



Celebrating 20 Years of Forum Magic!

Dear Forum Attendees,

Welcome to the 20th Anniversary of the Chesapeake Watershed Forum!

I attended my first Forum in 2009 as a young, wide-eyed environmental professional - eager to absorb as much information and meet as many people as possible. I was on a personal mission to build my community, and I could never have imagined how valuable a tool Forum would be on that journey. During my time at the Prince George's County Planning Department, Forum opened my eyes to the world of green infrastructure planning. At the South River Federation (now Arundel Rivers Federation), Forum gave me an invaluable peer network of other non-profit Executive Directors who support me to this day. Now in my role as CEO of the Alliance, I have had the honor of welcoming our community back to NCTC for the last 8 years.

Our theme this year, "Shaping the Future of Conservation with Human-Centered Approaches," celebrates the longevity of our collective work. As we mark this 20th anniversary milestone, we have an opportunity to reflect on the successes and challenges that have shaped our work and the lessons that will guide us forward. 2025 is a pivotal year – both a moment to celebrate how far we have come and a chance to plan for what's ahead. Planning for 2025 and Beyond efforts led by the Chesapeake Bay Program challenge us to think critically about the future of conservation and restoration efforts. While uncertainties exist, by embracing a mindset of resilience and adaptability, we can continue building a strong foundation for the next generation of conservationists.

The Forum is a cornerstone of learning and sharing, of networking and socializing. It is where our next generation of conservationists has come to learn, sharpen their skills, build long-lasting relationships, and celebrate all that we have achieved together. In the 16 Forums I have attended, I am deeply grateful to everyone who has stayed up late, solving all the problems of the Chesapeake with me.

We are so glad you've decided to join us for the weekend - I look forward to being in community with you all!




KATE FRITZ
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the Planning Committee Members and their organizations for donating staff time and resources over the past year to help plan and promote this Forum. Your efforts are invaluable and have made this year's Forum into an exceptional watershed event.

Forum Planning Committee Members

Brenna Goggin | River Network

Bryan Hofmann | Friends of the Rappahannock

Eddie Gonzalez | National Park Service

Emma Gregory | Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Erin O'Grady | Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Hope Cupit | SERCAP, Inc.

Jenny McGarvey | Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Jesse Iliff | Severn River Association

Jim Sullivan | DE Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control

Joe Toolan | GreenLatinos

Julie Lawson | DC Department of Energy and Environment

Kate Fritz | Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Lauren Sauder | Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Oleksandr Faryga | National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Patti Bohnsack | Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Pri Ekanayake | Institute for Conservation Leadership

Ron Ohrel | American Dairy Association North East

Tori Sullens | National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Wuill Urvina | Choose Clean Water Coalition

A special thank you to Laura Creamer, Katie Poston, and the incredible team at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), for handling the on-site logistics for our event, including through the 2025 Federal Government Shutdown. We are proud to be among the many conservation professionals who participate in workshops and training programs at NCTC annually.

CHESAPEAKE WATERSHED FORUM AT A GLANCE

Friday, November 7		
8:30 AM to 6:00 PM	Registration	Confluence Center Lobby
10:30 AM to 12:00 PM	Forum Welcome and Friday Plenary	Confluence Center Auditorium
12:00 PM to 12:30 PM	Forum Buddies Introduction	Confluence Center Auditorium
12:00 PM to 1:30 PM	Lunch	Headwaters Lodge: Dining Room
1:30 PM to 4:30 PM	Concurrent Sessions A and B	Lemon (IW) and Turner (IE) Buildings*
4:45 PM to 6:00 PM	Meet-and-Greet with the NFWF Field Liaisons	Headwaters Lodge: Ground Level Foyer
5:30 PM to 7:00 PM	Dinner	Headwaters Lodge: Dining Room
6:30 PM to 7:30 PM	Chesapeake Collective Book Club	Headwaters Lodge: Social Lounge
7:30 PM to 9:00 PM	Poster Session	Headwaters Lodge: Roosevelt Room
Saturday, November 8		
6:30 AM to 8:30 AM	Breakfast	Headwaters Lodge: Dining Room
7:30 AM to 2:00 PM	Registration	Confluence Center Lobby
7:30 AM to 8:30 AM	Nature Walk	Confluence Center Lobby
9:00 AM - 12:00 AM	Concurrent Sessions C	See Schedule of Events
9:00 AM - 12:30 PM	Concurrent Sessions D and E	Lemon (IW) and Turner (IE) Buildings
12:00 PM to 1:30 PM	Lunch	Headwaters Lodge: Dining Room
12:30 PM to 1:45 PM	Meet-and-Greet with the NFWF Field Liaisons	Headwaters Lodge: Ground Level Foyer
1:30 PM to 5:30 PM	Concurrent Sessions F, G, and H	Lemon (IW) and Turner (IE) Buildings
5:30 PM to 7:00 PM	20th Anniversary Dinner Celebration	Headwaters Lodge: Dining Room
8:00 PM to 9:00 PM	Oyster Happy Hour	Headwaters Lodge: Roosevelt Room
Sunday, November 9		
6:30 AM to 8:30 AM	Breakfast	Headwaters Lodge: Dining Room

*Instructional East (IE) Turner Building, Instructional West (IW) Lemon Building

ONGOING ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE FORUM

Friday, November 7

Forum Welcome and Plenary Presentation, Confluence Center Auditorium | 10:30 AM-12:00 PM

Join us as Kate Fritz (Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay) officially opens the 20th Annual Chesapeake Watershed Forum. The Forum welcome will be followed by our Plenary Speaker, Larissa Johnson with Formula for Fun, LLC on Leveraging Fun for Overall Well-being.

