

Program Goal: Conserving Chesapeake Forests

Healthy forests are key to healthy streams and watersheds, healthy communities and a thriving Chesapeake Bay. Trees and forests keep pollution out of water and air, create habitat for fish and other aquatic life, maintain a steady flow of water in streams and serve as a natural defense system from floods, windstorms and other extreme weather events. They also provide benefits to each of us every day, like cooling the air during hot summers, keeping our drinking water safe, support jobs, provide building materials, increase property values, provide places for kids to explore and parents to “get away from it all,” and support some of the most diverse wildlife habitats in the country.



Trees can also be an important part of our watershed protection and restoration strategies. We spend billions of dollars every year constructing best management practices that replace the work that the forests used to do for free, like reducing runoff, cooling the air and protecting water quality. We lose about 100 acres of forest each day to development and more is harmed by invasive plants and pests, too many deer and other threats. As they are lost, our communities and watershed must rely on smaller and smaller amounts of healthy forest to provide them with all of these benefits.

Chesapeake Forests Program Goal:

The goal of the Chesapeake Forests program to “help forests help us” by improving the health of existing trees and forests, creating new forests in places important to Chesapeake residents and promoting the benefits of forests to the public and decision-makers.



Current Alliance Forest Projects:

1) Forests for the Bay Outreach and Education



Forests for the Bay Network – The Alliance maintains a voluntary membership program of landowners who are interested in actively conserving their woodland and/or restoring woods on their property. Currently, over 1000 members receive access to information on improving wildlife habitat, water quality, generating income and overall enjoyment of their property.

Forests for the Bay Training – The Alliance also actively encourages woodland owners to continue providing natural benefits for themselves and their neighbors through management training, easing access to conservation funding, and developing educational initiatives. Current workshops include “Your Woods and Your Wallet”, “Real Forestry for Real Estate”, “Woods in Your Backyard”, “Discover your Woods”, and “Family Succession Planning.”

Forests for Bay Online Conservation Tools – The Alliance maintains a suite of online tools and resources to help landowners, local organizations, and businesses plan forest improvement projects and evaluate their potential for participation in existing conservation programs or new and emerging markets such as forest mitigation banking and water quality credit trading. These tools include LandServer, Woodland Crediting Platform and the Bay Bank.



2) **Forest Restoration and Tree Planting**

Chesapeake Forest Fund —This program offers foundations, businesses and agencies an easy and transparent opportunity to invest in clean air and water, carbon storage, wildlife habitat and other natural benefits. The Alliance directs Fund contributions into forest restoration actions that produce quantifiable outcomes: tons of carbon uptake; pounds of reduced nitrogen and phosphorus; and acres of improved habitat. Our methodologies make it easy for organizations to report on their social and environmental responsibility accomplishments. We are using the Fund to test innovative opportunities to provide a return to impact investors through environmental markets.

Healthy Forests, Healthy Waters Project — In partnership with the Maryland Forestry Foundation, we are implementing tree plantings on private lands to reduce nutrient and sediment pollution to the Chesapeake Bay.

Landscape Scale Management - We are working with the partners to test methods for managing forest landscapes with fragmented ownership. Current work is focused in the Prettyboy Reservoir watershed--one of three reservoirs supplying water to 1.8 million people in and around the City of Baltimore.

Healthy Streams, Healthy Farms Stewardship Project – The Alliance is working with farmers and other NGO partners to accelerate the planting of streamside forests while addressing other farm conservation needs. Farmers are guided into USDA and State assistance programs. More sustainable working landscapes and healthier streams are the result.



Trees for Sacred Places – Working with partners in the faith community, the Alliance is planting thousands of trees on the property of houses of worship in Maryland while helping these congregations understand the environmental and spiritual importance of trees and build their own local stewardship programs.

TreeBaltimore - The Alliance is bringing social marketing and other resources to the City of Baltimore to help them achieve their long-term goal of 45% tree canopy in urban areas.

Trees for Tomorrow—The Alliance is providing tree planting assistance to local governments, non-profits, and private landowners in the Conococheague Creek watershed (a tributary of the Potomac River) to accelerate riparian buffer plantings and conversion of turf to trees.

3) **Forest Policy and Communication**

New Policies and Strategies for Riparian Forest Buffers and Urban Tree Canopy– The Alliance has taken the lead to bring together key federal and state agencies along with local partners to develop a new generation of tools and initiatives that will increase the planting of riparian forest buffers on farms and pastures and expand tree canopy in cities, towns, and communities. These new policies and programs will guide millions of dollars in investments.

Publications, Events, and Recognition

The Alliance also provides a variety of publications, tools, and events to help the public and partners appreciate the value of trees and forests; including the “State of Chesapeake Forests”, “Walking the Woods”, Chesapeake Forest Blog, media, the Bay Journal, Big Tree Day, and periodic bird and forest walks. In addition, we honor people as *Chesapeake Forest Champions* in partnership with the US Forest Service

Who benefits from this Program:

Forests provide benefits to city dwellers and rural folks alike. Forest conservation and tree planting help businesses meet their sustainability goals and local governments meet watershed obligations as well as community social and economic goals.

Partners:

The Chesapeake Forests program relies on an extensive set of partners from university extension offices to landowner associations to state and federal agencies. In the future, our work will need to better cultivate business and local government partners.

Potential Funders:

Federal agencies; especially the USDA Forest Service, USDA NRCS, USDA FSA, USFWS, and potentially DOD. State natural resource and environmental agencies. Local governments in terms of forest mitigation and urban tree canopy. Businesses may increasingly be a key funder in the future.

Measuring Performance:

The Chesapeake Forests program measures accomplishment through the activities conducted; # of trees planted, acres of forest restored, acres of urban tree canopy increased, forest landowners assisted; as well as the benefits generated by our projects; nutrients and carbon sequestered, runoff reduced, habitats enhanced, and increased understanding through education and training.

Geographic Scope:

Chesapeake Bay Watershed