

2024 NORTHEAST MID-ATLANTIC PARTNERSHIP FOR FORESTS & WATER FORUM SUMMARY



November 20 – 21, 2024 in Hamden, Connecticut

Slides, resources, and other materials from the forum are available at [Northeast Mid-Atlantic Partnership for Forests and Water – Healthy Forests = Clean Water](#)

November 20th

12:00 -
4:00 PM

South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority (RWA) Lake Whitney Water Treatment Plant & Sites around New Haven/Hamden, Connecticut

- 🌿 RWA staff presented on the benefits of stormwater treatment systems, which are utilized when there is a lack of forested land within the public drinking water supply watershed.
- 🌿 The group visited the site of the Seymour slash wall and toured the slash wall hearing about and the research behind it. A comparison was seen between the area where deer have been excluded, and where deer have been left to roam free.
- 🌿 The group also heard about RWAs Landscape Scale Restoration grant project and saw a demonstration of the steam weeder on the invasive plant, Japanese stiltgrass.

5:00 -
7:00 PM

Bear's Smokehouse BBQ

The group met up at local BBQ spot Bear's Smokehouse to network and get to know one another better

November 21st

South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority (RWA) Lake Whitney Water Treatment Plant

8:30 - 9 AM
9 - 9:15 AM
9:15 - 9:25 AM

Registration, Coffee, and Tea
Introductions, Kira Jacobs, *EPA Region 1*
Welcome to RWA, Steve Vitko, *RWA*

- 🌿 Welcome to New Haven!
- 🌿 Whitney Water Treatment Plant overview, including the architecture of the interesting facility where the meeting was being held
- 🌿 45 million gallons per day (MGD)
- 🌿 ~430,000 customers throughout 15 municipalities
- 🌿 10 reservoirs, 4 surface water treatment plants, 7 wellfields
- 🌿 Owns 27,000 acres of protected lands

9:25 - 9:45 AM **Forests & Drinking Water Supply**, William Henley, RWA

- Importance of Forests & Water
 - Forests enhance surface water quality
 - Forests provide water flow modulation
 - Forests are important for groundwater recharge
- How does forest management plan into source supply and drinking water quality?
 - Diversity in stand age critical for diverse ecosystem
 - More extreme events, more pests – always a need for forest management to remedy those issues
 - Generates revenue

Questions:

- *Is there concern about herbivory (deer eating trees) and invasives within managed land?* Yes, anywhere we clear cut is a concern for deer. Diverse patch cuts help with diversity, but we still have concerns about invasives as well.
- *Do you have specific targets for regenerating revenue?* No, our predominate goal is water quality management. We do like to see some revenue, but it isn't a primary driver for our management practices.

9:45 - 10:15 AM

Framing the Day & Partnership Overview, Kira Jacobs, EPA Region 1 & Annica McGuirk, National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)

- The Southeastern Partnership for Forests & Water served as a model to establish the Northeast Mid-Atlantic Partnership for Forests & Water.
- The group held a 2022 webinar, a 2023 in-person forum in Edison, New Jersey, and now we're here for the 2024 in-person forum in Connecticut!
- Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) grants phase 1 and phase 2, totaling over \$1 million in funding for the partnership.
 - Phase 1: Implementation work in Ohio and Connecticut underway now.
 - Phase 2: Implementation work in Pennsylvania and West Virginia to start soon.
- The Partnership has a steering committee, governance documents, a strategic plan, and outreach products including a website and consistent branding.
- There are four main goals of the Partnership, to:
 - Collaborate
 - Build capacity
 - Implementation projects
 - Conduct education and outreach

10:15 - 10:30 AM

Partnership in Action: Efforts in Connecticut, Denise Savageau, NACD Northeast Region Chair

- Connecticut has a statewide Source Water Collaborative.
- In the early 2010s, soil health and water quality work was being done by conservation districts and other partners but connections to drinking water weren't always being made.

