



Chesapeake Bay Program's (CBP)
Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) Workshop
**Healthy Forests: Proactive Strategies for Managing
Threats and Promoting Conservation**
February 24-25th, 2026
The Delaplaine Arts Center
Frederick, Maryland

****Exact Times Are Subject to Change****

This meeting will be recorded to assure the accuracy of meeting notes.

Workshop Objective: Participants will identify and discuss major ecological stressors to forest health in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, with a focus on which stressors feel most urgent, how stressors interact, and where key knowledge gaps limit action. The discussion will also explicitly connect forest health to downstream water quality outcomes, including nutrient and sediment runoff, stream temperature, and the ability of forests and riparian buffers to protect and restore aquatic habitat.

- **Day 1 Objective:** Develop a shared picture of the major stressors affecting forest health, how they compound, and why they matter not only for forests but also for Chesapeake Bay water quality and living resources.
- **Day 2 Objective:** Develop and prioritize actionable recommendations for proactive forest management and stewardship, distinguishing short-term from long-term strategies.

Tuesday, February 24, 2026

8:45 am **Coffee & Light Breakfast (Provided)**

9:15 am **Welcome and Introductions – Katie Brownson (USFS), Craig Highfield (Alliance)**
Workshop Co-Chairs will kick off the workshop with a welcome and introductions and outline the objectives of the workshop. Summary of the new Forestry goals in the [Bay Watershed Agreement](#).

9:45 am **Conceptual Model Discussion – Matt Baker (UMBC), Michelle Katoski (USGS)**
Steering Committee members will introduce a draft model connecting stressors to forest health, water quality, and Bay outcomes. Participants are requested to provide feedback and refinement.

10:00 am **Level-Setting Plenary: Major Ecological Stressors to Forest Health**
Facilitator: Katie Brownson (USFS). Experts will present on important ecological stressors affecting forest health in the Chesapeake Bay watershed (e.g., climate change, land use, invasive species, pests/disease) and the management relevance of these stressors.

- *Chris Hayes (USDA FS)*
- *Matt Hurd (MD DNR FS)*
- *Jill Rose (PA DCNR)*

11:00 am **20-minute Break**

- 11:20 am** **Panel: People and Forests**
Facilitator: Sarah Johnson (PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry). Panelists will talk about the roles of people (e.g., landowners, community groups, stewardship programs, local governments) in forest management.
- *Allyson Brownlee Muth (Center for Private Forests, PSU)*
 - *Isaac Hametz (The Nature Conservancy), Michele Romolini (Loyola Marymount University)*
 - *Jenny Willoughby (City of Frederick)*
 - *Jon Geyer (Hardwood Development Council)*
- 12:20 pm** **Lunch (provided)**
- 1:20 pm** **Panel: Lessons from Practice**
Facilitator: Craig Highfield (Alliance). Case studies of proactive forest management that will help inform the strategy moving forward.
- *Kyle Myers (PA DCNR), Roy Brubaker (PA DCNR)*
 - *Nancy Baker (Land steward, landowner)*
 - *Matt Pienkowski (Woodland Stewardship Network, the Alliance)*
 - *Dave Mausel (USFS)*
- 2:20 pm** **20-minute Break**
- 2:40 pm** **Breakout Groups: Prioritizing threats to forest health and water quality**
Participants will identify priority stressors and discuss how stressors interact, with attention to implications for both forest health and downstream water quality. Participants will rank each stressor on a 1–5 scale for importance/urgency, current understanding, and ability to influence (tractability).
- Which stressors are most urgent for maintaining forest health and for maintaining water quality, and why
 - Where are key knowledge gaps, including around stressor interactions and water quality implications
- 4:00 pm** **Breakout Groups Report-Out**
- 4:30 pm** **Wrap-Up Discussion: Key Takeaways from Day 1**
Facilitated by the workshop steering committee.
- 4:45 pm** **Recess**
- 5:40 pm** **Optional Dinner (offsite)**

Wednesday, February 25, 2026

- 8:45 am** **Coffee & Light Breakfast (Provided)**
- 9:00 am** **Recap of Day 1 & Framing for Day 2**
Facilitated by the workshop steering committee.
- 9:15 am** **Lightning Talks / Panel: Tools and Approaches for Scaling Forest Management**
Facilitator: Chris Hayes (USFS). Lightning talks highlighting practical tools and policies that have supported proactive forest management.
- *Guy Dunkle (Foundation for Sustainable Forests)*
 - *Jeff Larkin (IUP/ABC)*
 - *Sabina Dhungana (VA DOF)*
 - *Amy Shields (Allegheny Hardwoods Utilization Group, Allegheny Forest Health Collaborative)*
 - *Phyllis Joris (Neighbor Space)*
- 10:30 am** **Breakout Groups: Strategies for managing threats and promoting conservation**
Participants will discuss actionable strategies that address the priority stressors (and their water quality implications), including what can be implemented in the short term versus what requires longer-term effort.
- What proactive management strategies can address the priority stressors, and at what scale do they work (project/local/state/basin-wide)
 - What enables implementation (key implementers) and what barriers or gaps limit action (capacity, policy, funding, data, decision-support needs)
- 11:30 am** **20-minute Break**
- 11:50 am** **Breakout Groups Report-Out**
- 12:30 pm** **Lunch Keynote: Inspiring Forest Futures – [Ethan Tapper](#)**
Ethan Tapper is a Vermont-based forester and the author of *How to Love a Forest: The Bittersweet Work of Tending a Changing World*. Drawing on years of on-the-ground forest stewardship, Ethan offers a practical and hopeful perspective on what it really means to care for forests in a time of change, including the hard, “bittersweet” decisions required to protect and restore resilient forest landscapes.
- 2:00 pm** **Group Discussion: Synthesis and Next Steps**
Facilitated by the Workshop Steering Committee.
This session will summarize key takeaways from both days and focus on identifying three priority areas for follow-up.
- 3:00 pm** **Closing Remarks and Workshop Conclusion – [Katie Brownson \(USFS\)](#), [Craig Highfield \(Alliance\)](#)**
- 3:15 pm** **Adjourn**