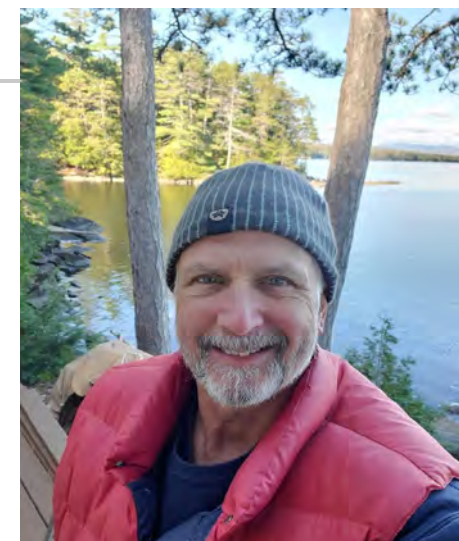


Northeast Mid-Atlantic Partnership for Forests & Water and a Case Study for RCPs to use Federal funding

Presented at the RCP Network Gathering - November 9, 2023

Presented by Kira Jacobs, EPA
with support from Annica McGuirk,
National Association of
Conservation Districts (NACD) and
Karl Honkonen, U.S. Forest Service

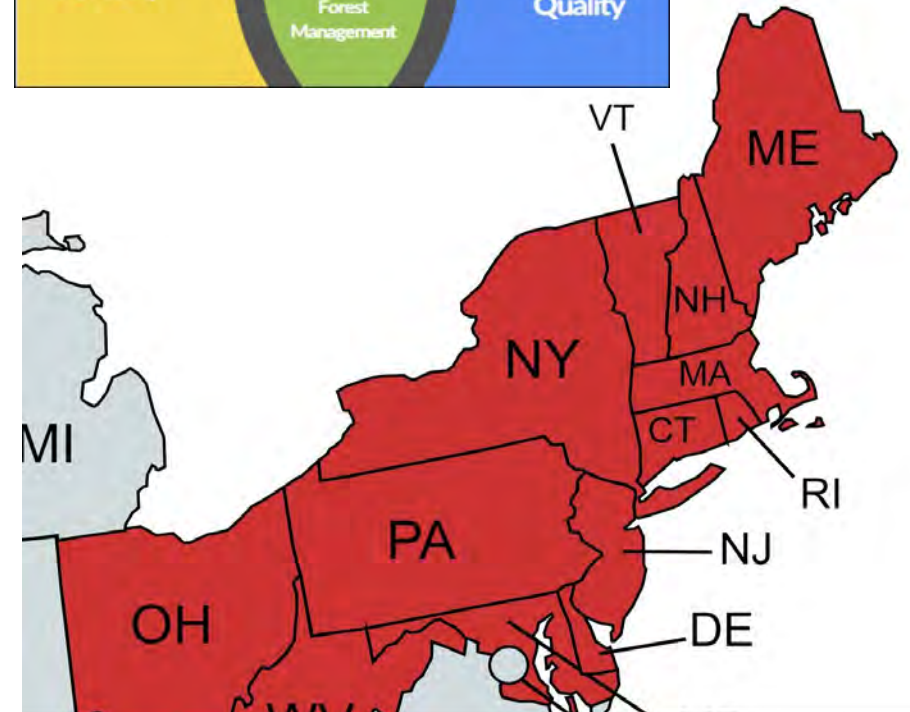




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Conservation Districts

Northeast Mid Atlantic Partnership for Forests & Water

- **Encouraging collaborative, science-based restoration of priority forest landscapes**
- **Project Coverage Area:**
Maine to West Virginia and Ohio
- **Modeled after the Southeastern Partnership for Forests & Water**
- **Lead organization is the National Association of Conservation Districts**



Clean water grows on these trees.

Okay, not technically, but forests do provide the cleanest water of any land use to keep drinking water safe and reliable.

TOTAL SOUTHERN WATER SUPPLY

State & Private forests provide

44.3%

of the total water supply.