- 🌿 2018 Farm Bill included the source water protection provision and Connecticut was able to apply for a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) in Long Island Sound securing \$10M for nutrient management practices and soil health.
- 🌿 Were able to put forth the RCPP application using the Healthy Forests Reserve Program and targeted work in source water protection areas. This brought foresters and water quality and quantity partners together to do the work.
- 🌿 The most pressing issue has been land conversion/development pressure.
- 🌿 The momentum of partners starting to work together led to a Southwest Conservation District National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) watershed assessment. The NWQI watershed plan met NWQI criteria but also criteria for EPA 319 watershed-based plans. This opened up the watershed for both sources of funding moving forward.
- 🌿 All this work set them up to be the first implementation state for the Northeast Mid-Atlantic Forests & Water Partnership.
 - All state foresters had to sign a letter of support for NACD's Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR) grant application (from all 13 states!)
- 🌿 Through this work, partners realized how important conservation districts are to state forestry divisions. We are helping Connecticut's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) with forestry grants, training foresters, and looking at forestry programs to make sure they are using forestry climate smart practices.
- 🌿 Two other groups in Connecticut that are doing a lot of work and partnership here
 - Water planning council advisory group
 - Long island sound study citizens advisory committee
- 🌿 Where is the funding?
 - There are limited source water protection (SWP) funds but significant money in infrastructure. How can a project apply for infrastructure funds?
 - Looking at estuary programs that are getting big dollars, consider what they are doing for watershed management that could be aligned with source water areas and goals. Consider programs like the Chesapeake Bay Program too.
- 🌿 Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans (CCMP) handout is out for public review now
 - One measure of success is to conserve and protect watershed land beyond the coastal boundary! It is all One Water.
 - Looking to get forestry people involved in this work moving forward.

10:45 - 11 AM **Field Trip Recap**, Joshua Tracy, RWA

- 🌿 **Stop 1: Web Brook Cove Sediment Detention Basin**
 - Established to manage stormwater from suburban area.
 - Native plants help with filtration and nutrient uptake.
 - Passive filtration before feeding into Lake Whitney and getting to the Treatment Plant.
- 🌿 **Stop 2a: The Seymour Slash Wall Area**
 - 18-acre clearcut surrounded by a slash wall and about 18 acres outside the wall.
 - Was built as an experiment area; the harvest is encased by the slash wall; slash is made from residuals left over from harvest sales.
 - Need a 20-foot-wide wall to support a 10-foot-high pile for deer exclusion.
- 🌿 **Stop 2b: The Steam Weeder**

- Purchased a steam weeder as part of an LSR grant related to bat habitat work.
- The purpose was to kill annual Japanese Stiltgrass while avoiding using herbicides near the reservoir.

Questions:

- *Why was such a large area outside of slash wall harvested?* A: This area was mostly for the study. Ideally, you want to minimize external area that is not protected within the slash wall.
- *Why focus on Japanese Stiltgrass?* A: Can only really kill plants with shallow roots, not woody herbaceous. It also easily infiltrates cuts once sun is exposed to the soil.
- *Did you have public pushback while the slash wall was being built?* A: Yes, there were concerns with timber harvest because people assumed the area would be turned into a development. Mostly concerns based on not knowing what was happening. We worked on educating agencies and neighbors beforehand as well.
- *What is the long-term maintenance and management plan?* A: They are low maintenance. In the short term, we will fill any holes in the wall. After 5-10 years, when trees inside the slash wall are established, it will start to biodegrade. A benefit of a slash wall is it doesn't have to be maintained or removed long-term.

11 AM - 12 PM Success Stories from the Region

DIVERSIFICATION: The Key to Locally Led Conservation, Michael Kent, Cape Atlantic Conservation District (NJ)

- New Jersey's Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Program – applies to any project that disturbs over 5,000 sq. ft. and had been in place for 5 years.
- The trick is getting to meet people, identifying you have the same goals, and understanding we don't all have to do it alone.
 - Come to meetings like this, the September 2025 NACD Northeast Regional Meeting in Syracuse, New York. Get out and meet people, hear ideas, bring what you learn back.
- Everyone is struggling to find and hire certified foresters right now (only ~8 in the state of New Jersey right now). They have been able to expand their staff and now have a forester and work with the state to get forestry work done.
- There is value in focusing on “conservation” instead of “preservation.”
- Recommend working with your local conservation districts and an easy way to do that is attending local working group meetings.
 - Every conservation district is mandated to hold a local working group annually.

