



STRATEGIC PLAN



NORTHEAST MID-ATLANTIC PARTNERSHIP FOR FORESTS & WATER

July 2024

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OUR PARTNERS

[Appalachian Trail Landscape Partnership](#) | [Association of State Drinking Water Administrators](#)
[Connecticut Council of Soil and Water Conservation](#) | [Fish and Wildlife Service \(Northeast Region\)](#)
[Ground Water Protection Council](#) | [Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians](#)
[Maryland Department of Natural Resources](#) | [Mi'kmaq Nation](#)
[National Association of Conservation Districts](#) | [National Association of State Foresters](#)
[Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) | [National Wild Turkey Federation](#)
[Northeast Midwest State Foresters Alliance](#) | [Ohio Division of Forestry](#)
[Ruffed Grouse Society & American Woodcock Society](#) | [Southeastern Partnership for Forests & Water](#) |
[U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) | [U.S. Forest Service](#)

Overview

The Northeast Mid-Atlantic Partnership for Forests & Water brings together partners across the 13 states to leverage resources and lead efforts that improve the health of our forests and watersheds and address water quantity and quality concerns in the region. The strength of this partnership is rooted in collaboration with the goal of benefiting the region, its ecosystems, and public health. *Healthy Forests = Clean Water*

BACKGROUND

The Northeast Mid-Atlantic Partnership for Forests and Water (“the Partnership”) is an interagency, multi-partner collaborative to enhance concerted, science-based **restoration of priority forest landscapes to improve water quality and quantity in 13 states in the Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic United States**. The Partnership’s footprint encompasses Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio. The region’s numerous streams, lakes, and reservoirs provide drinking water to 66 million people, or around 40% of the American population. Approximately 25% of U.S. forests are located in the Northeast and Midwest regions, with a total of **89,680,169 forested acres within the Partnership area**.

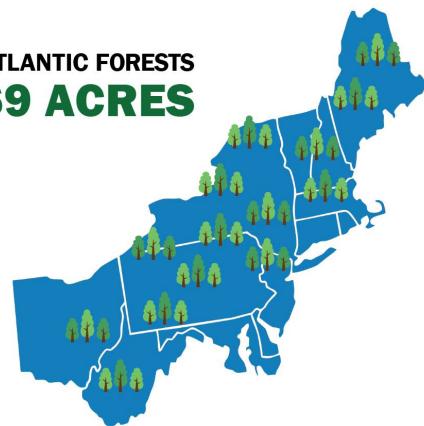
Forests filter sediments and other pollutants before they reach water sources, providing clean water that is vital to communities and habitats. Regional collaboration helps mitigate the multiple pressures that threaten forests (e.g., fragmentation, invasive species, abiotic disturbances) and highly effective coordination across states, multiple levels of government, and non-governmental partners is essential given the multitude of entities with management responsibility related to forests and water. **The Partnership creates a space for collaboration and alignment** between the forest and water sectors to maximize investments and improve program delivery and outcomes across the region. It also includes and supports regional and state-led efforts that work to restore and protect forested lands and priority watersheds.

Collaborative Structure

The Partnership is comprised of a **steering committee, workgroups**, an assembly of **members**, including **advisors and supporters**, and a **coordinator**.

- The steering committee will steer the Partnership and be responsible, alongside the coordinator, for sustaining the Partnership.
- The Partnership will also include several workgroups, including local implementation workgroups and a research work group. Other groups will be established based on the needs and direction of the Partnership.
- Partnership members will contribute feedback and input to support Partnership efforts, receive regular updates about the Partnership, and are able to serve on workgroups. Members include advisors who are individuals that helped build the Partnership from the ground up and who are called on to provide additional direction and advice to the steering committee and coordinator when needed. Members also include supporters who are organizations that are called on to provide letters of support and show public

**NORTHEAST MID-ATLANTIC FORESTS
89,680,169 ACRES**



support for the partnership mission and goals. Members can also participate in the Partnership without being designated as advisors or supporters.

- The coordinator will be responsible for facilitating communication between partners, documenting and propelling project progress, developing timelines and setting deadlines, and providing administrative, scheduling, and outreach support to the Partnership.

Vision, Mission, Values

VISION: Resilient and well-managed forests that improve water resources and create healthy watersheds.

MISSION: To create a collaborative network that leverages resources to manage, restore, and conserve forests and protect water resources.

VALUES IN ACTION: The values of the Partnership (see graphic to the right) create the framework for making governing and operational decisions. We are committed to creating respectful spaces for intentional collaboration that allow for equitable input. In making all voices heard, we produce outcomes that are both community-informed and focused.



Intentional collaboration: We unite the interests of partners and communities and promote cross-agency initiatives from forest and water professionals to improve overall water quality and protect forested landscapes. The Partnership is most successful when we bring together agencies (federal, state, and local), the general public, and industry/utilities/NGOs/corporate stakeholders.