That's equal to **97.8 trillion gallons.**

HOW MUCH LIQUID IS THAT?
That's enough water to fill a stack of five gallon buckets that would extend all the way to the sun & back **24 TIMES.**

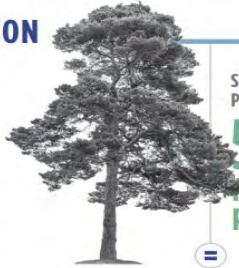


SOUTHERN FORESTS



POPULATION SERVED

ALL FORESTS
113 MILLION PEOPLE



STATE AND PRIVATE FORESTS
57 MILLION PEOPLE



FEDERAL FORESTS
56 MILLION PEOPLE



THE CHALLENGE

Population is expected to increase more than **30%** over the next **40 years** compared to 2012 levels.

2052

POPULATION INCREASE OF 30%

2012

THE THREAT

UP TO 23 MILLION ACRES of our forests are forecasted to be converted to other uses by **2060.**



HEALTHY FORESTS ARE CRITICAL TO DRINKING WATER

Healthy, managed forests provide the cleanest water of any land use, and help keep drinking water safe, reliable, and affordable.

TO SUM THINGS UP...



FOREST STEWARDSHIP AND BMPs

Foresters work with landowners to develop forest stewardship plans and implement Best Management Practices that protect soil and water resources.



"Our investments in healthy forests today lead to higher quality drinking water in our communities tomorrow."

David LaFrance, CEO of American Water Works Association
Learn more by watching our video! <https://bit.ly/3f6jTKO>

DRINKING WATER DEPENDS ON HEALTHY FORESTS

Contact for more information
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Kitty Weisman | kitty.weisman@icloud.com



Liu, Ning; Dobbs, G. Rebecca; Caldwell, Peter V.; Miniat, Chelcy Ford; Bolstad, Paul V.; Nelson, Stacy; Sun, Ge. 2020. Quantifying the role of State and private forest lands in providing surface drinking water supply for the Southern United States. Gen. Tech. Rep. SRS-248. Asheville, NC: U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Southern Research Station. 405 p. Caldwell, P., Muldoon, C., Ford-Miniat, C., Cohen, E., Krieger, S., Sun, G., McNulty, S., and Bolstad, P.V. 2014. Quantifying the role of National Forest system lands in providing surface drinking water supply for the Southern United States. General Technical Report SRS-197. Asheville, NC: U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Southern Research Station. 135 p.



National Association of
Conservation Districts

Northeast Mid-Atlantic Partnership for Forests & Water

Project Overview

The project emphasizes landscape-scale conservation to enhance habitat connectivity, improve water quantity and quality, and bolster ecological resilience.

Creating alignment between the forest and water sectors with shared goals of maximizing resources and outcomes.

The Partnership will continue to develop coordinated goals, communication tools, trainings, and other resources for use with forest landowners, natural resource practitioners, and other stakeholders.

Regional collaboration can alleviate the multiple pressures on forests and priority watersheds while enhancing conservation outcomes.

Continue establishing and enhancing state forest-water partnerships across the region.

Northeast Mid-Atlantic Partnership for Forests & Water

Timeline of Partnership



National Association of
Conservation Districts

2019 - Kira Jacobs and Karl Honkonen ask “what if?”

June 2022 - virtual forum, 80+ attendees from Maine to West Virginia attend and express support for the concept

August 2022 - follow up with approximately half the group preparing for a 2023 U.S. Forest Service LSR grant application

April 2023 - West Virginia Forests and Water Forum - 30 attendees from West Virginia participate

