

Chesapeake Watershed Forestry

USDA Forest Service
Northeastern Area
State and Private Forestry



Restoring the health and productivity of the Chesapeake Bay watershed

Description: Because forests play a vital role in water quality, every acre of forest lost means an increase in nutrients polluting the Bay. The U.S. Forest Service has been providing critical Federal leadership and technical expertise for forest-related projects in the watershed since 1992. Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry coordinates the activities of an interagency, multistate Forestry Workgroup and facilitates the involvement of State Foresters, the Southern Region of the Forest Service, Forest Service Research, and the George Washington/Jefferson National Forest. The Chesapeake Bay Program focuses on the three most important forest practices for improving water quality: restoring riparian forest buffers, increasing urban tree canopy, and protecting priority forests.

Key Issues:

- Every day, the Chesapeake watershed loses about 100 acres of forest.
- Experts project that 9.5 million acres of the region’s privately owned forests will face some level of development by 2030.
- Forests are part of the solution to reducing nonpoint 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.
- With 90 percent of the Chesapeake’s watershed in private ownership, strong partnerships and collaboration are essential.
- Protecting and improving water quality requires regional cooperation at the highest levels.

Accomplishments:

- Worked closely with 12 other Federal agencies to address requirements in Executive Order 13508– Chesapeake Bay Protection and Restoration.
- Restored 729 miles of riparian forest buffer, bringing the total to 6,943.4 miles since 1996.
- Protected 24,388 acres of priority forest from development and 174,478 acres of forest in 2 years through the 2007 Chesapeake Forest Conservation Directive (http://www.chesapeakebay.net/content/publications/cbp_27761.pdf).
- Increased tree canopy in 80 communities. Completed assessments in another 40 communities.
- Prepared *The Bay Bank* for launch as a national model of a multicredit ecosystem marketplace.
- Enrolled 275 members in *Forestry for the Bay*, an online sustainable forest education program targeting landowners with smaller-sized lots (5-50 acres).
- Launched a test version of a user-friendly mapping tool, the “Mapper,” which can monitor small-scale land use change.
- Awarded eight forest conservation grants totaling \$477,500 to nonprofit partners and local governments in partnership with EPA, NOAA, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.
- The Potomac Watershed Partnership celebrated its 10th year. Its flagship program, *Growing Native*, is considered a premier community based watershed partnership. This program attracted over 9,000 volunteers in 2009 for forestry related projects, including the collection of 21,000 pounds of native tree seed for use at school grow-out stations and State nurseries.

Budget History:

Chesapeake Watershed Forestry (\$ Thousands)					
	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010
Total	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$945	\$1,000	\$2,000

Future Direction:

- Release of the beta version of *LandServer*, an online GIS application that uses a suite of data layers to help a landowner identify the unique resources on his or her property with an easy-to-use Google map interface. *LandServer* will work to deliver *Forestry for the Bay* and *The Bay Bank* applications seamlessly.
- Implement the Executive Order strategy for forests and related goals, particularly forest conservation and restoration of riparian forest buffers that were part of the 2007 Chesapeake Forest Conservation Directive.
- Planned 2010 release of *The Bay Bank* (<http://www.thebaybank.org/>), a regional, multicredit, environmental services marketplace where landowners can identify, calculate, and buy and sell environmental credits.
- In 2010, the Chesapeake Bay Program will apply improved modeling abilities to quantify urban forest environmental service benefits, especially stormwater benefits.
- Administer a Forest Conservation Group, part of the online Chesapeake Watershed Network, which continues to be a growing means to circulate information and ideas about watershed forestry issues. It now has 109 participants.
- In 2010, provide tools for local governments and citizen groups to track land use at a local scale to monitor progress towards Watershed Implementation Plans required by the Clean Water Act.
- Continue to track and report progress toward tree canopy, riparian forest, and forest conservation goals agreed to by six State governors, the Federal government, and the Mayor of Washington DC.

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