Forum Buddies Introductions, Confluence Center Auditorium | 12:00-12:30 PM

Break the ice with your Forum Buddies before heading to lunch (advance sign up required).

Meet-and-Greet with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Field Liaisons, Headwaters Lodge: Ground Level Foyer | 4:45-6:00 PM

Meet NFWF Field Liaison team members to learn more about NFWF grants, explore project ideas, discuss your program needs, and gain insights about program priorities and the application process. Advanced registration is not required.

Chesapeake Collective Book Club, Headwaters Lodge: Social Lounge | 6:30-7:30 PM

Calling all Forum booklovers! Choose a nature-themed book (interpret that however you like!) and join us for a cozy, creative gathering on Friday night. We'll dive into a discussion with thought-provoking prompts and craft beautiful bookmarks inspired by the stories we've read.

Poster Session, Headwaters Lodge: Roosevelt Room | 7:30-8:30 PM

Join us for informal networking with colleagues. View and interact with new and seasoned professionals at the Poster Session and learn about ongoing projects, programs, research, activities, and other work from across the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Saturday, November 8

Nature Walk, Headwaters Lodge: Ground Level Foyer | 7:30-8:30 AM

Walk the National Conservation Training Center trails and learn about native species with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay's Ryan Davis and Rob Frank. Meet at the Headwaters Lodge.

Meet-and-Greet with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Field Liaisons, Headwaters Lodge: Ground Level Foyer | 12:30-1:45 PM

Meet NFWF Field Liaison team members to learn more about NFWF grants, explore project ideas, discuss your program needs, and gain insights about program priorities and the application process. Advanced registration is not required.

20th Anniversary Celebration Dinner & Session Evaluation Raffle, Headwaters Lodge: Dining Room | 5:30-8:00 PM

Join us for dinner on Saturday to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Chesapeake Watershed Forum. Following, we will serve freshly shucked, mild, and approachable oysters from around our watershed. Oysters donated by the York Riverkeeper, Friends of the Rappahannock, and Severn River Association. Limited supply; first come, first serve.

CHESAPEAKE COLLECTIVE



Chesapeake Collective is a creative platform for a range of voices to express their vision for a healthy bay watershed. While the Collective certainly does not include all of the voices that make our watershed whole, its projects provide a platform to elevate our many perspectives.

** Titles with stars indicate that you can find the project at the Chesapeake Collective table. The table will be in the Confluence Center on Friday morning and in the Headwaters Lodge for the rest of the Forum.*

Books We Love

Share an environmental book you would recommend to your fellow Forum attendees.
Bottom of Turner (IE) Building

Climate Heroes

Celebrate collective empowerment through digital storytelling - this year highlighting Project Drawdown's climate heroes!
NCTC Bridge

Communal Joy!

Express joy for your work, community, and environment on our collective display!
Top of Lemon (IW) Building

Dine & Doodle

Record your favorite memories, draw your favorite NCTC setting, or tell us what the forum means to you as we write on the dining tables. (table covering only, please!)
Headwaters Dining Hall, Saturday at 5:30 PM

Forum Bingo*

Want to get the MOST out of your Forum experience?! Play Forum Bingo and see how many activities you can cross off!

Forum Book Club

Calling all Forum booklovers! Choose a nature-themed book (interpret that however you like!) and join us for a cozy gathering of discussion and crafts
Headwaters Social Lounge, Friday at 6:30 PM

Forum Postcards*

Color in a Forum Postcard, write a note, and mail it to someone! Or, keep it as a memento from Forum.

Roots & Ripples: Charting our Collective History

Help us build a living timeline from the start of the Forum to today—marking major moments in our watershed, society, and shared work.
Top of Lemon (IW) Building

Stumpsitting

Sitting quietly in a forest for an extended period, such as 30 minutes, causes the forest to "come alive" around you. Find your own stump and experience the forest come alive.
Anywhere Outside

Trading Cards for Change

Create a collectible card featuring a conservation role model. Add your card to our gallery or make two to share.
Top of Turner (IE) Building

Watershed Web

Expand our watershed web by adding your string to this mesmerizing art build!
Top of Lemon (IW) Building

FRIDAY PLENARY

Friday, November 7 at 10:30 AM
Confluence Center Auditorium



LARISSA JOHNSON

Chief FUN Officer, Formula For Fun, LLC

Leveraging Fun for Overall Well-being

Integrating elements of fun can greatly benefit the well-being of individuals and communities dedicated to nurturing clean streams and resilient landscapes in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Larissa Johnson will explore current research showcasing how fun activities help reduce stress, elevate mood, and enhance social bonds. Attendees will leave equipped with tools to transform their surroundings into lively and engaging spaces that support both environmental and personal wellness.

Friday, November 7 | 1:30 - 3:00 PM | Session A

FRI-A.1: Visualizing and Strengthening Networks with Mapping

Room: 151 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: All

Meredith Lemke, Chesapeake Bay Program

Learn how to increase network connections, grow collaborative capacity, and leverage data visualization with network mapping by exploring a case study of the Chesapeake Steward Map! How does it work? Map users opt-in, fill out a questionnaire, and indicate their level of connection to other users. Questionnaire data is visualized and can be filtered and configured by areas of expertise, location, and many other ways. Network mapping is a particularly useful tool for managers of networks, coalitions, partnerships, and organizations looking for collaborative opportunities. Come explore mapping and build connections both virtually and with fellow Forum attendees.

