



Stewardship Workgroup – June 2026 Meeting

June 23, 2026
11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

Meeting Link: [Join the meeting via Zoom](#)

Meeting ID: 864 1467 8159 **Passcode:** 813089

[Visit the meeting webpage for meeting materials and additional information.](#)

Purpose: The purpose of this meeting was to introduce new workgroup members, solicit voting members, highlight Stewardship Lightning Talks showcasing stewardship efforts in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, and provide an update on Management Strategy development for the Stewardship Outcome.

Minutes

I. Welcome and Introductions (11:00 – 11:10 AM)

The Workgroup welcomed Katie Ayers as the new Stewardship Workgroup coordinator.
Leads: Marissa O'Neill, DC DOEE (Chair); Meredith Lemke, CRC (Staffer)

II. Stewardship Lightning Talk: Greening Richmond Public Libraries (11:10 – 11:30 AM)

Justin Doyle from the James River Association presented about the Greening Richmond Public Libraries initiative and answered questions following the presentation.

Lead: Justin Doyle, James River Association

Materials:

- Presentation: [Green Infrastructure Stewards](#)

Key Points:

- Community engagement is a large part of JRA's approach to tackling the challenge of stormwater pollution, e.g., engaging and training community stewards to maintain the BMPs at the libraries that are a part of the Greening Richmond Public Libraries initiative.
- Maintenance of green infrastructure projects is important for stormwater functions, native plant retention, and encouraging community trust and support.
- Green Infrastructure Stewards – launched the program in 2024; 12 certified individuals so far.
 - Values of the program: Results in beautiful library grounds, functioning BMPs, and adds capacity to JRA's work.
- Success Story: Andy Wessel, Wild Harmony Landscapes – he volunteered, got training from JRA and CBLP, launched his own landscaping contractor business, and is now the contractor JRA uses to maintain the grounds of a few JRA centers.

Discussion:

- Marissa: As the CBP Stewardship Workgroup, our new outcome and target are very focused on how we can build capacity of leaders in communities and environmental professionals and get

people the social data and technical assistance they need to support stewardship on both and individual level and community scale. Are there any areas where JRA is looking for support or advice from a group like this?

- Justin: Richmond Public Libraries is hiring a new contractor who is getting CBLP training to maintain the BMPs, so we are planning to hand off maintenance. So that creates new opportunities to engage the green infrastructure stewards in other areas beyond stewardship events at the libraries. We've begun talking to the City of Richmond about reactivating some of the BMPs around the city that need some TLC to start working again. We will also lean on the stewards as we plant 200 street trees around Easton Branch Library.
- Clare Auld-Brokish: What is the cadence/seasonal distribution of volunteer events?
 - Monthly on a predictable day of the week (Fridays) so showing up can become a part of individuals routines.
- Laura Cattell Noll: Are the Richmond Libraries their own non-profit/organization or are they part of the City of Richmond local government structure?
 - Justin: The libraries are part of the City of Richmond local government. JRA has a close relationship with the director of libraries and of ground maintenance.
 - JRA has been doing this work since 2019 and intends to until at least 2030. JRA's strong relationship with the library director is a key driver of longevity.

III. Stewardship Lightning Talk: Chesapeake Climate Action Network (11:30 – 11:50 AM)

Meredith Prescott from the Chesapeake Climate Action Network presented about the Chesapeake Climate Action Network's Tree Rescue Team Program and answered questions following the presentation.

Lead: Meredith Prescott, Chesapeake Climate Action Network

Materials:

- Presentation: [CCAN's Tree Rescue Team Program](#)

Key Points:

- Joint program between Chesapeake Climate Action Network and Casey Trees – a 3-year, grant-funded program with the goal of rescuing 3,800 mature trees that are being threatened by invasive vines in DC and Prince George's County.
- A unique feature and challenge of the program is the intention for 3,000 out of the 3,800 tree goal to be on private properties.
- Since 2024, have already saved close to 5,000 trees and engaged close to 700 volunteers.
- Casey Trees GIS Team has helped CCAN target their work and track their progress. GIS mapping has also been a beneficial visualization tool to help encourage support from municipalities and local communities.
- CCAN has used door hangers and a Google Form to request service to engage private property owners.
- CCAN has helped train/ build two local tree rescue teams to help this work live beyond the scope of the grant period and build a model of community engagement.
- Challenges:
 - Private property trees are harder to identify and rescue
 - Volunteer recruitment in low-income communities
 - Limited scope and duration
 - Vines grow back! The program conducts maintenance, not eradication.
 - Work with homeowners to teach them about the importance of invasive vine removal and how to do it

Discussion:

- Marissa: Do you often come across residents that are looking into taking the next step of wanting to remove additional invasives or learn how to plant natives?
 - Meredith Prescott: I hear anecdotally about follow-ups, e.g., a community wanting to get involved with our native shrub program, but we don't track that directly. Another way that we approach that, is that we have a tree FAQ sheet that I send with volunteers when they knock on doors, because we found that it helps establish trust.
- Meredith Lemke: Who are the primary volunteers you tend to see in your program, and when they're getting involved, what would you say are their main motivations (e.g., volunteer hour requirements, Master Naturalist programs, interest in learning about native species)?
 - Meredith Prescott: Everyone has their own motivation. So it's really helpful when a new volunteer joins the program to have a conversation about what motivates them, how to continue to get them involved, and how to escalate them into leadership. Early on it was a lot of people who have done invasive removals before. We've had a lot of success with students who need service hours. We also do outreach at farmers markets, happy hours, and engagement events and make the program fun and also a space to build community (food is a big draw).
 - Justin Doyle: Some of the volunteers we interact with regularly are retirees who are looking to stay active and have a community. We also tap into volunteers who live very close to the libraries as ongoing stewards beyond our green infrastructure stewards events.
- Clare Auld-Brokish: What did the initial tree/invasive vine survey look like? How did you know invasive vines were present especially on private property?
 - Initial survey involves looking around neighborhoods with vines present, especially during winter, and knocking on all of the doors to connect with the community.

