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**Forestland & Urban Tree Canopy Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
Meeting #3**

Date: March 19, 2026

Location: Virginia Department of Forestry Headquarters, Charlottesville (Hybrid)

Attendees In Person:

Terry Lasher	Department of Forestry
Jim Whipp	Department of Forestry
Nathan Thomson	Department of Forestry
Lara Johnson	Department of Forestry
Michael Webb	City of Richmond
Karen Firehock	Green Infrastructure Center
Rose Freeman	Green Infrastructure Center
Matt Lee	Green Infrastructure Center
Peter Forister	Green Infrastructure Center
Ann Jurczyk	Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Phil Abraham	Va Association for Commercial Real Estate
Sheri Shannon	Southside ReLeaf
Jim McGlone	VASWCD
Jonathan Rak	DEQ
Joe Weber	DCR
Adam Downing	Va Cooperative Extension

Attendees Virtual:

Kaycee Faunce	DOF
Rachel Henley	Virginia Farm Bureau
Hannah Schul	DWR
Ron Jenkins	Virginia Loggers Association
Sarah Dishman	Friends of the Rappahannock
John Marlin	Arlington County
Charles Paullin	Inside Climate News
Sarah Thomas	Va Association for Commercial Real Estate

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

The meeting opened with introductions and comments from the State Forester. Attendees reviewed the statutory basis for the Forestland and Urban Tree Canopy Conservation Plan, required by HB 309 (2024), which must be completed by November 2026. Emphasis was placed

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on building a unified statewide strategy that integrates multiple agencies and stakeholder perspectives, grounded in accurate, statewide data.

2. Legislative and Budget Updates

The committee reviewed recent General Assembly actions related to forestland, tree canopy, land use, and development. Highlights included updates to the Forest Sustainability Fund, solar mitigation, urban forestry funding, and data center siting. Several bills affecting solar development, housing, and tree conservation ordinances were also discussed.

3. Overview of Plan Scope and Expectations

Consultants from the Green Infrastructure Center (GIC) outlined the plan's purpose as a statewide strategic framework rather than a prescriptive local planning tool. The plan will identify statewide priorities, risks, and strategies achievable at the state level, with updates scheduled every five years.

4. Data Development and Preliminary Findings

DOF and GIC presented preliminary statewide datasets, including 2023 land cover mapping, canopy change analysis, forest management activity layers, and urban heat data. Key observations included canopy gains in western counties, losses in many eastern and coastal localities, and strong correlations between urban canopy and heat exposure.

5. Data Quality, Local Studies, and Reconciliation

The committee discussed differences between statewide datasets and local high-resolution analyses. The plan will document methodological distinctions, encourage local assessments, and include cautions to prevent misinterpretation of statewide figures.

6. Strategy Discussion — Initial Themes

Members identified early themes for urban and rural strategies. Urban priorities included strengthening UCF staffing, expanding ordinance authority, improving public access to data, and enhancing canopy in heat-vulnerable communities. Rural strategies emphasized forest product market support, small-parcel landowner assistance, habitat connectivity, and addressing fragmentation.

7. Data Access and Transparency

The TAC agreed that statewide datasets should be publicly accessible, with a planned viewer to support local planning and analysis. DOF will confirm any data-sharing constraints, though full transparency is anticipated.

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8. Next Steps & Timeline

The committee reviewed upcoming milestones, including completion of final datasets, risk assessments, strategy development, and delivery of plan drafts. The final plan will be submitted to the General Assembly by November 2026.

9. Adjournment

The meeting concluded with a reminder for members to complete post-meeting surveys.