FRI-A.2: 10 Years of the Chesapeake Monitoring Cooperative

Room: 154 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: Intermediate

Liz Chudoba, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Matthew Kierce, Izaak Walton League

Sophie Stern, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Isabel Ruff, ALLARM

2025 marks the 10th anniversary of the Chesapeake Monitoring Cooperative (CMC), a successful regional partnership integrating participatory science into regulatory and decision making processes at the state and federal levels. Together, the CMC development team and participating members have built a centralized water quality database housing over 1 million data points, watershed-wide. The CMC has supported local-level advocacy for clean water, and enhanced water quality assessment and data use for the Chesapeake Bay Program and the State's Integrated Reports. Regional partnerships that work across state lines and include multiple organizations are essential for the future of conservation in the Chesapeake Bay region.

FRI-A.3: Community Partners Boost Watershed Education

Room: 160 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: Introductory

Morgan Buchanan, ShoreRivers

Suzanne Sullivan, ShoreRivers

In this dynamic, hands-on session, learn how ShoreRivers partnered with a county recreation and Parks Office to co-create a Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience that empowers students to investigate whether their rivers are swimmable and fishable. Participants will engage in adaptable, fun, ready-to-use activities and collaborate in group discussions and brainstorming workshops to apply lessons learned to their own programs. Build essential skills, including how to co-facilitate programs with youth development organizations and find partners who amplify student voice and real-world impact across any grade level.

FRI-A.4: Dead Tree Talking

Room: 161 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: Introductory

Jenny Willoughby, City of Frederick

As changing environmental conditions shift where trees can survive and thrive, it also is shifting the pests, diseases, and abiotic factors that stress and kill them. This session will focus on what arborists and foresters are seeing in the field and how to best prepare our forests for the future. Dead and dying trees are telling their stories. We just need to listen.

FRI-A.5: Trees and Schools: Growing the Connection

Room: 105 Turner (IE) | Workshop Level: Introductory

Stephanie Banik, Cacapon Institute

Frank Rodgers, Cacapon Institute

Have you engaged your school system? It is a large landowner in every community. Students, 15-20% of most communities' populations, should be engaged in Bay restoration. Teachers need community partners to teach students the importance of trees. Since 2011, Cacapon Institute has run "Growout Stations", micro-tree nurseries managed by schools, growing hundreds of trees. Discover how to get your foot in the door at your local school and help teachers provide Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEE). MWEE is a curriculum standard across the region. Help students grow their connection to the environment, and grow tree stock for projects.

FRI-A.6: Strategies on PFAS Pollution in Biosolids

Room: 114 Turner (IE) | Workshop Level: Intermediate

Brent Walls, Potomac Riverkeeper Network

Mark Frondorf, Potomac Riverkeeper Network

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), often called "forever chemicals," are a growing concern in the management of sewage sludge (biosolids). These persistent and bioaccumulative chemicals, found in a number of sources, accumulate in wastewater treatment facilities and subsequently in biosolids. When these biosolids are applied to farmland as fertilizers, they introduce significant environmental and public health risks. This workshop will explore the far-reaching impacts of PFAS-contaminated biosolids, with a focus on the Shenandoah. We will explore community engagement opportunities and strategies to grow a grassroots campaign in Virginia to protect our rural communities.

FRI-A.7: Investing in Collaboratives: Evaluating NFWF's INSR Program

Room: 201 Turner (IE) | Workshop Level: Intermediate

Jake Reilly, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Amy Mickel, PhD, The Stewardship Network

Sharon Farrell, The Stewardship Network

The Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction (INSR) Grants Program, administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), was created to advance nutrient and sediment reduction efforts in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. In 2018, the program shifted focus to more intentional and explicit support of collaborative models to accelerate the implementation of best management practices at landscape scales. In 2024, NFWF commissioned The Stewardship Network to conduct an independent evaluation of the INSR program to assess whether and how these shifts toward investment in collaborative capacity advanced the program's objectives and created long-term environmental and organizational impacts. This session will explore findings, recommendations, and proposed actions stemming from the evaluation.

Friday, November 7 | 1:30 - 3:00 PM | Session A

FRI-B.1: Past, Present, and Future of the Chesapeake Bay Program

Room: 151 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: Introductory

Anna Killius, Chesapeake Bay Commission

Carin Bisland, Chesapeake Bay Program (Retired)

After 42 years, the Chesapeake Bay Program is undergoing a significant restructure to renew its commitment to the Chesapeake Bay watershed restoration effort. We'll trace the partnership's history, from its origins to its current structure. Most importantly, you'll get a look at the proposed revisions to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, learning what's included and how these changes will shape the future of our collective efforts to restore and conserve the Bay watershed.

FRI-B.2: Designing a Resilient Campus with Students

Room: 154 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: All

Jenny Smeltzer, Neighborhood Design Center

Micaela Ada, Neighborhood Design Center

This 60-minute case-study session shares Neighborhood Design Center's Climate Resilience Toolkit, a ready-to-use curriculum that guides high-school students through field research, site analysis, and landscape concept design to solve real stormwater challenges on their campuses and increase the resilience of current conditions through planting to manage stormwater. Presenters will highlight lessons learned from the 2024 Central High School pilot, where students produced conceptual masterplans and maintenance schedules that advance Prince George's County Public Schools' Climate Change Action Plan. Attendees will leave with a replicable, human-centered model for empowering youth to co-create watershed solutions.

FRI-B.3: Integrated Floodplain Management and Floodplain Restoration

Room: 160 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: Intermediate

Lia Mastropolo, American Rivers

Adam Schellhammer, American Rivers

This session will provide an overview of how integrated floodplain management approaches can be used in the Chesapeake Bay for a variety of ecological and people-centered benefits, including flood control, recreation, habitat, and water quality and quantity. Regional floodplain issues and opportunities will be discussed from a policy and funding perspective. The session will include 2-3 case studies of completed floodplain restoration projects, viewed through the lens of local, people-focused benefits. Watershed context, details on project funding and development, community engagement, and project outcomes will be addressed.