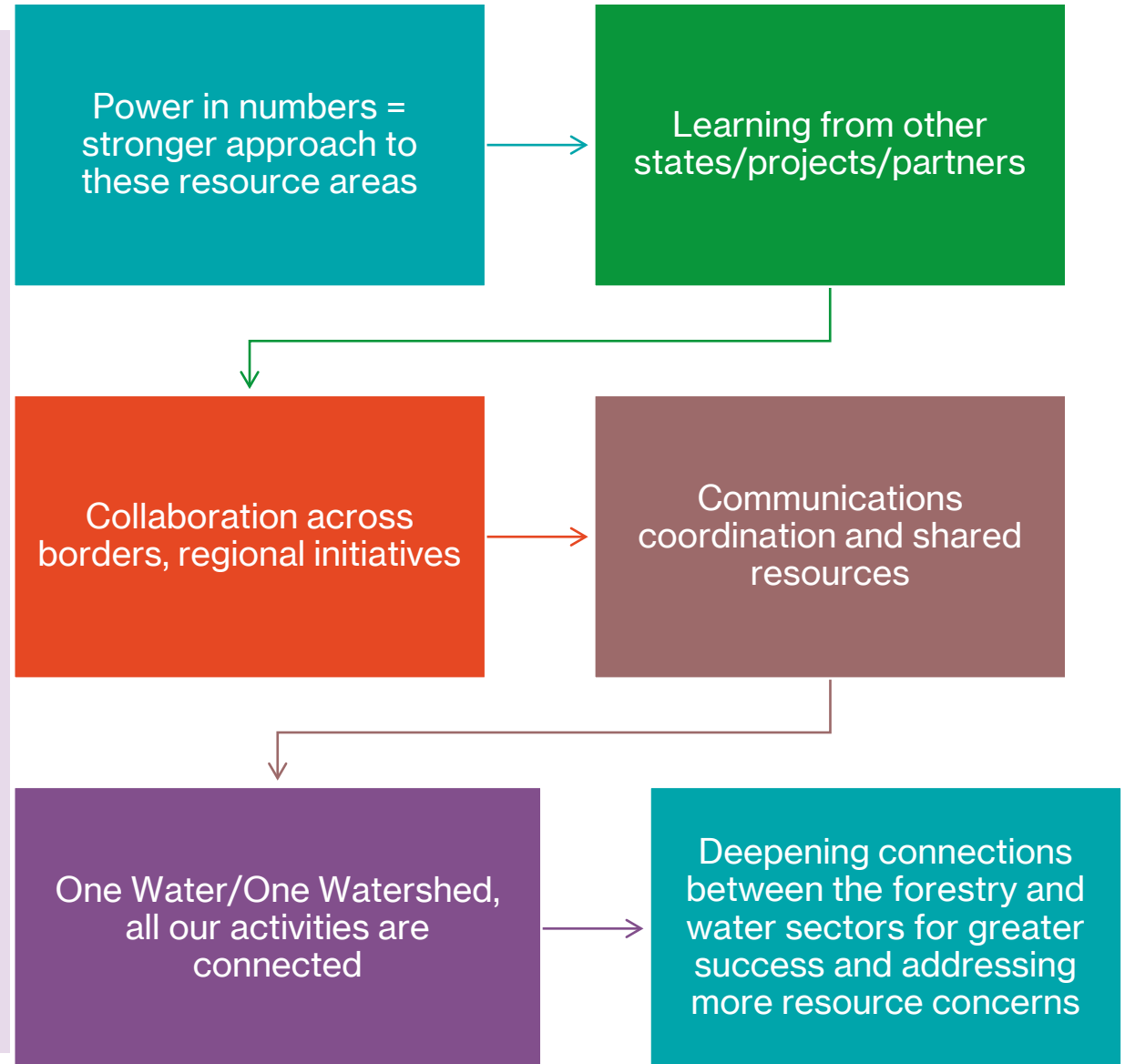
May 2023 - 50 attendees from across the region and representing utilities, federal agencies, NGOs, forestry

2024 - West Virginia & Connecticut host forums

Summer 2024 – NACD National Meeting - Boston

Northeast Mid-Atlantic Partnership for Forests & Water

Why are partners across the region interested in this collaborative?