Community-based efforts: We recognize the importance of input and engagement from on-the-ground contributors to enact meaningful impact. Working with private forest landowners and producers with forested lands is a key focus of our work.

Public engagement: We prioritize increasing public awareness of where water comes from and engaging with public stakeholders, including universities.

Nature-based solutions: Our efforts are inspired by following natural systems as the ultimate green infrastructure.

Collective learning: We seek expertise and insight from our partners and members to increase collective knowledge and partnership capacity.

Equity and representation of all community members: We recognize historical structures have disproportionately affected communities in the region today. We also recognize that healthy forests are diverse forests, and so we value diversity in backgrounds and opinion to create a more equitable landscape for the future.

Goals

These four goals are long-term goals for the Partnership. Annual objectives and strategies to meet these goals will be set based on grant requirements, partnership needs, and opportunities to best address these goals.

1. **Foster Collaboration between the Forestry and Water Sectors:** Foster effective, sustainable partnerships focused on northeast forests, water, and conservation. Leverage these partnerships to align the forestry and water sectors in their efforts to achieve water quality goals using state forest action plans.
2. **Build Capacity to Increase Work in the Region:** Build partner capacity through training and increased coordination to accelerate implementation of state, watershed, and regional-scale projects that increase technical assistance and deliver on the ground improvements.
3. **Increase Implementation of BMPs:** Conserve, restore, and enhance forest landscapes in priority watersheds through implementation projects that target riparian restoration and forestry pollution abatement.
4. **Align Communication and Outreach:** Align communications between the forestry, water, and conservation sectors and develop and disseminate coordinated messages and provide training and outreach to forest owners, members, and other stakeholders.

How We Measure Success

- Forests and water management are integrated to the mutual benefit of ecosystems, local economies, and public health.
- Increased coordination among cooperating partners in the form of agreements to provide financial and technical assistance.
- Increased nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) participation in forestry practice implementation that results in measurable improvements in forest sustainability and water quality.
- Key components (i.e., long-term state/regional forest and water partnerships are in place, establishment of sustainable practices to best protect forested lands and preserve water quality) of the Partnership are self-sustaining.

What's Next?

In June 2024, the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) was awarded a second Landscape Scale Restoration grant for the Partnership. This new grant will enable us to increase collaborative efforts, expand the partnership, develop and disseminate additional resources, and implement new projects in West Virginia and Pennsylvania. Looking ahead in 2024, we will further build the programmatic structure for the sustainability of the Partnership and create unified messaging materials for elevating and expanding the Partnership. Members will begin regional scoping for partner alignment to build on work that enhances the Partnership without duplicating efforts previously undertaken.

2024 Regional Partnership efforts include:

- Establishing a governance structure and developing a charter (finalized June 2024).
- Launching a unifying logo and strategic plan with a vision, mission, and goals for the Partnership (finalized June 2024).

- Designing and launching web-accessible communications to share materials and updates with members, including a recurring newsletters and website (launching in July 2024)
- Documenting and sharing accomplishments through regular touchpoints and reports.
- Organizing meetings and creating tools to engage landowners and align partners.
- Support state-led efforts and implementation of on-the-ground projects in the region.

WHAT ARE STATE IMPLEMENTERS DOING THIS YEAR?

In 2024, the Partnership plans to support implementation activities through several projects across the Northeast Mid-Atlantic region.

In **Connecticut**, implementers will continue to support collaborative partnerships that equip landowners with the resources and knowledge necessary to make informed decisions about their forested lands. Connecticut implementers will work to restore riparian buffers in up to 50 acres in priority watersheds in Connecticut. A large percentage of people who will benefit from the proposed watershed projects within Connecticut (e.g., greater New Haven area) are low income and people of color. Low-income rural communities (e.g., Putnam) will also benefit from the proposed drinking water supply protection projects, including those served by private wells.

In **Ohio**, implementers will begin by providing oversight and guidance to conservation efforts in approximately 30 counties within the Appalachian region that are classified as “most disadvantaged” or “disadvantaged” by the University of Michigan’s “Index of Deep Disadvantage” equity maps. The Partnership will analyze issues of program access and equity through working group discussions and outcomes. These working group discussions will identify and assess the barriers that prevent forestry and water managers and the communities they serve from accessing federal, state, local, and NGO programs. Working groups will also discuss potential approaches to improving the effectiveness of outreach strategies and engagement with historically underserved forest owners.

In **Pennsylvania**, with the support of the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD) and the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, the partners will establish at least four riparian buffer demonstration sites. These efforts, including associated state outreach will reach at least 5,000 private forest landowners, partners, and stakeholders.

In **West Virginia**, implementers will meet in May to identify priority forested areas and critical watersheds for potential implementation projects that serve local communities. Implementers will also support projects that target wildlife habitat improvements, state forest action plan priorities, and water quality protection. West Virginia’s Association of Conservation Districts (WVACD) will collaborate with conservation districts in target watersheds to leverage their community relationships to educate landowners about the program and associated practices to facilitate their participation and practice adoption.