

The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Forestry Program

USDA Forest Service
Northeastern Area
State and Private Forestry



Restoring the Bay through conservation, restoration and stewardship of forests

Description: The Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP), created in 1984, is a watershed partnership led by the Governors of Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia; the District of Columbia; the Chesapeake Bay Commission; and the U.S. EPA Administrator, who represents all federal agencies. CBP coordinates policies and actions to improve water quality, restore habitats, and encourage land stewardship in the 41million acre Chesapeake Bay watershed. The partnership highlighted the need for enhanced forest stewardship in its report, *Chesapeake 2000*, an extensive set of commitments to watershed restoration goals.



The USDA Forest Service has been a partner since 1990. The Northeastern Area (NA) State and Private Forestry provides forestry leadership and facilitates the activities of the Forestry Workgroup (FWG), a diverse, multi-jurisdictional partnership that represents the watershed's forestry community. NA Cooperative Forestry Programs help fund planning, education, and on-the-ground demonstration and restoration projects. Innovative partnerships help leverage the Federal funds by contributing other sources of funds and expertise.

The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Forestry Program works to: 1) create a regional model linking forest conservation, restoration, and stewardship to watershed health while sustaining working landscapes; 2) find solutions to watershed and forestry issues by serving as a catalyst for action; 3) bring science, technical, and financial assistance together to meet Chesapeake Bay goals; and 4) build new partnerships for regional forest stewardship.

Key Issues:

- Forests are part of the solution to reducing non-point pollution in agricultural and urban areas.
- Riparian forests are critical to water quality, aquatic health, and habitat diversity; these areas require substantial restoration and protection.
- In this region of 15 million residents, nearly 100 acres of forest are fragmented or developed every day, degrading the Bay and threatening the viability of regional resource-based economies.
- With 90 percent of the land in private ownership, strong partnerships and collaboration are essential to demonstrating how forest protection, restoration, and stewardship contribute to restoring Chesapeake Bay.

Accomplishments:

- Led, supported, and participated in activities of the Potomac Watershed Partnership (PWP), a community watershed restoration project. To date, PWP has restored more than 700 miles of riparian forest buffers and 600 acres of wetlands, permanently protected over 6,000 acres of land, and leveraged a cost-benefit ratio of 1:28. In 2003, PWP's Growing Native event engaged more than 7,000 volunteers in the collection of 18,800 pounds of native hardwood tree seeds at over 300 sites.
- Led the Chesapeake Bay Program in the development and completion of an expanded set of riparian forest buffer goals, which the Executive Council approved in December. The new goals include restoring 10,000 miles by 2010, restoring 70 percent of riparian areas in the long-term, ensuring the survival of newly-restored buffers, advancing efforts to conserve existing buffers, and working with local jurisdictions to enhance urban tree canopy coverage.
- Directly granted \$238,525 to non-profit partners for seven forestry projects, and granted \$367,000 to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants Program for forestry

projects ranging from stormwater retrofits to community watershed planning to buffer restoration activities.

- Enhanced state partners' capacities by providing an additional \$248,000 in grants to states to facilitate forest land conservation, data collection, training, and reporting related to Chesapeake Bay forestry issues.
- Represented the USDA Forest Service and State Foresters on Chesapeake Bay committees and provided staff support for the CBP Forestry Workgroup.
- Conducted the first annual field foresters' watershed training at Smith Island in October 2003 for 20 field foresters to learn about the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem through a hands-on experience.
- Developed a five-year strategic action plan for USDA Forest Service and state partners' forestry activities in the Chesapeake Bay—including hosting of a Chesapeake Bay State Forester's Summit.
- Provided data, assistance, and led the technical review for the CBP Resource Lands Task Force forestlands water quality and economic assessments to identify high-priority forestlands in the watershed to conserve.
- Completed a centralized riparian forest buffer spatial database, linking online data entry to GIS mapping to evaluate past restoration and target future efforts.

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<i>(\$ Thousands)</i>				
	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004
Watershed Forestry Program	\$500	\$750	\$994	\$988
Potomac Watershed Partnership (R8&NA)	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,100
Total	\$1,700	\$1,950	\$2,194	\$2,088

Future Direction:

- Continue to provide support for the Potomac Watershed Partnership, including the small grants funding in the Potomac basin.
- Work with state partners to restore riparian forest buffers and initiate strategies to accomplish the new riparian forest buffer goal of 10,000 miles by 2010.
- Work with State Foresters and the Forestry Workgroup to identify and target critical forests and watersheds for integrated place-based forest conservation and restoration initiatives.
- Develop and implement a "Forestry for the Bay" recognition program for sustainable forestry practices.
- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the forests in the Chesapeake Bay watershed to be published as the "State of the Chesapeake Bay Forests" report.
- Host two design workshops to develop innovative stormwater practices that incorporate trees. Use these practices to complete the development of an urban watershed manual.
- Research synthesize, and publish literature on how forest fragmentation and forestland conversion affects water quality and watershed function. Seek consensus on research findings to support policy goals.
- Work with Penn State Land Analysis Laboratory to complete a riparian forest buffer inventory for 2000 and redo the 1990 baseline inventory. Use the data to measure progress in riparian forest conservation.
- Provide assistance to conduct urban canopy assessments, establish urban canopy goals, and develop canopy enhancement strategies for urban jurisdictions in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

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