



# **State Riparian Forest Buffer Action Strategies**

2023 Report to the Management Board



## Questions to consider

- What are some opportunities for the Bay Program to support implementation of the Action Strategies?
- Are there any items that need to get elevated to the PSC to improve progress?



# Delaware Riparian Forest Buffer Action Strategy Update

Management Board Meeting July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Terry L. Deputy

DNREC Division Of Watershed Stewardship Director

Holly Walker

DNREC Chesapeake Bay Watershed Coordinator



DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL RESOURCES AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL





# Strategies to Meet Buffer Goals

- Create a RFB coordinating committee
- Create an incentive program
- GIS desktop analysis
- Co-benefits
- Ordinance review
- Continuing education
- Landscape training



# Forest Buffer Incentive Program



- 100% of project costs are covered
- Incentive payment paid to landowner for 5 years. Received as a one-time payment.
- While under contract, maintenance will be provided.
- New Enrollment Options
  - Forest Buffer (>35ft) \$1000/acre
  - Narrow Forest Buffer (<35ft) \$500/acre

## Forest Buffer Incentive Program

<https://dnrec.alpha.delaware.gov/watershed-stewardship/nps/forest-buffer-incentives/>



# Ongoing Challenges to Forest Buffer Implementation

Landowner Concerns

Complexity of programs

Sustainable sources of funding

# Opportunities for Support

---

## State Support

- Continued support to make tree planting programs a priority.

## Federal Support

- Waving the match requirements for federal grant programs.







# Maryland's Riparian Forest Buffer Progress

---

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

*July 2023*





## >> FOREST BUFFER RESTORATION

### Increased Production and Technical Assistance

#### State Seedling Nursery Production Expanded

- Added ½ million seedlings, for 2.7 million in 2023
- Expanding volunteer seed collection of native trees (seed = limiting production factor)

#### 8 new MFS hires through 5 Million Trees

- 2 supervisors
- 5 specialists covering 3 regions
- 1 Nursery
- 5 more in recruitment

#### Workforce development to expand skills and contractor availability

- In planning, new Woodland Incentive Fund for a variety of forest industry needs, including buffer and tree planting maintenance

Over 155 acres of RFBs submitted so far for 2023, more in process for reporting



## >> BUFFER OUTREACH, TRAINING, & TARGETING

### **New employee training**

- Providing Buffer Planting 101
- Partnership with Chesapeake Bay Landscaping Professionals, Fall 2023 (first time in MD)

### **Supporting development of informative webinars/ field tours to address emerging concerns**

- New fact sheets on invasive species and concentrated flows

### **Provided training on concentrated flows and long-term buffer management**

- Joint CREP training 2023, FSA, NRCS, DNR,





## >> BUFFER LEADERSHIP & COORDINATION

### Coordination and Partnerships

#### **New 5 Million Trees Agreements**

- MD Assn. of Environmental and Outdoor Educators
- Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake
- Chesapeake Bay Landscaping Professionals

#### **Continued private/public partnerships with Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund building pipelines of viable buffer projects**

#### **MD Park Service partnership for habitat restoration**

- Plantings at Seneca Ck SP, Milltown Landing, Calvert Cliffs, others, over 57 acres in 2023)

#### **Merging buffer efforts for water, air, and carbon, and equity goals, working with agencies and other partners**

- landscape approach with Delmarva Woodland Stewards and buffers at Browns Branch WMA







