

Forest Restoration

Chief and State Foresters Sign Chesapeake Forest Restoration Strategy

The Challenge

The Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in the United States. The health of the Bay has been in decline for several decades. Excess nutrients flowing into the Bay from agriculture and developed land have caused the development of “dead zones”—areas of water depleted of oxygen where nothing can live.

This watershed was once 95 percent wooded. Today, only about 55 percent of the watershed is forested, and that percentage continues to decrease by about 100 acres per day.

The Solution

Over the past 2 years, the Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry (NA S&PF) unit of the U.S. Forest Service has led a partner-driven effort to create a Chesapeake Forest Restoration Strategy to meet overarching goals for the Chesapeake. Over 30 Federal, State, and nongovernmental organizations contributed to the Strategy.

In December 2012, State Foresters from Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia joined EPA Chesapeake Bay Program Director Nick DiPasquale and U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell in Washington, DC, to sign the Forest Restoration Strategy. The Strategy provides a roadmap to guide and expand forestry partnership efforts throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. It builds on earlier commitments to restore riparian forest buffers at a rate of 900 miles per year and support community tree canopy expansion goals. The different sections in the Strategy outline approaches to targeting forest restoration in areas of greatest opportunity by focusing on wildlife and fisheries habitat, mine lands, agroforestry, urban and community forestry, and contaminated lands.

Resulting Benefits

- Forest restoration provides many ecosystem services including improved air and water quality, stormwater

“The Chesapeake Forest Restoration Strategy means continued and renewed support for more urban and rural forests, which will supply more clean water,” said Steven Koehn, Maryland Forest Service director.



U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell signs the forest restoration strategy as Sally Claggett, Forest Service Chesapeake Liaison, looks on. (Photo: Bob Lueckel)

management, carbon storage, wildlife habitat, and moderation of stream and air temperature. The Strategy notes these and other benefits to people, including improved quality of life and economic benefits.

- The Strategy identifies key actions that partners can take to help restore forests in identified areas. These actions will guide the work among partners for years to come.
- The Strategy introduces an interactive mapping tool to identify the context of forest restoration and identify where tree planting will have the greatest impact.

Sharing Success

- On December 15, 2012, The Capital® newspaper printed an [article](#) based on a U.S. Forest Service news release.
- On January 2, 2013, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources highlighted the signing ceremony on its Web site in the [article](#) “States in Bay Watershed Sign Chesapeake Forest Restoration Strategy.”
- On January 24, 2013, the Federal Drive aired an [inter-view](#) with NA S&PF Urban and Community Forestry team leader Sally Claggett.
- View the Strategy at <http://executiveorder.chesapeake-bay.net/chesapeakeforestrestorationstrategy.pdf>



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