ask the PSC how to move forward with this target
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DRAFTING TIMELINE



UPDATED CHALLENGES

Challenges	Within CBP's ability to influence	Outside of CBP's ability to influence
Data gaps in the Protected Lands Indicator Dataset: Attributes of the dataset are missing key amounts of data, limiting CBP's ability to understand conserved lands within the Chesapeake fully	X	
Building relationships and trust within the Protected Lands Network: Jurisdictions have deep networks of implementers; the Bay Program does not. There is a need for the Bay Program to better coordinate with those doing the on-the-ground work.	X	
Communication: There is a need for communicating the importance of protection and demonstrating how it contributes to the successful achievement of a wide range of goals. Communication should be targeted to multiple audiences: the public, legislators, donors, etc.	X	
Land Use Change*: Land use across the watershed is shifting, increasing disturbance and impervious surfaces. These changes boost runoff and nonpoint source pollution while also fragmenting natural and working lands, reducing habitat connectivity and agricultural productivity.	X	
Population change: The overall population in the watershed is increasing, but is not evenly distributed. There are some areas of the watershed that are seeing increases in population, while others are losing population. These population changes can shape how protection is perceived in rural, suburban and urban areas.		X
Funding: Partners are being asked to do more with fewer resources. There is a real need for funding for agency and partner capacity and technical assistance.	X	

CHANGES TO APPROACHES

- Consolidated approaches
- Integration of co-benefits throughout the approaches
- Workplan items vs. Management Approaches

First Draft

Maintaining High-Quality Data

Identify, assess, and leverage funding opportunities

Actively engage with the Protected Lands Network

Develop and provide communication resources

Integrate Chesapeake Bay co-benefits into the priorities and activities

Second Draft

Data, Tracking, & Targeting

Funding Conservation & Protection

Engagement, Communication & Outreach

DATA, TRACKING, & TARGETING

- Accurate and comprehensive tracking of protected lands over time is essential to achieving the Protected Lands Outcome and its Targets.
 - High-quality data—particularly complete attribution of protection dates and public access status within the Protected Lands Indicator—are critical for assessing current conditions, setting up targets, and evaluating progress toward the Protected Lands Outcome.
 - This approach requires the Protected Lands Workgroup to coordinate with data managers to improve protected lands datasets' completeness and consistency, ensuring that all information is properly attributed and suitable for detailed analysis.
 - The Protected Lands Workgroup will also identify, quantify, and—where feasible—monetize the ecological, hydrological, and community benefits of land protection across the watershed, while assessing emerging issues and potential approaches for addressing them. These insights, along with jurisdictional plans (example: State Wildlife Action Plans), will help guide the strategic prioritization of conservation investments.
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FUNDING CONSERVATION & PROTECTION

- Sustained, accessible funding is critical for conserving and restoring protected lands. The Protected Lands Workgroup will work to expand both access to funding and the total resources available for protection and restoration activities. It will support partners in identifying and leveraging diverse funding opportunities, addressing challenges such as limited capacity. In collaboration with the Chesapeake Bay Program, the Workgroup will also explore ways to use appropriated funds more effectively.
 - To maximize long-term value, the Workgroup will promote conservation and restoration strategies that advance multiple outcomes—including water quality, habitat and forest protection, and community well-being—and encourage coupling conservation and restoration efforts to increase environmental and community benefits.
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ENGAGEMENT, COMMUNICATION & OUTREACH

- The Protected Lands Workgroup will strengthen land conservation and increase protection across the Chesapeake Watershed by actively engaging practitioners, improving communication resources, and expanding outreach that supports voluntary conservation and restoration activities.
 - Over the next six years, the workgroup will engage directly with the Protected Lands Network—including land conservation practitioner networks (such as the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership), federal and state agencies, local governments, nonprofits, and community partners—to build trust and cultivate meaningful, collaborative relationships. Through regular engagement, workgroup meetings, and knowledge-sharing, the Workgroup will deepen its understanding of on-the-ground challenges, opportunities, and priorities. These strengthened relationships will support coordinated conservation strategies, advance shared goals, and enhance long-term stewardship of critical lands throughout the region.
 - The Workgroup will also develop and provide communication resources that help jurisdictions, local governments, and partners convey the environmental, economic, military readiness, and community benefits of land conservation and protection, especially the protection of our priority landscapes. Tools such as fact sheets, case studies, and messaging materials will support informed decision-making and build broader support for conservation at local and regional scales.
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SNAPSHOT OF SIGNATORY PROGRAMS

DELAWARE SIGNATORY PROGRAMS

Signatory Program	Healthy Landscapes Goal Submission	Protected Lands Outcome Submission
Delaware Open Space Program	X	X
Delaware Natural Areas Preservation System		X
Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Trails Program		X
Agricultural Lands and Forestland Preservation Program		X