Lightning Talk Discussion Questions

- How does your organization shift stewardship program designs and recruitment strategies in areas with low engagement?
- Have you employed any creative techniques to bolster engagement?
 - Justin: Volunteer appreciation is very important. Doing so in a celebratory way (with food) builds those relationships.
 - Katie Ayers: Highlighting the financial long-term benefits of managing invasives, stewardship practices, native landscaping, etc. can help folks see the value.
 - Laura: It's also important to recognize that the "co-benefits" may often be the primary benefits for our partners, e.g., when working with local governments on increasing tree canopy, the beautification and economic pieces are likely the primary benefit as opposed to the stormwater mitigation effects.

IV. Chesapeake Bay Program Updates

(11:50 – 12:10 PM)

Marissa and Katie provided updates about the Bay Program governance framework and structure changes, the upcoming call for Workgroup voting members, Management Strategy drafting for the Stewardship Outcome, and the July 9th Engaged Communities Goal Team meeting.

Leads: Marissa O'Neill, DC DOEE (Chair); Katie Ayers, EPA (Coordinator)

Materials:

- Presentation: [Stewardship Workgroup Meeting Slides](#)

Key Points:

- July 9 – first Engaged Communities Goal Team Meeting
- Revised Governance and Management Framework is available

- Drafting CBP Strategic Plan / Goal-level Management Strategies with Outcome-level subchapters this summer. A draft of the Stewardship Subchapter is due to be submitted to the Policy Steering Committee (PSC) by October 19, 2026. There will be a public feedback period in January 2027.
 - Katie, Marissa, Meredith, and Jenny are working on drafting the Stewardship Subchapter. We welcome input and participation from anyone else in the Workgroup who is interested – particularly on the Challenges section.
 - Management Strategies will be updated on a 6-year cadence, Workplans will be updated every 3 years.

Action Item: A draft of the Stewardship Management Strategy Subchapter is forthcoming in early August for your asynchronous comment/review. If you would like to provide comments about the challenges presented during the meeting, you are welcome to do so at any time.

Discussion:

- Jenny – I'm very excited about the focus on building the capacity of the leaders in the community and environmental professionals versus individual volunteers or stewards themselves. I'm looking at these challenges and I see a lot of intention towards challenges of those leaders, but I would love to see more emphasis on the word capacity, and other layers beyond ability to recruit and train volunteers and local leaders.

V. Discussion and Wrap-Up

(12:10 – 12:25 PM)

Workgroup leadership provided time for open discussion, questions, and identifying collaboration opportunities.

Leads: Marissa O'Neill, DC DOEE (Chair); Katie Ayers, EPA (Coordinator)

Action Item: Let us know what you thought about the format of the lightning talks. Should they be longer, shorter, 3 speakers, 1 speaker, more time for discussion, etc.

Action Item: Let us know if you would like to join the July 28th SET meeting ASAP and Meredith will forward the invitation.

Details:

- **July 28 SET Meeting** -- [Meeting request submission](#)
- **Main Topics:**
 1. How to grow Stewardship Workgroup membership (more mid-level stewardship practitioners/program managers, especially from nonprofit orgs)
 - Outreach tips from SET?
 2. How to make membership a mutually beneficial relationship between CBP and practitioners (e.g. lightning talks, resource toolkits, Bay.net projects, broader outreach)
 3. Action Team redesign and writing purpose statements for action teams
 - Current informal action teams: Community-Level Stewardship, Resource Hub, Map Ambassadors (but Comm-Lvl Stew and Res-Hub are already sort of morphing into one team)
 - Redesign into 2 action teams? Two focuses could be: Resources/Capacity-Building and Outreach/Network-Building
 - Formalize Action Teams w/ Goal Team approval.
 4. Ultimately how will we achieve our target: no funding reality vs. our ideal world
 - In an ideal world if we had funding to provide assistance and capacity to stewardship environmental professionals, what would that look like? (e.g., what did LGL tech assistance look like? What resources/engagement materials would be most useful?)

VI. Wrap-Up and Adjourn

(12:25 – 12:30 PM)

Lead: Meredith Lemke, CRC (Staffer)

Next Meeting: September 29, 11:00 AM –12:30 PM

Attendance:

- Justin Doyle, James River Association
- Meredith Prescott, Chesapeake Climate Action Network
- Meredith Lemke, CRC / CBP
- Katie Ayers, EPA
- Marissa O'Neill, DOEE
- Clare Auld-Brokish, DOEE
- Jenny McGarvey, Alliance
- Julie Mawhorter, US Forest Service
- Kayli Ottomannelli, Alliance
- Kelly Doordan, Trash Free Maryland
- Laura Cattell Noll, Alliance
- Lauren Sauder, Alliance
- Mary Hundt, DCNR
- Renee Bourassa, ICPRB