**NEW YORK**  
STATE OF  
OPPORTUNITY

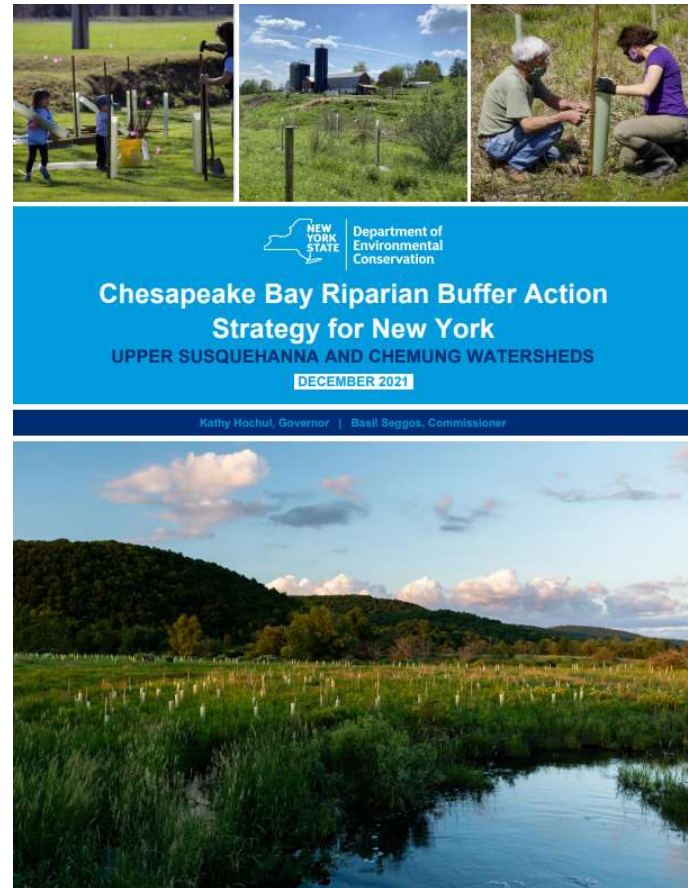
**Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation**

# **New York State Action Strategy For Riparian Forest Buffers**



# Action Strategy Outline

- Current Efforts
- Opportunities for Implementation
  - Participating Partners
  - Strategy for Implementation
  - Current Programs
  - Technical Assistance
  - Opportunity Analysis
  - Riparian Buffer Maintenance and Verification
  - Support Needed
- Climate Change
- Available Resources



# State Funding Programs

- Trees for Tribes/Buffer in a Bag
- Water Quality Improvement Program
- Environmental Justice Grant Program
- Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program
- Local Waterfront Revitalization Program
- Climate Smart Communities Grant Program
- Chesapeake Bay Riparian Buffer Restoration and Protection Grant
- Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement Program
- Agricultural Environmental Management
- Climate Resilient Farming Program





# Upper Susquehanna Coalition

## Buffer Program

- Implementation Programs
  1. Trees for Tributaries Program (DEC)
  2. USC Water Quality Program
  3. USC Natural Filter Protection Program
- Planning Program
- USC Buffer Steward Program



United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources  
Conservation Service



NFWF



Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund

Chesapeake Bay Program



Agriculture  
and Markets



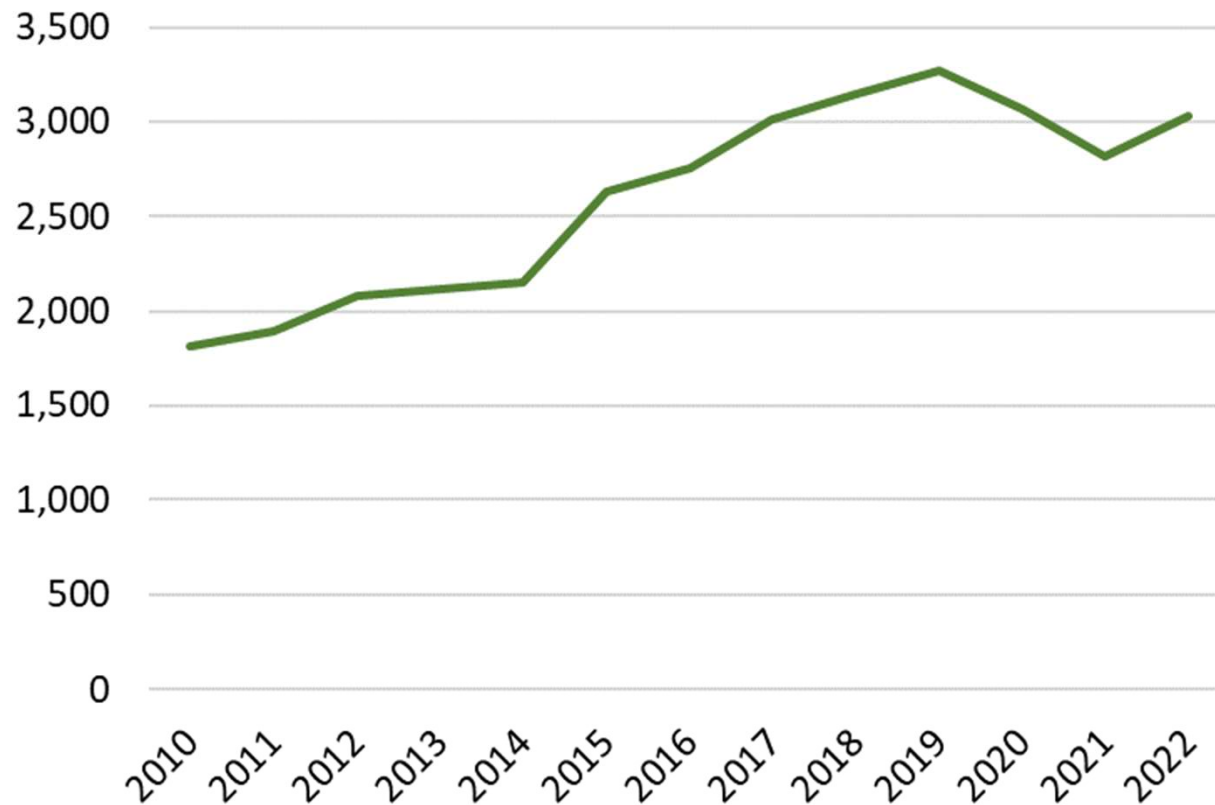
Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation



## Riparian Buffer Team Structure

- USC Buffer Committee (at least 15 SWCD staff)- guidance and program participation
- Three USC staff- program coordination and management.
- 5-10 seasonal buffer stewards.
- **All SWCD staff**- technical assistance, all programs.

## Acres of Riparian Forest Buffers Implementation from 2010-2022



Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation



# Continued Challenges

---

- USC staff capacity
- Continued funding for technical assistance and project implementation
- Flexible programs and funding sources that allow for project bundling
- Consistent funding mechanisms
- Staff training and onboarding resources
- Lack of maintenance contractors



A young tree sapling with green leaves is growing out of a grey, textured nursery container. The background is a blurred forest scene with green trees and a grey sky.

# Pennsylvania's RFB Action Strategy Update

**Matthew Keefer**

Assistant Director; Stewardship, Protection, and Conservation  
Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources  
Bureau of Forestry

# Strategy Review

## PA's Five Areas of Strategic Focus:

- Convening Partners and Stakeholders
- Communications and Outreach
- Financial Assistance
- Technical Assistance
- Engage Leadership





# Recent Key Accomplishments

1. Fully-staffed Watershed Forestry Team (10 positions)
2. Hosted first in-person Watershed Forestry Summit since 2019
  - ~150 attendees
3. Restoration ITQ (direct contract mechanism) developed, testing will begin summer/fall 2023
  - A potential long-term flexible buffer program
  - Nearly \$1m wait list of projects
4. Special grant round in 2022 bolstered by ARPA and EPA funds, including \$5,280,000 from PA General Assembly
  - Match reduced to 20% of overall project cost (previously 1:1 match required)
  - Funds are available for staff time, outreach, and contractor plantings
5. Planned planting of nearly 300 acres of forest buffer at new PA State Park in Big Elk Creek watershed in Chester County for Spring 2024 w/ Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Approaching 2,000 acres of annual implementation



Photo: Will Parson/Chesapeake Bay Program

# Challenges Encountered

- Demand generated by staff and partners outpacing available funding
- Contractor availability for planting and maintenance beginning to thin
- Limitations of working within grant/funding structures originally built for other purposes
- Staff turnover in TA positions
- Capacity to apply for and manage grants (internal and partner capacity)
- Reporting



Photo: Will Parson/Chesapeake Bay Program



# Opportunities for Leadership Support

- Creation of a buffer-specific funding mechanism that can support the specialized needs of buffer staffing, outreach, contracting, implementation, monitoring, maintenance, and reporting.
- Continued funding allocations to buffer programs.
- Review match requirements on buffer funding programs.
- Creation of workforce development programs for buffer planting and maintenance.