Questions:

- *What funding did you use to hire foresters?* We have a good relationship with NRCS. Since 2015 have had partner employees which has allowed us to help the state with their workload. It's a win-win. Also received a NFWF grant for 500K to build forestry capacity in the region over the next 3 years.

"Got Trees?" Thoughts on Forest Conservation, Water Quality and Climate Change,
Tim Abbott, Housatonic Valley Association (CT)

- 🌲 We need to look at and think about everything as a landscape story.
- 🌲 Everything is interconnected and we need to find ways through breaks and barriers to connect them.
- 🌲 We are struggling with forests and fires right now and people will start seeing forests as a threat. People are afraid and will need expertise and guidance.
- 🌲 Connected and big forested landscapes are important. That doesn't mean we can't manage things; it means we need to know where it is situated in the landscape and what we can control.

Questions:

- *Are you interested in dynamic forest block and looking into trying to build diversity in your watershed?* Yes, interested and still learning. We need to be smarter about experimentation and make sure we're sharing what we learn.
- *How do we get a grip on "forests and dangerous?"* Human health will always be more important than the environment, if a decision has to be made we will choose to save ourselves. It is our job to talk to people and frame the messaging around human health impacts, rather than the environment.

Tools for Source Water Protection and Watershed Assessment in CT, *David Dickson, UConn (CT)*

- 🌲 [Local Watershed Assessment Tool](#)
 - Focuses on riparian areas
 - Has a scenario builder
 - Works for watershed prioritization, not parcel level decisions
- 🌲 [Parcel Prioritization for Source Water Protection](#)
 - Parcel-level prioritization for SWP and aquifer protection
 - Parcels ranked from 0-10
 - The goal is to get land use commissioners to use the tool for parcel prioritization

Questions:

- *Now that we have identified parcels, how do you plan to reach landowners to implement improvements?* The plan is to use land trusts, land use commissioners, ad watershed associations who do outreach to individual landowners. Have also presented the tool to the water planning committee to reach water utilities. The Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR) is focused on tool development and promotion to those partners, not working directly with landowners.
- *What should other states do that are looking to develop similar tools?* It is a GIS application, and other states can use available data to get something similar done. That tool was a driving force for work on watershed health with the long island sound and should be explored.

John O'Neil, *Manchester Water Works (NH)*

- Has been operating since 1874 and have 2 foresters on staff
- Massabesic (30 MGD) & Merrimack (6 MGD) Rivers are their sources
- They own and manage many acres, and most are open for recreation
- They have also been focusing on conservation easements on private lands, partnering with land trusts, the town, and other interested parties to extend protected areas.

Alex Ashby, *Albany Water Department (NY)*

- Similar watershed as New York City, only smaller with ~120,000 customers
- They own the land surrounding the reservoirs and manage 6,500 acres
 - Alcove Reservoir and Basic Creek Reservoir are the two sources
 - Reservoirs were built in 1920's
- Water runs from Alcove, 20 miles into the city of Albany. System is gravity fed.
- Because they own the forested land they need to keep it functioning. Are in the process of losing some trees and trying to mitigate those issues.
- Working to acquire more land as conservation easements.

Nick Kevey, *West Virginia American Water (WV)*

- They serve about 300k customers from their largest plant (They have 7 surface water systems and 14 wells). They serve about ½ the state population with both surface and groundwater plants.
- They are a private utility and do not own or manage any land. Instead, they work with private and public landowners and partners to manage land.
- There is a state regulatory source water protection program (after 2014 Elk River chemical spill that shutdown the water supply to Charleston, WV for three days).
- They manage in two zones – the zone of critical concern (5-hour time to intake) and zone of peripheral concern (10-hour time to intake).
- Partner to do conservation. Work with entities who want to protect the watershed. Have organizations that will do testing for them and provide information to the state and West Virginia American Water (WV AM).
- The state does have a regulation that systems must update their SWP Plans every 3 years.