FRI-B.4: Advancing Restoration Tracking and Drone-based MRV

Room: 161 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: All

Robert Dawes, The Commons

Michael Wu, Collant Climate, Inc

AI and computer vision have revolutionized restoration tracking and Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) tools for practitioners and landowners. FieldDoc's integration with Coolant's innovative drone-based 3D reconstruction technology enables precise monitoring of riparian forest buffers and carbon stock estimation. These accessible tools empower stakeholders to quantify environmental benefits and verify outcomes without specialized expertise. Learn how these cost-effective solutions can advance your organization's unique mission.

FRI-B.5: Effective and Authentic Collaboration Principles for the Bay

Room: 105 Turner (IE) | Workshop Level: All

Mike Foreman, Institute for Engagement & Negotiation, University of Virginia

This session offers an introduction to the Six Principles of Equitable Collaboration, developed by the Institute for Engagement & Negotiation at the University of Virginia based on over four decades of work in community engagement and conflict resolution, and shares how these principles can be applied through a human-centered approach to conservation in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Participants will engage in an interactive session where they collectively think through and apply each principle to the projects and populations they engage with in their conservation and restoration work and will leave the session with specific ideas for enhancing their own collaborations.

FRI-B.6: Strategic Questions and Collaborative Discussions

Room: 114 Turner (IE) | Workshop Level: All

Joy Jackson, Institute for Conservation Leadership

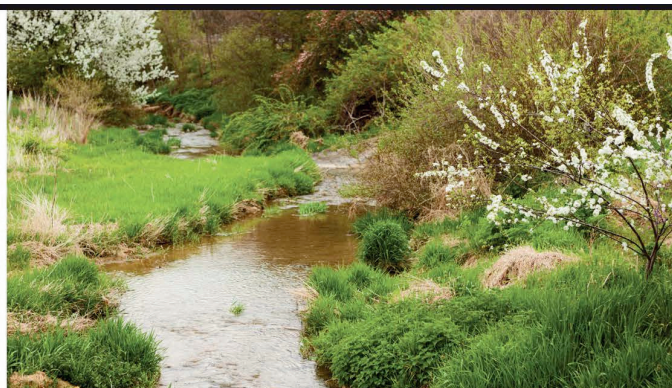
The quality of collaborative outcomes often hinges on the quality of our conversations—and that starts with asking the right questions at the right time. This interactive workshop helps attendees learn how to craft questions that transform routine meetings into productive dialogue. Participants will learn frameworks for choosing question types based on conversation stage and desired outcomes, practice techniques for constructing engaging inquiries, and develop skills to know when to shift questioning approaches. Through hands-on exercises and real-world scenarios, attendees will explore the art of strategic questioning.

FRI-B.7: Fiscal Compliance Training for Federal Grant Award Management

Room: 201 Turner (IE) | Workshop Level: Intermediate

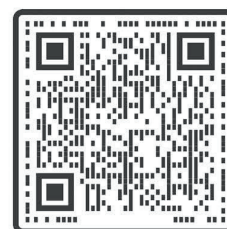
Steve Spillan, Burman Group

This session will focus on the federal compliance rules in 2 CFR Part 200, which applies to all recipients and subrecipients of federal funds. The session will provide a brief overview of changes that went into effect last year involving procurement, inventory, financial management, audits, and more.



Our Commitment to a Clean Bay

Dairy farmers live on or near the land that they farm. They understand that practicing environmental stewardship is not only good for their farms, their communities and their bottom line—it's the right thing to do.



**AMERICAN DAIRY
ASSOCIATION** NORTH
EAST

AmericanDairy.com

Learn how dairy farms are
protecting the Chesapeake
Bay Watershed:



[/AmericanDairyNE](https://www.instagram.com/AmericanDairyNE)



[/AmericanDairy](https://www.youtube.com/AmericanDairy)

Harry R. Hughes

CENTER FOR AGRO-ECOLOGY

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Saturday, November 8 | 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM | Session C

SAT-C.1: Cultivating Nature Connection, Mindfulness and Well-being

Room: 105 Turner (IE) | Workshop Level: All | Maximum Capacity: 30

Amber Ellis, James River Association

Christine Gyovai, Dialogue + Design Associates

This relaxed, interactive, outdoor session will focus on practices to develop well-being and a deeper sense of connection to one's self, nature, and each other. Grounded in the science of the benefits of mindfulness and nature connection, activities will include meditation, journaling, and creative nature-based activities. We'll spend time on the banks of the Potomac River enjoying the mental health benefits of riparian forests (bird song, trees, and water are the trifecta for calm!) and focused awareness on the present moment for a restorative, connecting, and restful morning. All materials will be provided, and plans for inclement weather.

SAT-C.2: Local Dairy Farm Tour

Meeting Location: Headwaters Lodge Loop | Workshop Level: All | Maximum Capacity: 35

Ron Ohrel, American Dairy Association North East

Dairy farmers use numerous practices to maintain economic viability while protecting the environment. There's more work to be done, but we share the same goal—a healthy Chesapeake Bay. On this tour of a family-owned dairy farm, you'll meet local farmers and learn first-hand about their farm operation, environmental practices, and some of the challenges—and opportunities—to improve local waterways and ensure a healthy Chesapeake Bay. Ask any questions you've ever had about dairy farming during your 90-minute, ¼-mile walking tour. The tour is rain or shine, so bring your inclement weather gear. Close-toed shoes are required.