# Virginia's Riparian Forest Buffer Update

Caitlin Verdu  
Watershed Program Manager  
Virginia Department of Forestry



# Buffer Implementation in Virginia

- Department of Forestry RFB Action Plan created in June 2022
- Ongoing DOF efforts to increase implementation through:
  - Offering additional staff and partner training
  - Improving and clarifying reporting protocols
  - Creating new resources to navigate cost-share opportunities
  - Building stronger partnerships to identify, fund, and maintain buffer plantings
  - Increasing outreach and collecting information on why landowners do not want to plant buffers



# Statewide Planning

## Statewide RFB Action Plan

- Timeline
  - Funding requested June 2022, received May 2023
  - Contractor hired June 2023
  - Plan completion anticipated in winter 2024
- Plan will emphasize:
  - Increasing capacity for installing and maintaining buffers
  - Coordinating outreach to landowners to better match to best-fit programs
  - Better recording/reporting protocols to ensure accuracy and fully capture our accomplishments
  - Setting realistic and achievable goals and timelines
- WIP 14 Taskforce:  
Interagency collaboration to increase BMP implementation





## Next Steps

- Critical stakeholders have been identified with strong federal, state, local & nonprofit representation
- Gather additional information through stakeholder surveys
- Compile and analyze statewide and federal buffer data
- Hold stakeholder meetings in September & October
- Compile information into a draft plan
- Final plan to be completed in Winter 2024



Thank You!

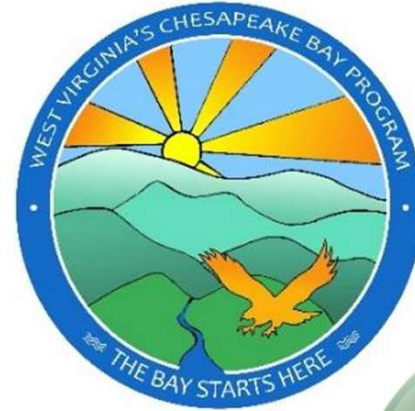
Contact Information:

Caitlin Verdu

[Caitlin.verdu@dof.virginia.gov](mailto:Caitlin.verdu@dof.virginia.gov)

# WV Riparian Buffer Action Strategy

July 13, 2023



**Jennifer Pauer**

[Jennifer.pauer@wv.gov](mailto:Jennifer.pauer@wv.gov)

WV Management Board

WV Dept. of Environmental Protection

Watershed Improvement Branch





## WV WIP Goal

To **install and maintain 250 acres per year** (for 7 years) in forest riparian buffers through CREP to reach a cumulative **total of 5,692 acres by 2025**.

Starting point for WIP III: **3,942 acres, 2017 progress level**. Annual implementation (2018 - 2021) **averaged 139 acres per year**, 80% of which was through CREP. Over 1,000 credited acres have been lost since 2017 due to expiration.

Strategy Goal - Return to WIP level of annual implementation

WV's plan, identifies **six areas** as opportunities or concerns around increasing new riparian forest buffer implementation or maintaining previously implemented practices already reported in the Chesapeake Bay model.

- **Staffing**
- **Maintenance**
- **Improving or streamlining CREP**
- **Non-CREP options**
- **Outreach and Education**
- **Tracking/Verification/Reporting**





## Staffing

- NRCS has hired one forester in the Potomac Valley conservation district in partnership with Trout Unlimited.
- Trout Unlimited is exploring additional shared positions with NRCS.





## Outreach

Trout Unlimited CBIG Objective includes RFB outreach, planning, installation and monitoring of past projects, even outside of TU priority areas.

WVU host monthly Zoom meeting for WV Woodlands Stewards.

Partners are sharing "Information regarding Tax Implications for producers who enroll in CREP. They are providing both the educational material as well as non-landowner grant options.

Farmer's tax guide: [About Publication 225, Farmer's Tax Guide | Internal Revenue Service](#)

# Maintenance



WV Division of Forestry is working with the Potomac Valley Conservation District to develop a tree tube buyback program.

PVCD is also stocking tree tubes and stakes for resale to landowners.

# Improving Streamlining CREP

Farm Service Agency is working on pursuing a higher rental rate in some counties.







## Questions to consider

- What are some opportunities for the Bay Program to support implementation of the Action Strategies?
- Are there any items that need to get elevated to the PSC to improve progress?