Questions

- *Did you say there is a regulatory program in West Virginia?* WV AM is privately owned but we do have to meet the state regulation. West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (WVDHHR) sets the standard. Every 3 years, we have to submit source water protection plans.
- *What are your key watershed partners you work with to protect drinking water?*
 - John – we work with the society for the protection of forests in New Hampshire, the southeast land trust, and other state wide and local partners.
 - Alex – we work with the Nature Conservancy and local partners on easements. We also partner frequently with county-level public health departments for outreach. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) also helps with monitoring and outreach and provide a

- hand with deer management. We also partner with the local population on deer management by allowing hunting deer in the reservoir area. And we have partnerships with Cornell and prism for regional invasive species management.
- Nick – after the spill in 2016, policies were kicked into high gear. We have partnered with United States Geological Survey (USGS) since then with upstream monitoring. They have also offered to help install upstream probes to be better prepared if there is an incident. Work also work a lot with the state-level forests and drinking water partnership in West Virginia. We can't do a lot of the work ourselves, so we need those partners. Our goals are aligned so we try to help financially when we can. We also re-established a partnership with WV Rivers coalition, doing education/outreach. We partner with Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO) - they have been a great partner because we have an intake on the Ohio river.
 - *What are your largest nonpoint sources (NPSs) and approaches to address them?*
 - John – we have a lot of small-scale farming where it isn't their primary business, but they have livestock, like horses. Subdivisions are also popping up. We want to look at open space in our watershed for conservation easement efforts before they could come in.
 - Alex – we have a fair amount of agriculture – dairy, especially in our secondary watershed. We are working on riparian buffers with them. Enforcing basic regulations like exclusion fencing. We also deal with road salt and have county roads through the watershed and the reservoir. We're testing tributaries to identify where the most significant problems are. We have a lot of aging septic systems and are currently working on an initiative to update or repair failing septic systems.
 - Nick – acid mine drainage is our largest source of NPS contamination. Urban development in West Virginia is only occurring in two areas so it isn't a widespread issue. West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) estimates 90% of the states' water is poor quality due to acid mine drainage. This is a challenge because West Virginia's economy is based on coal, so it takes trying to change the mindset of a whole state. Fecal coliform in rural areas has been an issue although we have seen improvements in last 10 years. Sanitary sewers have done a lot to improve that. We also have agricultural inputs and West Virginia is all rivers/valleys and mountain ranges and we have issues with cattle stream crossing, cattle biproducts and nutrient loading. We have Natural Resources Conservation (NRCS) strong in the room. As a water utility, they are a great resource.
 - *What is the biggest challenge you're facing today in your role?*
 - John – sometimes it is the politics. As a natural resource manager people tell me they recycle but they don't understand what we do. Educating board members, politicians in town, and upper management to what you do, and the value is important.
 - Alex – our reservoir is 20 miles from the city which is helpful for impacting the water but also challenging for communicating. As the forester, it is invasive species. We've lost ash almost completely and are losing hemlock. We have grasses that took over understory and they have exploded in vulnerable wetland systems.

