



Forestry Workgroup Meeting Minutes
Oct 5, 2022
Meeting Materials

Rebecca Hanmer, Chair
Sophie Waterman, CRC
Katie Brownson, USFS
Teddi Stark, PA BOF
Derrick McDonald, PA BOF
Brenda Sieglitz, CBF
Cassandra Davis, NYS DEC
Molly Hassett, NYS DEC
Peter Hoagland, NRCS PA
Danielle Gift, USFS
Frank Rodgers, Cacapon Inst.
Rick Turcotte, USFS
Rosey Santerre, WV Division of Forestry
Terry Lasher, VDOF

Rob Schnabel, CBF
Paul Emmart, MDE
Craig Highfield, ACB
Jenna Talbot, DNREC
Holly Walker, DNREC
Joe Schell, DNREC
Anne Hairston-Strang, MD DNR
Ned Brockmeyer, PA BOF
Collin Shephard, USFS
Kalaia Tripeaux, PA DCNR
Katie Ombalski, Woods and Waters
Julie Mawhorter, USFS
Keesha Braunskill, DNREC

Forestry Best Management Practices in 2021 Progress

Katie shared data received from the CBP on Forestry BMP implementation for the 2021 Progress run. She ran through each of the BMPs and gave a little context on why we are seeing certain trends, and how we are doing in terms of meeting our goals. The numbers are cumulative. Each state set their own WIP goals showing how they plan to meet their allocated load reduction. Some states also spoke up about their progress or lack of progress and gave some more context to the numbers.

We discussed Virginia's lofty goals for forestry practices. These are aspirational and the state is starting to look at the realities of trying to meet those goals. There has been a re-evaluation of how long it will take to meet the 2025 goals.

Anne asked about the issue of expiring credits. Katie talked about how tree planting should be getting picked up in the land use data and then put in the model, so the expiration should not matter as it is going to be counted in the LU/LC data. The issue at the moment is that forest buffers don't get to keep their bonus upstream efficiency credit if they aren't verified. The land use conversion for buffers will be picked up in the land use data, but once the credit expires after 15 years, if the buffer isn't verified, the efficiency credit also expires. Anne noted that it is a struggle to get the buffer verification into NEIEN. It might be good for states to better understand how to get that verification right. There was particular interest in having the forestry workgroup organize a tutorial to make sure that acres are getting verified correctly.

Rebecca asked the group if they would be interested in having some time at one of our future meetings to do an accounting session and make sure we are capturing everything we think we are in the model. We could talk about how each states numbers are getting reported, if states are satisfied with the information in the system and ask questions about credit durations. Katie suggested that we have that discussion closer to the release of the new CAST as things are probably going to change a bit.

Overview of Strategy Review System process

Sophie ran through the SRS process and what it means for the forest buffer outcome. The Strategy Review System is Chesapeake Bay Program's adaptive management process that works towards achieving the outcomes of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. SRS runs on a two-year cycle. Each two-year cycle begins at a Management Board Quarterly Progress meeting. The meeting is for outcomes to report on their past two years and request action or assistance for the next two years. Prior to that meeting outcomes have to have the following materials ready:

- The Outcome's past Logic and Action Plan color coded with how that outcome did during the last cycle.
- A narrative analysis which is a review of the last two years and what we are looking towards in the next two years.
- A presentation which summarizes the information in the Logic & Action Plan and Narrative Analysis, as well as any changes the workgroup anticipates making to its Management Strategy. It supports a GIT's request for action, support, or assistance.

The Forest Buffer Outcome starts its new two-year cycle when it presents to the Management Board on December 8th. Prior to that meeting, draft materials and a dry run of the presentation are due. The dry run will take place on November 17th at the STAR meeting where we will get feedback. We will have a little time to incorporate it into our materials before we submit to the Management Board.

After the December 8th meeting is when we create a new logic and action plan for 2022-2024 with updated factors, current efforts, and gaps to reflect any new understanding. We also get an (optional) opportunity to update the forest buffer management strategy, which is just a document that outlines how we will manage our outcome. The other component of this is creating our science needs which comes out of our identified gaps in the logic and action plan. We also get an opportunity to update previously identified science needs that are still considered a priority.

Reviewing our Previous Riparian Forest Buffer Workplan

Katie kicked off the review of our last Logic and Action Plan asking for input from the workgroup. States gave some input on the different actions.

