

Baltimore-Washington Partnership for Forest Stewardship

Baltimore-Washington Partnership Expands with MOU Signing

The Challenge

The region between Baltimore and Washington D.C. provides important ecosystem services to its many neighbors and residents—clean air and water, reduced soil erosion, flood control, biodiversity, and recreational and educational opportunities. It also removes pollutants from the Chesapeake Bay, whose tributaries run through the land. However, this region is highly urbanized. Its tree cover declined by 3,151 acres between 1986 and 2006. A number of Federal and partner agencies with jurisdiction to manage land that is still largely natural wanted to be better stewards of the land and support each other's efforts to conserve and restore forests, wetlands, and other "green space."

The Solution

In 2006, the Baltimore-Washington Partnership for Forest Stewardship (BWPFS) was made official. The agencies that signed a Memorandum of Agreement to work together to improve land management in this region included the U.S. Department of Agriculture Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Patuxent Research Refuge, NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center, U.S. Army Fort Meade, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and the Center for Chesapeake Communities.

The BWPFS is a Federal, State, local, and nonprofit partnership. It advances comprehensive and coordinated strategies to restore, conserve, and steward the combined landscape its partners manage within the Baltimore-Washington corridor. Through its Chesapeake Watershed Forestry program, the U.S. Forest Service's Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry unit helped form the BWPFS and establish its objectives.

The Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in the United States. The key to the Bay's health are the trees and forests in the watershed. More than 95 percent of this 43-million-acre watershed was once forested, but that number has dropped to 56 percent as development and agriculture have replaced trees. Current forest loss in the watershed is estimated to be 100 acres per day.



*The BWPFS joined its new members at a tree planting ceremony to commemorate their addition to the group.
Photo Credit: Leslie Riddle*

Recognizing State and Private Forestry's extensive role in the partnership even though they weren't managing land, the BWPFS invited the Forest Service to formally enter the partnership in 2011. Also joining the BWPFS was the city of Greenbelt, University of Maryland, U.S. Secret Service, and the U.S. Geological Survey. BWPFS partners collectively manage nearly 47 square miles of contiguous landscape, 64 percent of which is either in forest or wetlands.

Resulting Benefits

- Promote coordinated land management and collaborative scientific research.
- Reduce nutrient and sediment pollution in the Chesapeake Bay.
- Provide environmental education opportunities to the public.
- Pursue green building technologies and climate change action strategies.
- Conserve and improve wildlife habitat.
- Expand tree canopy cover.

Sharing Success

- The BWPFS continues to seek new collaborative partnerships with additional agencies, landowners, and interested citizens.



U.S. Department of Agriculture
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State and Private Forestry
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