- Nick – working with people to get the work done that we can't do as a water utility that doesn't own much of our watershed. We work with upstream facilities, have potential sources of significant concern, and ask for information but they don't have to give it to us. Calling and emailing doesn't get a response. You have to meet and be collaborative – those are the best ways to get a connection.
- *Can you describe your recreational program and what you have in New Hampshire?*
We have 7,500 out of our 8,000 acres open to the public. We used to partner with recreation clubs to manage access but that was a challenge because they were the intermediary, and the information would get changed between us and the users. Now we work directly with users. We use the website to communicate, our patrol officers can speak to and educate the public without offending them. We also have a hunting program with permitting to know who is hunting.
- *What is the public perception for your utilities and what are you doing to help build trust in the community?*
 - Alex – we have a clear divide between the reservoir and customers. Within the city people don't know where or how they get their water. Recently hired someone to do social media and public outreach. Highly recommend checking out the “Spring to Spigot” video on Albany Water's website. Opening the property for things like hunting has also helped with the local community.
 - Nick – it has been a struggle since the spill. We have a storymap for customers, we go out to them and teach and share information. We present SWP plan updates to customers in a GIS webmap. Customers said that has been a helpful tool.
 - John – the city of Manchester has a school program - 3rd graders have a poster contest and 4th graders have a science fair. We worked with local schools in our customer base. The thought was the kids will become adults one day, but the kids end up getting help from their parents, so we reach them too. The finals are at the water treatment plant. It has been a highly successful program. The watershed people who don't drink the water are more of a challenge to reach and influence.

1:30 – 2:15 PM

Forestry Presentations & Panel Discussion

Chris Martin, State Forester of CT (CT)

- 🌲 Used CLEAR to identify that 63% of Connecticut's riparian areas are covered in forests.
- 🌲 In Connecticut, 70% of all woodlands are privately owned so individual parcel owners – in the 5–10-acre category – are an important audience for us.
- 🌲 We have a strong SWP program in the state and encourage communities to work with the community forests program.
- 🌲 Tools for Engaging Landowners Effectively (TELE) is a great tool for engaging landowners effectively. It includes a tremendous workbook of strategies to work with landowners to best manage their land.

Charlie Laing, NYC DEP Forest Program Manager (NY)

- 🌿 New York City has its own watershed forest management plan – contracted with US Forest Service (USFS) in 2011 to develop the plan and management direction for the agency.
- 🌿 Established a forestry interdisciplinary technical team which is a diverse group, and everyone gets to review approaches.
- 🌿 There are a variety of challenges in different areas of the state including watershed forest species of concern and the invasive pests and disease of greatest concern.

Beth Sassaman, Pennsylvania NRCS State Biologist (PA)

- 🌿 NRCS helps farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners to find solutions that fit into their system. It is local led conservation which is different in every state and areas within the state too.
- 🌿 They have funding for technical positions with partners and agreements and have service centers in every county in Pennsylvania. They also have partner foresters spread throughout the state and a cooperative agreement with Penn Forestry. They are trying to get people on the ground to meet the needs of that specific areas.
- 🌿 NRCS' 7 resource concerns align with the core elements in State Forest Action Plans (SFAPs).

Questions

- *The 2018 Farm Bill in 2018 requires each state to develop a 10-year SFAP to guide the state agencies and partners in the things that should be most important in that 10-year period. They are eligible to be revised every 5 years. The current ones were drafted in 2020 and can be revised in 2025. What top 1-2 issues are you adding in 2025?*
 - Chris – every year a new forest pest comes into Connecticut. Since 2020, we have beach leaf disease, southern pine beetle, and other scares. They are all disturbing because they affect major components of the forests. We didn't think we needed to worry about fires, but we do. That is clear now.
 - Beth – we added water and soil in 2020. We have a need to address urban and suburban forestry in Pennsylvania. We do have some invasives as well but they're already in the action plan.
 - Charlie – working on watershed forest management plan. The state forest action plan aligns with the same goals as their program, but the state and city have aggressive carbon net zero plans and the state is looking at forests as carbon sinks for meeting their energy goals. We're in good shape though, if you manage for climate and carbon it is the same as water quality.
- *Interested in following up on comment about including urban and suburban forests. What are some best practices for parcels less than 5 acres in size? How do we help work with smaller parcel landowners?*
 - Chris – there is an infusion of federal funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). We put our urban and community forestry program on steroids – we had millions granted, we staffed up, we're still granting millions more. We are going to traditional and private property owners, municipal forests, public and non-public riparian areas. But there is a gap with US Department of Agriculture (USDA) USFS programs. We can do well in urban and rural but not suburban and we're trying to address that with these available funds.

