

# Chesapeake Bay Watershed Forestry

USDA Forest Service  
Northeastern Area  
State and Private Forestry



*Restoring a large watershed and a national treasure*

**Description:** Native forests of the Chesapeake Bay region are vital to protecting water quality and habitat for the watershed's more than 3,600 species of plants and animals. Yet more than 100 acres of forest are lost to development every day, and the Bay's health continues to decline.

In 2010, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency set a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for 92 river segments that feed the main stem of the Bay. Setting this TMDL is noteworthy because the affected states have taken extensive measures to reduce pollution in their rivers that feed the bay, and to meet progress deadlines. Also in 2010, the *Strategy for Protecting and Restoring the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and 2011 Action Plan* (<http://executiveorder.chesapeakebay.net/>) were completed per Executive Order 13508, ushering in a new era of Federal leadership, action, and accountability.

## Key Points:

- Restoration, conservation, and stewardship of private forest lands are essential to watershed health. The Forest Service works closely with State agencies and others to identify priority areas where forest practices will most benefit water quality, and assists with implementing these practices. The Forest Service also helps to quantify the water quality benefits of forest practices.
- The goal to conserve working forests in the Chesapeake is shared by a suite of Federal agencies, as well as many non-Federal partners.
- The Forest Service has a track record of innovation and accountability in the Chesapeake watershed over the past 20 years. A few recent examples are—
  - The Bay Bank (<http://thebaybank.org/>)—links landowners with conservation resources
  - LandServer ([www.landserver.org/](http://www.landserver.org/))—a conservation assessment tool
  - The state of Chesapeake forests (<http://na.fs.fed.us/watershed/socf.shtm>)—the report synthesizes more than a decade of data from public and private sources
  - Protecting the forests of the Chesapeake Bay watershed: 2007 response to Directive 06-1 ([http://www.chesapeakebay.net/content/publications/cbp\\_27761.pdf](http://www.chesapeakebay.net/content/publications/cbp_27761.pdf))—actions agreed to in 2007 by the 10-member Chesapeake Executive Council

## Accomplishments and Performance:

**Riparian forests restored.** At the end of Fiscal Year (FY) 2009, partners had restored over 6,900 miles of buffer since 1996. Restoration of riparian forests is the Best Management Practice for water quality on agricultural lands. Bay partners have set a goal of restoring 900 miles per year, which would require additional resources.

**Forests conserved.** At the end of FY 2009, almost 143,500 acres of private working forests had been conserved since 2008, when tracking began. Protected forests prevent millions of pounds of non-point source pollution from flowing into the bay each year. Local, State and Federal policies affect the amount of forests conserved. Performance levels will continue to grow at current Stewardship Program budget levels, and with the help of the Forest Legacy Program. Funds requested from the Land and Water Conservation Fund should be applied to forest conservation because of the benefits to water quality.

**Tree canopies increased.** At the end of FY 2009, 80 communities had increased their urban tree canopies and another 40 had committed to expanding their tree canopy, improving air and water, and quality of life. The rate of expansion of this performance indicator will continue at current budget levels because of marketing and program efficiencies.

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