

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday August 27, 2025

Meeting 2

Forestland and Urban Tree Canopy Conservation Plan Technical Advisory Committee

Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) Board Room

(Virtual Option)

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Attendees: Terry Lasher (VFA), Sheri Shannon (Southside ReLeaf), Joe Weber (DCR), Vincent Verweij (Arlington County), Ann Jurczyk (Chesapeake Bay Foundation), Karen Firehock (UVA), Michael Webb (City of Richmond), Jim McGlone (SWCD), Joe Lerch (VACO), Hannah Schul (DWR)

Virtual TAC Attendees: Amanda McGee (Roanoke Valley), Rachel Henley (Virginia Farm Bureau), Jill Sunderland (Hampton Roads), Josette Bulova (Virginia Municipal League), Justin Doyle (James River Association), Adam Lipera (Trees Virginia), Nikki Rovner (TNC), Jonathan Rak (DEQ), Sarah Dishman (Friends of the Rappahannock), Sarah Thomas (VA Association of Commercial Real Estate), Josette Briggs (DOF)

Attendees: Rob Farrell (DOF), Nathan Thomson (DOF), Lori Chamberlain (DOF), Jennifer Leach (DOF), Greg Bilyeu (DOF), Jim Whipp (DOF), Kaycee Faunce (DOF), Lara Johson (DOF), Ember Jennison (DOF), Amanda Scheps (DOF)

Virtual Attendees: Shannon Heckt (Virginia Mercury)

The meeting was convened at 9:30am

Welcome and Introductions

Rob Farrell (State Forester) welcomed everyone to the second Forestland and Urban Tree Canopy Conservation Plan Technical Advisory Committee meeting. Everyone in attendance introduced themselves.

Review of the Minutes

There were no adjustments to the minutes from the previous meeting.

GIS Presentation

DOF's Jim Whipp and Kaycee Faunce presented to the group regarding project preparation, harvest overview, landcover classification, regenerative layering, statewide application, and public facing technology.

- Karen Firehock
 - Would a county like Albermarle be able to download these GIS files?
- Jim Whipp
 - Absolutely, we want individuals who live or work in municipalities to be able to use and download the data
- Sheri Shannon
 - Can you talk about the accuracy assessment with the human eye?
- Kaycee Faunce
 - A human observer will compare their output to the model's output
 - This was an addition to the original GIS contract, along with the harvest data
- Sheri Shannon
 - What is the feedback loop to see progress over time?
- Jim Whipp
 - While this is a capability PlanITGeo has, it isn't currently in our contract. We can look at incorporating it in the future.
- Lara Johnson
 - The legislation mandates the plan to be updated every 5 years
- Vincent Verweij
 - What is the accuracy target?
- Lara Johnson
 - 99% for tree and forest layer
- Vincent Verweij
 - If we have our own data, can we upload them to this application?
- Jim Whipp

- Due to standardization, we don't think we will be able to incorporate that
- Vincent Verweij
 - How well will this process capture unusual features?
- Jim Whipp
 - We have not looked at areas like high rises and street trees yet
 - All data deliverables are due to DOF by December 1
- Jonathan Rak
 - Will there be an adjustment process for shelterwood cuts or natural events like tornadoes?
- Rob Farrell
 - Yes, shelterwood would be captured in this process due to DOF proprietary data
 - We can also utilize the Department's analysis from Hurricane Helene to see if there is overlap regarding natural events
- Ann Jurczyk
 - Will the regenerative layer use harvest data and planting data?
- Rob Farrell
 - The regenerative layer captures harvest and then by default that land regenerates into forest, unless it has been permanently converted
- Lara Johnson
 - We are doing as much as possible on the ground to make sure the regenerative layer is as accurate as possible
- Ann Jurczyk
 - Is this resolution to the point we can identify invasive species?
- Jim Whipp
 - Unfortunately, the technology is not that developed at this point. Hopefully further down the road when the plan is updated.
- Rob Farrell
 - There are multiple areas we can go with the data in the future once the technology is developed
- General Discussion regarding the value of study and future funding
- Jim McGlone
 - Are socio-economic variables being incorporated?
- Jim Whipp
 - We will look at vulnerable populations, heat issues, etc.

Consultant Discussion:

- Nathan Thomson
 - An IFB has been developed for a plan consultant and is now available for bid
 - Overview of IFB's scope presented
 - Timeline
 - Mandatory Pre-bid conference on Sep 10
 - Final bids on Sep 25
 - Final data delivery by PlanITGeo Dec 1
 - Data to consultant in Jan 26
 - Final plan publication Nov 26
- Ann Jurczyk
 - What portion of the budget went to data analysis?
- Nathan Thomson
 - Approximately \$540k

Member Forum:

- Karen Firehock
 - The plan needs to identify risks to our forests
 - Additionally, guidance for local governments
- Joe Lerch
 - Making the data available is the most critical part
- Jim McGlone
 - We need to discuss not only the risks but also the benefits of forests and tree canopy
 - A plan is needed for an awareness campaign
- Vincent Verweij
 - We need to know what we can achieve in our localities and identify plantable areas
- Rob Farrell
 - This plan will not be the appropriate vehicle for setting locality level goals, but it will be able to provide data for locality level comparison
- Hannah Schul
 - Emphasis on education component and outreach effort
- Joe Lerch
 - Discussion on implication of tax changes to solar development in Virginia
- Lara Johnson

- Plan Writer will develop templates for cities, towns, and counties
- Ann Jurczyk
 - Accuracy is important because everyone needs to be onboard with the findings from the dataset
 - Will this analysis be able to replace locality level studies?
- Lara Johnson
 - While we are demanding extremely high accuracy on a state level this will not prevent localities from doing their own studies
- Michael Webb
 - City of Richmond is developing their own Master Plan, and will have higher accuracy at a local level but this will be the standard from a regional standpoint
- Lara Johnson
 - We will be setting a baseline for communities in the state that have never had this information before
- Sarah Thomas
 - We would still like to see data on what localities are doing under their existing authority and if they are using said authority
- Nathan Thomson
 - That is one of the tasks prescribed in the IFB
- Jim McGlone
 - FIA is facing similar quality control challenges
- Karen Firehock
 - GIC has some tools in place that localities can use
- Jim McGlone
 - Tree care is of high-level importance
- Amanda McGee
 - State level assistance for tree planting is available but maintenance funding is from local levels and thus susceptible to budget issues
- Vincent Verweij
 - The plan may need to look at VDOT lands for planting opportunities
- Jim McGlone
 - There are numerous state entities beyond VDOT that own lands and may be highlighted
- Sheri Shannon

- The plan should examine the process of interacting with these agencies and localities and how it overlaps with forest management and health

No comments from the public received

Adjournment – 11:20am