- Karl – there is 1.5 billion in urban and community forestry dollars out nationwide. Every state has received those funds.
- Charlie – we fund partner organizations that can work with private landowners to do riparian buffer planting, do best management practices (BMPs) for water quality protection activities. We can pick away at that by funding groups and collaboratives to focus on that work.
- Beth - deer management and invasives are a major area for us, even in suburban areas.
- ***What can we do as a partnership to collaborate better for harvesting of forest products and habitat management?***
 - Chris - if we do a forest management plan, we draft it, send it out, gather input from communities. As we implement a 10–15-year management plan, we have additional education and outreach events focused on that. We tell field foresters to reach out to local land trusts, watershed councils, elected officials, and address their concerns and follow-up. That has gone a long way to inform the general public on good management and why we do what we do.
 - Charlie – the key has been being upfront and transparent. We need to get the message across and express we’re confident that our program goals and plans are good. We are managing the forests for long-term water quality protection. We're able to demonstrate it is in the most environmentally sensitive way we can. It can be hard to convey need for long-term plan, but we want a forest that remains and to do that we need to insert ourselves into the forest.
 - Beth - NRCS has the opportunity to do this in forested lands but also across the landscape. In Pennsylvania they have initiatives for adorable and great species. There is a Joint Chiefs Initiative for the state bird. Pennsylvania likes Pennsylvania stuff so you can connect over species and something people can see. NRCS helps people do things and see the results. When you’re in a field office and you and they can see improvements it is motivating and exciting. It’s nice to be able to show people what you’re improving.

2:30 – 3:15 PM

Demystifying Funding Presentations & Panel Discussion

Karl Honkonen, USFS

- 📍 Shared a map of USFS’ northeast region. It includes 172 million acres of forest lands and 125m people. Much of the forested lands are privately owned and many of the people in the region rely on surface water for their drinking water.
- 📍 LSR – the application has to have a tie-in to the SFAP. This is how the partnership work has been funded thus far. The project we saw with the steam weeder yesterday was funded with an LSR grant. The 2024 applications are being reviewed now.
- 📍 There is also an LSR grant program for Tribes – it is available to federally recognized tribal governments and applications are due in December.
- 📍 USFS also has the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) within the Great Lakes basin, the Collaborative Wildfire Risk Reduction program, and provides BIL funding for invasive species management on non-federal lands.

Karen Sughrue, EPA Headquarters Office of Water

- 🌱 EPA's Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) & Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) programs - provide low interest below market loans and grant like assistance (like principal forgiveness). CWSRF has given 172 billion to communities over 36 years. Example projects that have been funded by the SRFs include:
 - Maine forestry direct link loan program
 - Sebago lake conservation easement (watershed partnership) in Maine
 - Skagit public utility district in Washington (CWSRF and DWSRF)
 - Jefferson County Department of Public Health in Washington (land acquisition loan fund pilot)
- 🌱 Clean Water Act (CWA) section 319 grants - advancing watershed protection through land conservation guide and factsheet provides information about 14 types of programs that can help fund land conservation.
- 🌱 Two tools are available to help identify funding.
 - The Pollutant Load Estimation Tool (PLET) now has a protected lands feature to get estimates of stormwater mitigated from land protection
 - The Funding Integration Tool for Source Water (FITS) has 14 federal programs with information on funding, planning and coordination, and case studies.

Matthew Vandersande, NRCS

- 🌱 Farm Bill Programs – 10% of funding for these programs has to be used for SWP. These include Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) (flagship program), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) (enhancements and flexibilities for annual payments), and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) (long-term and permanent easements for agricultural lands).
- 🌱 Landscape conservation initiatives including Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW), NWQI, and Long Leaf Pine Initiative (LLPI).
- 🌱 Project-based Programs. There is a proposal based and project selection process instead of dedicated funding to states to support these initiatives. These are around leveraging existing partnerships for projects. These include RCPP (has some unique rules and requirements and unique flexibilities to get large scale restoration done) and the Joint Chiefs' landscape restoration partnership.

