



Minutes
Chesapeake Bay Forestry Workgroup (FWG)

March 7, 2018 9AM – 10:30 AM

Conference Line: 888-844-9904, Code: 6802405#

Adobe Connect:

<https://epawebconferencing.acms.com/fwg>

Meeting Attendees

Sally Claggett, USFS, *Coordinator*
Katherine Wares, CRC, *Staff*
Luke Cole, DC DOEE
Anne Hairston-Strang, MD DNR
Dakota Durcho, MD FS
Nathan Forand, Baltimore County
Karen Coffma, MDOT
Cassandra Davis, NYSDEC
Lydia Brinkley, USC
Teddi Stark, PA DCNR
Greg Evans, VA Office of Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry
Matt Poirot, VA DOF
Frank Rogers, Cacapon Institute
Tanner Haid, Cacapon Institute
Barry Frantz, NRCS
Kathy Boomer, TNC
Joan Smedinghoff, ACB (Communications)
Craig Highfield, ACB (Forestry Program Leader)
Jenny McGarvey, ACB (VA)
Ryan Davis, ACB (PA)
Holly May, ACB (WV)
Amanda Duren, Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture
Kate Gordon (Was on adobe connect)

Cerulean Warbler Partnership in Pennsylvania

Amanda Duren, Cerulean Warbler Partnership Coordinator, reviewed the biology and habitat of Cerulean Warblers in Pennsylvania and the Cerulean Warbler Appalachian Forestland Enhancement Project. These warblers have experienced population decline due to habitat loss of mature deciduous forests (oak) with complex forest structure. Most of present-day forests are over-stocked and very uniform, with closed canopies that lack the variety of habitat structure required by many songbirds, including Cerulean Warblers. One of the greatest threats to forest health and wildlife habitat quality is unsustainable timber practices. Unfortunately many harvests conducted on private lands in

Pennsylvania are not planned with future growth and health of the forest in mind. Most are driven solely by timber markets and commercial value of the stand. Usually, this type of harvest removes only the best, most valuable trees, leaving only the smaller, and probably genetically inferior or less-desirable species to grow into the future forest—a practice called high-grading.

However, timber harvesting techniques that can be used to enhance forest habitat for Cerulean Warblers and promote the development of features they are attracted to, such as a heterogeneous canopy:

- One technique that is used to promote oak regeneration is a *shelterwood harvest*. A shelterwood harvest is where both small and (some) large trees are removed, leaving other larger trees to act as seed trees. This practice favors trees that require less than full sun light, such as oaks. A shelterwood harvest also promotes increased understory density, and creates a more open canopy. Usually, the over-story trees are removed 10-15 years later in a second cut to release the regenerating trees on the forest floor. Cerulean Warblers are especially common in shelterwood harvests. Additional sunlight reaching the forest floor encourages the growth of understory plants, which provide insects for songbirds. Insects are especially important for songbirds, and in the case of Cerulean Warblers, more than 70% of prey fed to nestlings is caterpillars.
- Another technique is *group selection* which is a regeneration system in which trees are removed in small groups. A small group opening encourages a diverse canopy structure and understory development. This system mimics small-scale natural disturbance and hence stimulates the natural regeneration of certain species well adapted to the subsequent conditions of light and temperature.
- A third technique is *crop tree release*. A crop tree can be any tree that the landowner wants to retain, and by cutting all trees whose crowns touch the crop tree crown, crop-trees can grow faster. The practice is typically applied in 15 to 20 year-old stands.
- *Thinning* is another forest management technique used to reduce stem and crown density and to favor desirable residual trees. Proper spacing and thinning can reduce overcrowding and relieve tree stress. Thinning a forest helps maintain the health and vigor of a forest. Thinning can reduce fire hazards, generate revenue, and increase the value of remaining trees.
- Another extremely effective and valuable tool in promoting oak regeneration is *herbicide*. There are a number of targeted application techniques that control competing and invasive species. Also, there are herbicides that target just trees or just ferns or grasses and that have no soil activity, meaning that they will not kill any new plants that germinate in the soil. Herbicides can be a low-cost and practical method to greatly improve the health of a forest.

The Cerulean Warbler Appalachian Forestland Enhancement Project is a partnership between the Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture (AMJV) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) through their Regional Conservation Partnership Program to work with private landowners to enhance forest habitat using the above sustainable forest management practices for Cerulean Warblers. There are a number of other criteria the Partnership looks at to determine the suitability of a property as cerulean warbler habitat and project site. First, the property must be within a forested landscape, with

80% forest cover or more within the surrounding 1.5 miles. Also, any new habitat is more likely to be used by cerulean warblers if there are already cerulean warblers in the surrounding area. So, funding preference is given to properties that are near known cerulean warbler populations. Finally, cerulean warblers prefer steep upper slopes, especially northern and eastern-facing slopes, so preference is given to properties meeting these characteristics as well. The Partnership has a RCPP agreement with 129 contracts awarded and over \$3million in financial assistance awarded over more than 5,000 acres contracted. They have over \$700,000 in financial assistance remaining with plans to do over 3,000 more acres of habitat implementation.

Questions and Comments

- Members asked about future efforts. The Cerulean Warbler Partnership hopes to continue the work through a new RCPP agreement.
- Are there quarters that are particularly attractive to warblers? The Cerulean Warbler Partnership's focal area is the ridge and valley area of West Virginia, Western Maryland and Pennsylvania; these areas are important for nesting and migration.
- What role do local foresters play or how could the FWG be of assistance? The Cerulean Warbler Partnership works with WF DOF, VA DOF, MD FS, and PA DCNR. Foresters can help by recommending this project and NRCS forest management to landowners.
- Do you think landowner participation is wildlife or forestry motivated? Amanda estimates about two-thirds are interested in wildlife, not necessarily cerulean warblers, and the rest are more interested in timber growth.

CBP Updates

Sally reviewed 2017 BMP Progress Data that is now available in BayTAS. 2018 Progress Data will be in CAST. The 2017 RFB numbers in CAST will be negative for most states which affirms the importance of verification and reporting. The first priority "Conservation Plus" scenario for the 2025 Forecast is Forest Conservation and should be done in March 2018. The Forestry Workgroup will be presenting on the RFB Outcome to the Management Board in May as part of the Strategic Review System (SRS). The Tree Canopy Outcome will be up in October. For this process, we must review our workplan actions, answer guided questions, and identify key issues to bring to the Management Board. After the presentation we will have 90 days to create a new 2year workplan.

Round Robin

- DC DOEE: A new large parcel grant has officially been awarded with the goal of 1,300 trees/year. Additionally, they are approaching 9,000 trees planted since October.