We discussed the two components of the buffer outcome. We have a goal to restore 900 miles/year of buffers and also a goal to buffer 70% of the riparian area across the watershed. For the 70% goal, some people take that as the ceiling, when in reality the workgroup sees it as a minimum. Rob noted that it could be useful to show how close we to meeting 70% in each of the states on the BMP progress graphs. How many acres are there to buffer to meet our goal? Katie said that would be helpful, but we do not currently know exactly how many buffer-able acres there are. Hopefully with the new data we will get a better idea.

As we walked through the past two years and what the outcome has achieved, there were some comments about what we may want to include in the next workplan. Anne noted that we should really be explicitly including more equity and climate resilience into our actions. Community needs can be addressed through buffer investments (i.e., hazard mitigation, investment in parks, heat islands, climate concerns, protection of urban streams).

There was also some discussion about the importance of the FWG coming forward with specific proposals for action, particularly around opportunities for better regional coordination. For example, we could work to better address common challenges, such as needing to better fund maintenance, improve access to contractors, increase/improve technical assistance, and address tree supply issues.

Rebecca requested that states please look over the logic and action plan and to please add examples to the justification column. Sophie and Katie will be compiling everything.

Action: We are requesting members review our 2020 Logic and Action Plan and think about the actions in the context of their state. Members are also asked to let the FWG coordination team know if they disagree with how a particular action has been rated and make comments as to why they think the action should be rated in a particular way. Any examples of progress made, or barriers encountered in a member's state would also be helpful. **Please send your comments and examples on the Logic and Action Plan to Sophie (swaterman@chesapeakebay.net) by COB October 20th.**

Round robin on Riparian Forest Buffer grants

Pennsylvania

Teddi Stark: PA has gotten a NFWF grant that focuses on converting lawns back to natural lands and expanding buffers. They have about \$500 thousand budgeted to do buffers through a new direct contracting process. PA has just gotten their contract and are still going through their procurement pieces. PA will be contracting out the \$500 thousand to plant the buffers. The plantings will be targeted at tier I and II counties. PA is learning about the complexity of contracting out work. For example, they can only fund two \$50 thousand direct contract projects a year, so projects are going to have to be bundled together. More lessons learned will be reported on when projects get started.

The other NFWF grant that has recently closed was the PA Stream Releaf. This grant provided a flat rate per acre buffer funding process through a partnership with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. The flat rate per acre funding model was really popular with partners. Funding started out with four thousand dollars per acre, but they learned quickly that it was not enough. The state then moved to fund at five thousand per acre. The buffers were funded upfront, a report was required after the planting, and money could be used for post planting establishment and maintenance if they did not use all the money up front.

Craig Highfield: The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay in PA is out planting buffers this fall planting season. Folks at the Alliance are working on DCNR and NFWF grants for working with corporations (like Organic Valley). The Alliance is set to plant about 90 acres of buffers this fall in PA. Producers are ready for buffers, and these buffer plantings will be tied in with other farm practices.

Brenda Sieglitz: In PA, Molly is working with Keystone Tree's south-central partners on their NFWF INSR grant. This fall they will have some projects going into the ground with subcontracted private contractors.

New York

Lydia Brinkley: New York had an Arbor Day Foundation Grant last that supported larger stock. New York has applied for that grant again. The Upper Susquehanna Coalition is getting a bunch of funding from the state (not competitive) to help fund ag related projects.

Upper Susquehanna Coalition also has three NFWF grants:

- One is on stream corridor restoration. It is based on getting buffers in areas where there is a need for stream corridor restoration.
- One grant project is on getting permanent protection for natural filters. Upper Susquehanna Coalition is working with land trusts to get permanent protection on buffers, wetlands, and other things that are classified as natural filters. That grant project will hopefully be starting soon.
- The last grant is just a basic "plant trees everywhere" but has a focus on planting buffers. Upper Susquehanna Coalition does not have the contract yet but has been notified that it is funded.

Upper Susquehanna Coalition has also received two grants that are very similar to the permanent protection grant project from SRBC. The grants are for purchasing large parcels and doing stream bank restoration, wetland restoration, and riparian restoration all on the same project.

Upper Susquehanna Coalition is matching all the grants.