Questions

- *What funds does your agency have that are underutilized for forests/water projects, what are the challenges to using them, and what are some ways to overcome those barriers?*
 - Karl – the LSR grant. It requires intimate knowledge of the SFAP and where their plan fits in. The applicant has to secure endorsement from the state forester and there is a 50% non-federal match. The match can be in-kind or cash. Each state is only able to submit up to 5 applications in one year although regional applications do not apply to that limit.
 - Beth – CWSRF. Nonpoint source program staff remind us that 95% of the millions of dollars in the program are going to wastewater treatment plant construction and upgrades (point source pollution) and that is very expensive. Water quality impairments are largely due to nonpoint sources and there is an imbalance with where their funding goes. Loan is a four-letter word but there are ways to get a revenue source to pay back the loan like watershed

financing partnerships. BIL has provided 12 billion over 5 years for CWSRF and time is running out to take advantage of the subsidy. The green project reserve mandates 10% of funds through CWSRF go to green infrastructure, energy conservation, water conservation, or environmentally innovative projects. The money is there.

- Matthew – The White Oak Initiative is not a formal initiative, but it is a partnership USDA has with the White Oak Initiative. Folks who want to implement conservation practices can receive funding. There are some bills before congress to formalize that. For water projects, NWQI is a good place to start. It started in 2012 as a partnership with EPA to target funding over multiple years for voluntary conservation practices. We see accelerated outcomes in watersheds with this model. It is a national program, but we need people on the ground establishing partnerships, getting data, talking to producers. These are watershed programs that require watershed assessment before they can get funded. You can get the data we need in the assessment to be a guide for the watershed plan and qualify for the NWQI.
- *We are still losing markets for forest products. There is often an economic side of it when we're talking about forest projects but also need to make it marketable to do the work. Emerging markets are dwindling. What are some ways we can bring local markets back into our states?*
 - Karl – in the last few years there have been earmarks in the federal budget. A few years ago we started getting these earmarks. One addresses the Northern Forest Center in Concord, NH who received 200k to listen to forest producers and enhance forest markets around New England. They're working on furniture, pellets, and shipping issues to enhance the market share around New England. There is also an effort to use BIL funding to develop a temporary bridge program to build and distribute portable skidder bridges to get products out of the woods more efficiently.
 - Beth - EPA has also received congressionally directed projects which are community grants. See what types are funded near you (started in 2022).

3:15 – 4:00 PM

Small Group Breakouts

Connecticut Group

Successes/Resources

- Inland wetlands act provides protection but is also a challenge
- Forest Action Plan and Open Space Plan both emphasize water and forests
- Public Act 490 reduced taxes and help protect land (<25 acres)
 - A challenge is reduced acreage requirement
- OSWALA Program – open space
- Master Woodland Manager – CTFPA
- CT DEEP/NACD funding coordination with all partners – communication
- Water Planning Council/DPH
- State Water Plan

Challenges

- Extreme weather events (fire, flood, drought, tornados)
 - This can also be an opportunity - Legislative opportunity to address these challenges
- Change state statute to use CWSRF

- SB 11 forest resilience (failed at first) and also Climate Change Bill/Nature-based Solutions
- Clear cut forests for affordable housing – balance?

- Influence federal legislation to focus on watershed health
- Need more foresters to write forest management plans and implement the plans

Opportunities

- Convert forests to solar fields
- Remove urban hardscape and create new urban forests, encourage urban agroforestry.
 - o URI, UNH, New Haven stormwater

- Edible riparian buffers
- Local zoning to require solar panels on new construction

CT Collaboration/Partnership Next Steps

- Already have the Connecticut State Collaborative
- Conduct post disaster analysis
 - o What went wrong?
 - o Look for mitigation options

- GC3/Climate Change consideration of impacts, how to get involved, nature-based solutions need to move forward (not just energy)
- Don't wait for a problem to occur (algae bloom, hydrilla, etc.)