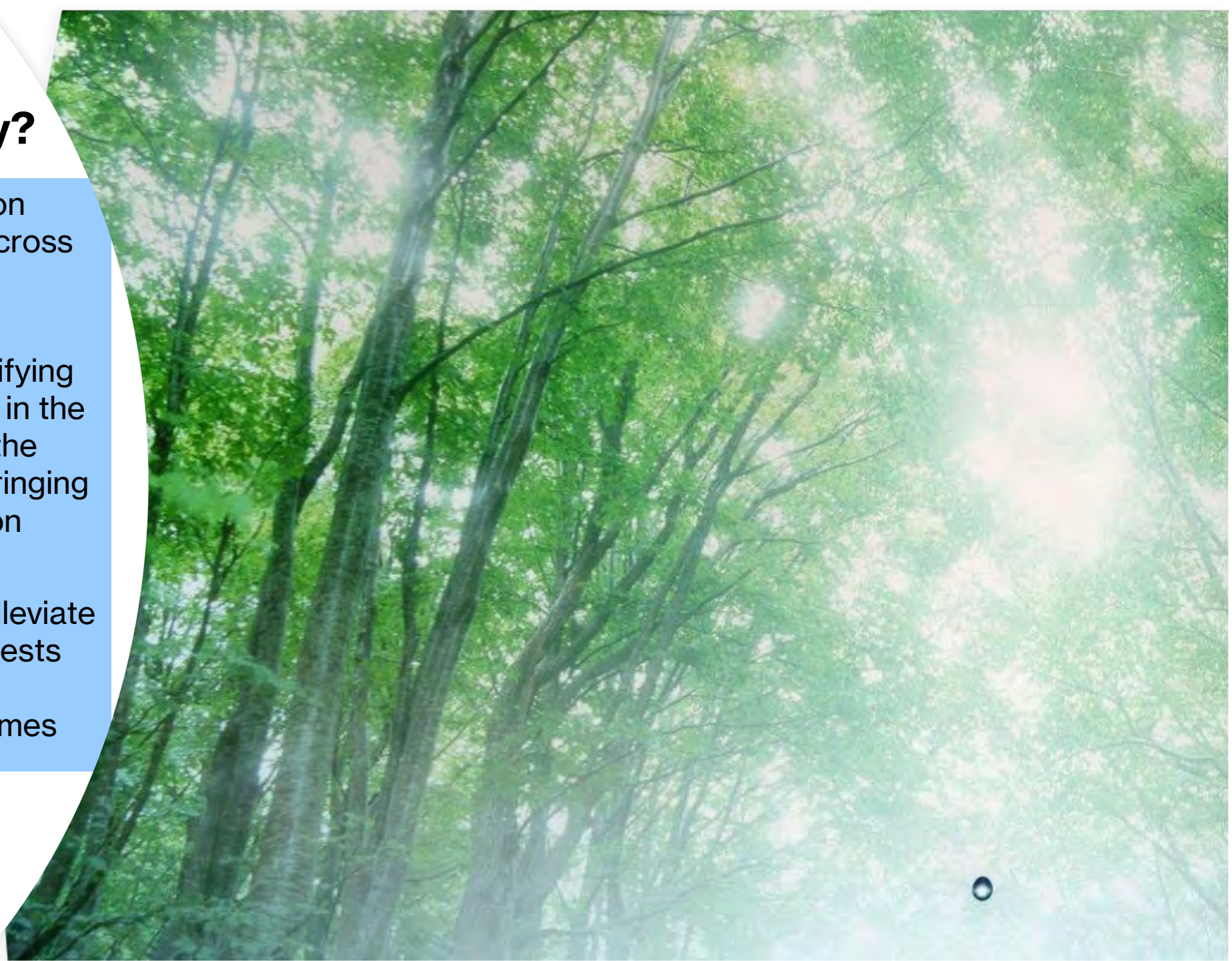


Why is a Regional Partnership Necessary?

- ✓ Landscape scale conservation efforts create connectivity across habitats
- ✓ Demonstrated success in unifying the forest and water sectors in the last 8+ years of work within the Southeastern Partnership, bringing these successes to our region
- ✓ Regional collaboration can alleviate the multiple pressures on forests and priority watersheds and enhance conservation outcomes