NEW YORK SIGNATORY PROGRAMS

Signatory Program	Healthy Landscapes Goal Submission	Protected Lands Outcome Submission
New York State Conservation Partnership Program	X	X
Open Space Conservation Grant Program	X	X
Forest Conservation Easements for Land Trusts	X	X

PENNSYLVANIA SIGNATORY PROGRAMS

Signatory Program	Healthy Landscapes Goal Submission	Protected Lands Outcome Submission
Department of Agriculture Farmland Preservation Program	X	X
Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund	X	X
Oil and Gas Lease Fund	X	X
Environmental Stewardship Fund		X

MARYLAND SIGNATORY PROGRAMS

Signatory Program	Healthy Landscapes Goal Submission	Protected Lands Outcome Submission
Rural Legacy Program	X	X
Maryland Agriculture Land Preservation Foundation	X	X
Maryland Program Open Space	X	X
Maryland Environmental Trust		X
Greenspace Equity Program		X
Whole Watershed Program		X

WEST VIRGINIA SIGNATORY PROGRAMS

Signatory Program	Healthy Landscapes Goal Submission	Protected Lands Outcome Submission
Outdoor Heritage Conservation Fund	X	X
West Virginia Division of Natural Resources	X	
County Farmland Protection Programs		X

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SIGNATORY PROGRAMS

Signatory Program	Healthy Landscapes Goal Submission	Protected Lands Outcome Submission
Office of District Waterways Management	X	

VIRGINIA SIGNATORY PROGRAMS

Signatory Program	Healthy Landscapes Goal Submission	Protected Lands Outcome Submission
Office of Working Lands Preservation	X	
Purchase of Development Rights Program	X	X
Virginia Land Conservation Foundation		X
Virginia Battlefields Preservation Fund		X
Virginia Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Historic Preservation Fund		X
Community Flood Preparedness Fund		X
Preservation Trust Fund		X



FEDERAL PROGRAMS

Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund

Forest Legacy Program

Community Forest Program

Land and Water Conservation Fund

Agricultural Conservation Easement
Program

Conservation Stewardship Program

Recreational Trails Program

American Battlefield Protection
Program

Regional Conservation Partnership
Program

Wetland Reserve Enhancement
Partnership

Readiness and Environmental
Protection Integration (REPI) Program

SIGNATORY STATUTORY AUTHORITIES DRIVING OUTCOME ATTAINMENT

Signatory	Statutory Authority
Chesapeake Bay Commission	Va. Code § 30-240
	MD Natural Resources Code §8-301
	1985, June 25, P.L. 64, No. 25
Delaware	Delaware Land Protection Act (creates the Open Space Program): https://delcode.delaware.gov/title7/c075/index.html
New York	ARTICLE 58 Implementation of the "Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act of 2022 " Environmental Conservation (ENV) CHAPTER 43-B NY State Senate
	SECTION 49-0113 Thirty by thirty conservation goal Environmental Conservation (ENV) CHAPTER 43-B, ARTICLE 49, TITLE 1 NY State Senate
	TITLE 3 Open Space Land Conservation Projects Environmental Conservation (ENV) CHAPTER 43-B, ARTICLE 54 NY State Senate
Pennsylvania	Agricultural Area Security Law (Act 43 of 1981 and Act 149 of 1988)
	Conservation and Natural Resources Act (Act 18 of 1995)
Maryland	CH546 Maryland the Beautiful Act
	MD Natural Resources Code § 5-9 Program Open Space
	COMAR 15.15 Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program
West Virginia	West Virginia Code Chapter 20 (Natural Resources): Governs the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR), covering the protection, development, and enjoyment of state parks, wildlife areas, public lands, and natural habitats
	West Virginia Code §8A-12-1 (Farmland Protection Programs): Focuses on protecting agricultural land and woodland as open-space land, controlling urban expansion, and establishing farmland protection boards
	West Virginia Code §20-12-2 (Conservation and Preservation Easements): Recognizes the public benefit of conservation easements to protect natural, historic, agricultural, and scenic resources
District of Columbia	D.C. Law 24-20. Comprehensive Plan Amendment Act of 2021.
	D.C. Law 24-336. Office of District Waterways Management Establishment Act of 2022
	Zoning Act of 1938, approved June 20, 1938 (52 Stat. 797; D.C. Official Code § 6-641.01 (2008 Repl.))

TO-DO LIST

- Work with the HLGT to draft a PSC request on how to address the Tribal Homelands Target.
 - Asked at the HLGT meeting on September 30th
 - Action Teams to help with target development
 - HLGT is supportive
 - Reincorporate and refine partner-provided programs from the first draft into the version prepared for PSC.
 - Follow up with HLGT reps on PLWG list
 - Gather feedback on the second draft and finalize the version for PSC.
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