SAT-C.3: DIY Mapping for Environmental Conservation

Room: Computer Lab G24 Turner (IE) | Workshop Level: All | Maximum Capacity: 24

Wansoo Im, Meharry Medical College

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are powerful tools for environmental conservation, but their complexity often excludes community participation. Dr. Wansoo Im introduces participatory GIS using Mappler Lite—a free, user-friendly platform that enables anyone with basic Excel or Google Sheets skills to create interactive maps, integrate public GIS layers (WMS/KML), and share data. This 180-minute hands-on workshop empowers participants to engage their communities, collect local data, and advocate for environmental solutions rooted in lived experience. Ideal for educators, nonprofit staff, and community leaders seeking practical, accessible mapping tools.

Saturday, November 8 | 9:00 - 10:30 AM | Session D

SAT-D.1: Collaborating to Protect Riparian Forests from Invasives

Room: 151 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: All

Bailey Pleasant, Rivanna Conservation Alliance

Lisa Wittenborn, Rivanna Conservation Alliance

Many of us appreciate that invasive species are a growing threat to riparian forests and the many services they provide our waterways and communities. The problem is so large, however, that it can easily overwhelm any one organization's ability to address it in a meaningful way. Presenters from the Rivanna Conservation Alliance will share how they initiated a collaborative effort to protect and enhance native tree canopy along the Rivanna River in Charlottesville, VA, through community science data collection, strategic invasive management and tree planting, extensive volunteer engagement, and the formation of a long-term community partnership.

SAT-D.2: School-CommunitEE Engagement for Sustainability

Room: 154 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: Introductory

Peter Mecca, University of Maryland Global Campus

Ray Wu-Rorrer, Falls Church City Public Schools

Schools and their students are in a unique position to address community-level challenges, such as food insecurity, clean water, and healthy environments. The Falls Church City Public School (VA) sustainability curriculum supports students' service in action within their community through multiple place-based, student-focused learning environments. In this presentation, attendees will examine ways and reasons to foster collaborations with community-based organizations, multiple projects in operation, lessons learned, and extension to other neighboring communities.

SAT-D.3: Healing Spaces: Culture, Community & Ecology

Room: 161 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: All

Teria Powell, 11th Street Bridge Park

Bridge Park's seasonal events—like the Anacostia River Festival, Taste of the Harvest, and our summer Health & Wellness Series—use culture, place, and community to inspire environmental stewardship. Through music, storytelling, urban gardening, and mindfulness, we create entry points into conversations about sustainability, resilience, and community joy. This session explores how grounding environmental education in cultural celebration fosters healing and belonging, particularly in communities disproportionately affected by environmental harms. Learn how Bridge Park partners with artists, elders, and local businesses to co-create joyful, restorative programming that connects people to each other and to the land.

SAT-D.4: Not Your Average Internship Experience

Room: 114 Turner (IE) | Workshop Level: All

Rachael Dickey Gilde, Maryland Port Administration

Kadija Ndiaye, Ecologix Group

Participants will use the unique approach of the Masonville Cove Links WildSTEM Internship to

create an innovative conservation internship program for students of all majors and backgrounds. Approaches provide insight into cultural competence, co-designing experiences, mentoring, soft skills, and professional development. Ultimately, the program aims to build a healthy “ecosystem” within the conservation field, maximizing diversity of disciplines and personal backgrounds.

Returning participants will receive expanded action-planning tools to move frameworks from concept to implementation. Advanced networking will connect them with new partners, transforming last year’s momentum into measurable action.

SAT-D.5: Data to Information 101

Room: 201 Turner (IE) | Workshop Level: All

Isabel Ruff, ALLARM

Jill Arriola, ALLARM

A key step within volunteer monitoring programs is data interpretation, and engaging volunteer scientists in this process of understanding water quality data and data use has numerous benefits. The data-to-information process is most effective when it is tailored to the needs of the individual monitoring program, including its study design, monitoring goals, volunteers, and characteristics of the local watersheds. This session will focus on best practices and tools for facilitating the data interpretation process and will provide a collaborative space to share different approaches to data interpretation in volunteer monitoring programs.



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Saturday, November 8 | 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM | Session E

SAT-E.1: Storytelling for Science Communication

Room: 151 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: All

Alexandra Fries, University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science

Annie Carew, University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science

Roshni Nair-Gonzalez, University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science

The application of science is dependent upon effective communication. Even within the scientific community, the sharing of information is vital for collaboration and advanced understanding. Distilling complex concepts and datasets into engaging, understandable narratives and communications products requires skills in graphic design and storytelling. In this session, participants will learn the principles of science communication, tools for communication and storytelling, and how best to use those tools. The session will include multiple activities and a discussion of science communication products that participants can apply to their own work.

SAT-E.2: Grow, Conserve, Harvest!: Real-World Learning

Room: 154 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: Introductory

Grace Julian, The Edible Classroom

Sarah Ludwig, The Edible Classroom

Explore how real-world learning can serve as a powerful platform for experiential education, environmental stewardship, and community empowerment. This session will highlight low-cost, practical activities that connect agriculture, water conservation, and wellness through a human-centered lens. Participants will engage in hands-on activities that deepen their understanding of sustainable food systems while exploring simple, accessible ways to support both personal and environmental wellness. Perfect for teachers, parks and rec stewards, administrators, family and community engagement specialists, public health educators, wellness coaches, and environmental advocates, this session will provide ready-to-use strategies for engaging stakeholders meaningfully in any setting.