People want to sign up for buffers, the money just has to be there. SRBC has been really flexible with funding so that Upper Susquehanna Coalition can purchase properties. Upper Susquehanna Coalition does not want to hold onto the properties, they will purchase them and give them to the State or a land trust.

Lydia noted that she would love to set up something where Upper Susquehanna Coalition purchases old farms, puts all the important conservation practices on the farm, and then sells the farm as a farm. This is a win-win as natural filters and conservation practices will be protected and the farm can go back to being a farm.

West Virginia

Frank Rodgers

Teresa Coon of WV DEP is leading the WV riparian forest buffer workgroup. There is also a Trout Unlimited statewide effort under way that is looking at riparian forest buffer with Farm Service Agency folks, conservation districts, and watershed associations.

Berkeley and Jefferson counties have a Safe Water Coalition that is looking at the riparian buffers as a source water protection issue.

Rosey Santerre:

Coalitions count and it has been really awesome to be able to see all the progress West Virginia has been able to make in the few months.

Virginia

Virginia representatives had left the meeting prior to giving updates. Rebecca noted that she would love to hear about the buffer work being done by the James River Association. The other thing Rebecca noted was that plantings being done by the Friends of the Rappahannock may not have been reported. NFWF has spoken about how they think these coalitions are going to be the way to get more plantings done, and it would be great if they could speak on their effectiveness periodically.

Maryland

Anne Hairston-Strang: MD is wrapping up a NFWF grant that focused on how to improve performance of riparian forest buffers, looking specifically at invasive and concentrated flow issues. Some preliminary findings of that work include that when buffers are planted, species richness doubled, but invasive species richness grew at an even faster rate. The buffers they evaluated had mostly native plants, but invasives have become a growing problem. Invasive control is crucial to buffer management. Concentrated flows were found to be pretty common, but they worked with partners to identify complementary practices for expanding buffers upslope or other practices that could mitigate concentrated flows. They have a fact sheet that is mostly done.

Farm Service Agency and USFS funding for technical assistance has been really helpful to the state. Buffers have been woven into Landscape Scale Restoration grants. The five million trees funding has been super beneficial for not only increased funding but also increase interest in trees and buffer plantings. The issue will be training enough staff and contractors to do the work well and get good outcomes.

Rob Schnabel: CBF has gotten some NFWF grants as well. They have been doing whole farm conservation work, working on converting corn and soybean fields to permanent diverse cover pastures and getting cows out of riparian areas. This grant is for the whole watershed but Rob told a promising story that is happening in MD: Young Amish farmers are moving into northern parts of MD and are partaking in regenerative agriculture and crop rotation. Historically in those areas we have only seen row crops, so it is really refreshing to see regenerative agriculture.

CBF also has a specific MD buffer NFWF grant that focuses on three MD counties (Frederick, Carroll, and Washington counties) that make up two-thirds of the statewide goal for forest buffers on Agriculture land. As a part of this there is an education of consumers on regenerative agricultural.

Craig Highfield: In MD, ACB is finishing up a buffer incentive grant in the Chesapeake Log Perch Watershed. That grant has helped plant 160 acres of buffers. ACB has received their next round of funding for Healthy Forest, Healthy Waters. That's an ACB partnership with Maryland Forest Service and Maryland Forestry Foundation. About 200 acres of riparian and upland forest will be planted in the fall and the spring.

ACB is waiting on their INSR grant which will have buffer components working with MS4s in MD. They will also be working with Organic Valley and Hershey on these projects. Craig also noted that MD has received a bunch of other small watershed grants that will help multiple counties in the state.

ACB is holding their Buffer Summit in Frederick MD on October 12.

Delaware

Patti Webb: Chesapeake WIP folks are executing the DE buffer plan. A program is coming together for RFB outside of CREP through CBIG and 319 funds.

Other

In the chat Katie Ombalski wrote:

Just a reminder that NFWF's INSR RFP is live, and proposals are due November 17th. There are two tracks this year: INSR Partnership Grants and INSR Infrastructure Grants. States are eligible applicants. Grants awards can range from \$500,000 - \$1,000,000. Partnerships require a 1:1 non-federal match. Infrastructure grants do not have a match requirement. Priority practices for Infrastructure grants include riparian forest buffers, including associated livestock exclusion fencing, and urban tree planting. Please reach out to me if you are interested in discussing project ideas katie@woodswaters.com