Region 1 States (ME, VT, NH, MA, RI)

Successes

- This forum
- Land Protection
- SWPA waivers
- Deliver high-quality water to the public
- 319 grants + NWQI Projects in the states

- Penny fund in RI goes to SWP
 - o 1 penny per thousand gallons of water

Resources

- State technical committees/subcommittees
- Local working groups

- Statewide working groups

Greatest Challenges

- Invasive plants
- People
- Politics
- Public Access

- Public Perception
- Limited funding in local communities
- Public information/connection between forests + water

ME, VT, NH, MA, RI Collaboration/Partnership Next Steps

- Find and communicate common goals/common grounds
- Funding sources complements

- Leveraging strengths of each partner
- Continuing to meet as a subgroup
- Resources central webpage

Region 2 States (NY, NJ)

Successes

- Federal Highlands Protection Act
- NJ Highlands Program + NJ Pinelands
 - o 300-foot buffers on waterbodies

- Curtailed urban spaces
- Forestry lands within water supply areas
- No fracking in NYC watershed

Challenges

- Public perception of what forest management is

- Forest product marketing – low quality wood

- Lack of qualified foresters
- Lack of regulatory staff
- Lack of living wages for these jobs
- Fringe benefit costs
- Funds for noncommercial forestry work (stewardship)
- Water rates stay stagnant
- NRCS funds can be used on public lands

Resources Available

- NJ NRCS state forester (Don)
- NJ Conservation Districts are slowly starting to do forestry work and fill in those holes
- Non-profits doing a lot of work

NY/NJ Collaboration/Partnership Next Steps

- Continuing this
- Funding partnerships
- Structured discussion at conference
- In the future full 2-day forum
 - o Day 1 field trip and talks
 - o Day 2 panels and workshopping
- Increase recruiting
 - o Work with universities
 - o American Water Works Association – Student Partners
 - o Vocational/technical high schools

Region 3 States (PA, DE, MD, DC, WV)

Successes

- Frederick Forests Stewardship Plan (MDO)
 - o City Forester – USFS Large Scale Watershed Partnership
- WV Forests + Drinking Water Partnership
- Model – Southeastern Partnership for Forests + Water
- National SWC – collaboratives near you + how to collaborate toolkit
- Share success stories from landowners (NRCS NWQI)
 - o Swatara + Maiden Creek (PA)
- TNC Sustainable certification – Forests in DW supply
- CREP – Riparian buffers + other cost-share (PA)
- ACAP-state ag cost-share in PA --> looking how it can be used for forestry

Challenges

- Staff turnover + capacity
- Consistency of funding
- Challenges with plain sect taking government funding
- Lack of nursery stock – meeting native demand
 - o TSP to write forestry plant +contractors for all state initiatives (ex. 10M trees initiative)
- Seed sources
- Fitting under grant criteria (ex. focus on nutrients reduction)
- Leveraging/matching funding (ex. local + regional/federal support for projects)

Resources

- MD – tree nursery + expanding
- SRF – revolving portion can be federal match
- State Forest Action Plans include water goals
- Land prioritization mapping (ex. Potomac, CT)
- Watershed ranking – Forests to Faucets
- DWMAPS --> Helps with NRCS high priority SWP areas
- Partners! Local watershed groups, county CCDs
- Take advantage of funding available NOW!
 - o Need to show value of funding (to continue funding in the future)

PA, DE, MD, DC, WV Collaboration/Partnerships Next Steps

- Leveraging funding + technical resources
- LCWP framework, envision the Choptank (grassroots, local collaboratives)
- Non-traditional partners (ex. Hunters)
- Engaging state and federal tribes
- Mutual ed + understanding (ex. What forestry practices impact DW – good or bad?)
- Long-game - mitigating risk by conserving lands (it is hard to quantify the dollar value of forests for DW supply)