SAT-E.3: Nature Art for Human Connection

Room: 161 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: All | Maximum Capacity: 40

Maisie Hughes, The Urban Studio

Reconnect with nature and your creative spirit in this hands-on workshop designed for self-expression, reflection, and human connection. Participants will create 12x16-inch artworks using natural paints, found materials, and traditional artist supplies. This immersive experience emphasizes the joy of the creative process over the final product. There's no pressure to "get it right." Inspired by the natural world, participants will explore artistic interpretation, mindfulness, and renewed connection to both nature and each other. Leave with a unique piece that reflects your experience and discover how creativity can build community and well-being.

SAT-E.4: Community Restoration through Participatory Grantmaking

Room: 114 Turner (IE) | Workshop Level: All

Delaney Samons, Chesapeake Bay Trust

Patrick DeArmey, Chesapeake Legal Alliance

Megan Andreasen, Chesapeake Bay Trust
Alice Volpitta, Blue Water Baltimore

This session will highlight the collaboration between the Chesapeake Bay Trust (Trust), program partners, and community members to develop grant programs that direct funds back into communities impacted by environmental incidents. The Trust was tapped to administer funding for environmentally beneficial projects as an outcome of environmental violations that occurred in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. You'll hear from the Chesapeake Legal Alliance on their key role in securing these funds, as well as the Trust's road to building a community-centered grant program, and the results of those efforts.

SAT-E.5: Not Your Mama's Outreach

Room: 201 Turner (IE) | Workshop Level: All

Renee Grebe, Nature Forward
Jamoni Overby, Nature Forward
Angie McCarthy, Nature Forward

Our work for cleaner, healthier watersheds touches a myriad of issues, some of which may seem outside of the "typical" environmental scope. Join Nature Forward's Conservation Team for a discussion and workshop on taking a holistic approach to environmental engagement. Learn about Nature Forward's work and strategies for addressing social issues in intersectional community outreach programs, with time for Q&A or troubleshooting examples from the audience. Put the learnings into action in small groups, practice and role-play how you might interpret an organization's environmental mission to address human-centered issues and connect with communities in different ways.

A Land Trust FOR THE NATION'S CAPITAL



Casey Trees is an accredited land trust with a growing network of conservation easement sites across Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia, actively stewarding naturalized landscapes to ensure their ecological and community benefits endure **for generations.**



Saturday, November 8 | 1:30 - 2:30 PM | Session F

SAT-F.1: Community Engagement in Forest Restoration

Room: 151 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: Introductory

Ryan Davis, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Rob Frank, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

A sustained movement for restoration is impossible without community support and participation. In Pennsylvania, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay has opened up as much of its reforestation program to volunteer participation as possible, from growing trees to planting them and tending to the sites until they are established. Over the years, this has resulted in more community capacity to implement important reforestation work, magnifying the efforts of agencies and professional organizations.

SAT-F.2: Leopold's Preserve: Community-Building Case Study

Room: 154 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: Introductory

Scott C. Plein, Equinox Investments, LLC

Nick Davis, White House Farm Foundation

Leopold's Preserve, a 380-acre park in Northern Virginia with 7+ miles of public trails, was permanently protected in 2015 as part of an innovative conservation-development project. Owned and managed by the nonprofit White House Farm Foundation (WHFF), the Preserve is now recognized as one of the best spots for wildlife-watching in Virginia and sees an estimated 13,000 visitors annually. In this session, WHFF team members will share how they have built and sustained a community of local supporters – from gaining buy-in for the development project in the mid-2010s, to growing the volunteer programs that keep Leopold's Preserving thriving today.

SAT-F.3: Successfully Working with Plain Sect Farmers

Room: 160 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: Intermediate

Mauricio Rosales, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Hannah Walmer, Maola Local Dairies

Jeremy Weaver, Weaver Environmental

Plain Sect farmers are a growing community across the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Their participation in conservation efforts is key to improving the health of the Chesapeake Bay. However, not many conservation professionals have been successful in engaging with these communities, which has slowed down progress toward restoration goals. This session will offer an example of a successful partnership that implemented projects in these farms, a conservation salesmanship tailored for Plain Sect farms, and a story-sharing discussion to learn tips and options to be successful in implementing conservation in Plain Sect farms.

SAT-F.4: Capacity Building to Enhance Conservation Outcomes

Room: 161 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: Intermediate

Amber Cameron, Chesapeake Bay Trust

Monica Robinson, Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project

This session highlights the Chesapeake Bay Trust's Capacity Building Initiative through a case study with the Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project. It will demonstrate how strategic investments in organizational capacity and participation in communities of practice have empowered the Black Heritage Project to lead innovative, cross-sector conservation efforts. Attendees will gain insights into how collaborative approaches enhance mission delivery and why cross-sector partnerships are vital to achieving Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals. The session will also offer practical strategies for engaging non-traditional partners—such as cultural and heritage organizations—in environmental work to foster authentic, community-rooted conservation.

SAT-F.6: The Power of Volunteer-Centered Engagement

Room: 114 Turner (IE) | Workshop Level: All

Jeffrey Campbell, Environmental Informatics

Explore a volunteer-centered perspective of a typical request to participate in a restoration event. To put themselves into the shoes of a new potential volunteer, the attendees will respond to a web poll of questions based on actual event descriptions. These results will identify ways to improve the descriptions. Details of critical importance to an individual can resolve the decision about participating without revealing personal details. Understanding what people want to know provides insight to the organization to adjust their message to better reach their community. The explicit human-centered perspective of what the reader wants to know is a significant aspect.

SAT-F.7: Work Hard, Laugh Harder: Embracing Levity

Room: 201 Turner (IE) | Workshop Level: Introductory

Leeanna Duong, Choose Clean Water Coalition

Drew Robinson, Choose Clean Water Coalition

As the environmental world has turned into a rollercoaster of unexpected news and difficult conversations, one thing is for certain: sometimes, all we can do is laugh. In this session, Choose Clean Water Coalition's communications team will discuss the various ways in which bringing levity and humor into communications work can be an effective method of storytelling, engagement, and community building for nonprofit and community organizations. Join this session to hear case studies from nonprofits throughout the Chesapeake Bay region and learn how humor can bring more than just a smile to various audiences.

Saturday, November 8 | 3:00 - 4:00 PM | Session G

SAT-G.1: Building a Stronger Urban Community

Room: 151 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: All

Steve Marzolf, Swansboro West Civic Association

Denise Payne, Swansboro West Civic Association

Swansboro West is a small, formerly red-lined community in Richmond's Southside. With no park and less than 25% of its identified street tree wells having trees, it is a heat island with temperatures as much as 10 degrees warmer than other areas of the city. The Swansboro West Civic, with many partner organizations, has planted over 150 street trees since January 2024 and has designed a park to be co-located with their neighborhood elementary school to serve both the school and the community. This session presents how they did it and what they learned in the process.

SAT-G.2: Program Participation Rooted in People

Room: 154 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: Intermediate

Skye Webster, DC Department of Energy and Environment

Shannah Cumberbatch, DC Department of Energy and Environment

The District of Columbia's RiverSmart Homes Program aims to reduce the impact of stormwater runoff by providing subsidized green infrastructure to residential properties. This session highlights the use of applicant data, community feedback, and academic partnerships to improve the program delivery, resulting in the creation of an ambassador program, annual neighborhood block walks, and learning opportunities such as shadowing installations. With the help of university capstone projects, the team has refined messaging to be clearer and accessible, shortened inspection timelines, and enhanced outreach strategies. This presentation demonstrates how ongoing analysis and community collaboration can drive practical improvements in conservation programs.

SAT-G.3: Practical Approaches to Volunteer-Powered Restoration

Room: 160 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: All

Lindsey Cathcart, Rock Creek Conservancy

Landrum Beard, Rock Creek Conservancy

Rock Creek Conservancy's People-Powered Restoration model is a community-centered approach to the goal of improving watershed and forest health in the Rock Creek watershed. The model connects individuals to the park and other natural areas through accessible entry points: from recreational activities to recurring volunteer leadership. The initiative emphasizes a robust continuum of engagement, integrating tools, education, and opportunities that empower community members to protect natural resources. By fostering stewardship norms, this strategic, interjurisdictional approach supports long-term ecological restoration, public awareness, and sustainable impact through grassroots action and cross-sector collaboration.

SAT-G.4: Engaging Supporters Thru Storytelling

Room: 161 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: Introductory

Nancy Merrill, Merrill Communications Consulting

This session will explore how to transform your organization's everyday work into compelling stories that inspire action—whether that means encouraging donors to give or motivating supporters to contact their elected representatives. We'll begin by identifying your target audience, then dive into how to uncover those unforgettable "Oh wow" moments that bring your mission to life. You'll learn how to choose language that connects rather than intimidates, and how to present your message in a visually impactful way.

SAT-G.5: Consequences of Removing a Mill Dam

Room: 105 Turner (IE) | Workshop Level: All

Charles Gowan, Randolph-Macon College

Stephanie Coster, Randolph-Macon College

Alan Weaver, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources

Ashland Mill Dam was a 13-foot-high barrier on the South Anna River north of Richmond, Virginia. Built about 1916, it replaced previous dams dating back to the 18th century. The dam blocked 200 miles of habitat for at least seven diadromous fish species and was listed as Tier 1 priority in the Chesapeake Bay Fish Passage Prioritization Tool by The Nature Conservancy. A decades-long effort to remove the dam was unsuccessful until a private company, Davey Mitigation, removed it in the fall of 2024 to create a mitigation bank. We discuss the history of the dam and the ecological impacts of its removal.

SAT-G.6: Introduction to Using GIS Resources

Room: 114 Turner (IE) | Workshop Level: Introductory

Anna Mahan, SERCAP, Inc

SERCAP is dedicated to bringing clean drinking water, environmentally sound wastewater solutions, affordable housing, community development, and environmental justice to individuals and communities throughout the Southeastern United States. Utilizing Geographic Information System (GIS) tools and resources, we empower communities to use these technologies for advocacy and decision-making. Through visual storytelling, the use of analytical data, and sound data management practices, we help communities document their needs, communicate priorities, and support informed planning. Our approach includes identifying and applying for funding opportunities at the state, federal, and private levels, while extracting meaningful, data-driven insights to build compelling narratives and strengthen funding applications.

SAT-G.7: Growing the Roots with Workforce Development

Room: 201 Turner (IE) | Workshop Level: Intermediate

Earl Charles, Ancient Greene

Bill Ferrell, Clean Decisions

In 2021, the Alliance partnered with Ancient Greene and Clean Decisions on a grant to maintain public green infrastructure in DC. After four years of working on the grant, Earl Charles of Ancient Greene and Bill Farrel of Clean Decisions want to reflect on how their partnerships with the Alliance have led to bigger and better things. They will be sharing the stories of what growth and development look like within their companies and how they measure success in workforce development.

Saturday, November 8 | 4:30 - 5:30 PM | Session H

SAT-H.1: Branching Out: Community Engagement that Lasts

Room: 151 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: Introductory

Terryl Acker-Carter, Anne Arundel Watershed Stewards Academy

How do you build authentic, lasting relationships with communities that you may not have strong (or any) relationships with? Explore various strategies for meaningful community engagement via a case study of the Watershed Stewards Academy's work in Brooklyn Park, MD. Learn about community engagement best practices and innovative approaches that were used to help environmental organizations become a trusted community resource to newly engaged communities. Hear how effective engagement can lead to restoration opportunities, environmental education programs, and increase stewardship behaviors. This session offers practical tools to deepen trust and connection with the communities you serve.

SAT-H.2: From Trash to Treasure: Tollgate Preserve

Room: 154 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: Introductory

Phyllis Joris, NeighborSpace of Baltimore County, Inc.

Conor Harrington, NeighborSpace of Baltimore County, Inc.

NeighborSpace is a land trust partnering with communities in urban Baltimore County to protect and steward small parks. Tollgate Preserve, a 7-acre forest buffer tucked between schools and homes, had become overrun with litter and graffiti by 2022, making it feel unsafe and inaccessible. NeighborSpace restored the area by engaging with the community, partnering with schools and fellow nonprofits, and offering educational programs. Today, the Preserve is once again a thriving natural area providing respite to neighbors and students, demonstrating that welcoming more people into green spaces—not less—can be the key to revitalizing and protecting them for future generations.

SAT-H.3: Advancing Environmental Restoration Through Social Enterprise

Room: 160 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: Intermediate

Lori A Lilly, Howard EcoWorks Inc.

Social enterprises are revenue-generating businesses with a mission. Howard EcoWorks has operated as a social enterprise since 2020 when the pandemic forced an organizational pivot. Multiple lines of business have been developed that support the organization's greater mission of cultivating green jobs and fostering environmental sustainability. The challenges and opportunities of operating a social enterprise will be reviewed along with restoration innovations that have co-evolved with the business, such as biochar. As grant funds and philanthropy become increasingly competitive, nonprofit organizations need to find alternative sources of revenue to support their programs and missions.

SAT-H.4: Underutilized Plants For Riparian Buffers

Room: 161 Lemon (IW) | Workshop Level: Intermediate

Kevin Zuidervliet, Octoraro Native Plant Nursery

A diverse plant palette is essential for creating sustainable landscapes. Exploring a wider range of species can offer numerous benefits. By incorporating underutilized plants like *Symphoricarpus albus* and *Carya cordiformis*, we can enhance biodiversity, improve water health, and provide habitat for wildlife. How we evaluate whether a plant is worth being incorporated into a planting can be a difficult decision. Factors like plant hardiness and resilience, growth habit, and ecological value should all be considered. This presentation will delve into the advantages of expanding our plant palette, how to select new species, and showcase specific species that deserve greater recognition.

SAT-H.5: Training Home Gardeners as a Cohort

Room: 105 Turner (IE) | Workshop Level: All

Jimmy Rogers, Vibrant Gardening LLC

A subtle shift from individual to collective learning can have huge, unexpected benefits for both participants and program goals. This session will detail how novice home gardeners were formed into a peer learning cohort, were trained to garden for wildlife, and helped each other create sustainable front yard gardens to reduce their lawn footprints, with a focus on long-term skills. During the second program year, the first cohort informally mentored the second cohort, extending peer learning even farther. Every element of the program will be shared, as it is easily replicated.

SAT-H.6: Opportunities for Expanding the Conservation Toolbox

Room: 114 Turner (IE) | Workshop Level: All

October Greenfield, The Piedmont Environmental Council
Linnea Sherman, The Piedmont Environmental Council

More than 1,000,000 acres of land have already been conserved in Virginia - but what happens to that land after it is protected? And how do we effectively engage with landowners not interested in pursuing a conservation easement? The Piedmont Environmental Council has implemented several habitat restoration programs to ensure that the relationship between the land trust and the landowner goes beyond easement recordation by encouraging better land management practices with in-house expertise. Learn about how restoration programs can galvanize easement holders and landowners to dive deeper into "Conservation 2.0" and open up new, meaningful opportunities for landowner engagement.

SAT-H.7: Grants to Grassroots: A Fundraising Toolkit

Room: 201 Turner (IE) | Workshop Level: Intermediate

Hannah Spencer, Mountain Watershed Association

In an era of escalating environmental challenges and competitive funding, conservation-based nonprofits must adopt innovative fundraising strategies. This session will explore diverse funding avenues, including effective grant searching techniques, crafting compelling narratives, and storytelling to engage potential funders. Participants will learn best practices for identifying grants aligned with their missions and discover creative fundraising events that foster community engagement. Additionally, we will introduce innovative donor appeal strategies to create impactful campaigns for various demographics. Attendees will leave with actionable insights and a toolkit of creative solutions to enhance their fundraising capabilities and ensure the success of their conservation efforts.



Choose Clean Water
COALITION

The Choose Clean Water Coalition harnesses the collective power of **320+ organizations to advocate for clean rivers and streams across the Chesapeake Bay region**. By coordinating policy, messaging, action, and accountability, the Coalition amplifies a unified voice toward one shared goal—**clean water for all**.

Young Professionals of the Chesapeake

YPC is a program that **empowers young professionals in the environmental field**. Through mentorship and professional development, YPC helps retain and equip emerging leaders.

Consider donating to YPC or participating as a mentor or mentee. Every contribution helps sustain a vibrant, inclusive movement—**supporting the future of the Bay and the next generation of trailblazers**.

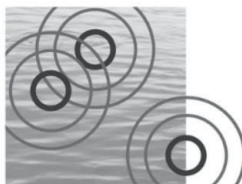
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