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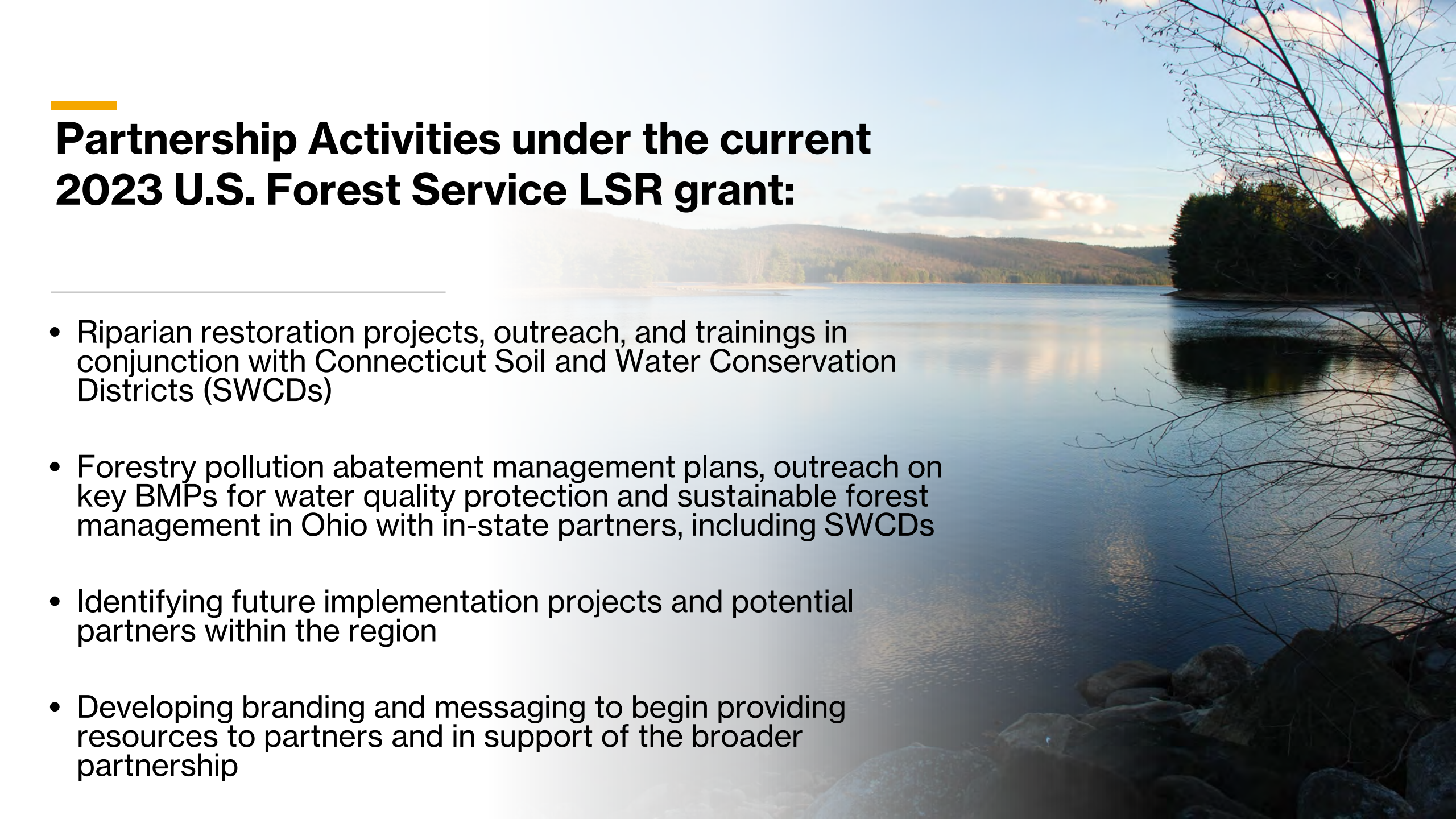




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Partnership Goals

- ✓ Conserve, restore, and enhance forest landscapes in priority watersheds across the partnership footprint
- ✓ Develop coordinated goals and messaging for use with forest landowners, partners, and other stakeholders
- ✓ Create alignment between forest and water sectors with the goals of maximizing resources and outcomes
- ✓ Build capacity for partners to increase “boots on the ground”



Partnership Activities under the current 2023 U.S. Forest Service LSR grant:

- Riparian restoration projects, outreach, and trainings in conjunction with Connecticut Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs)
- Forestry pollution abatement management plans, outreach on key BMPs for water quality protection and sustainable forest management in Ohio with in-state partners, including SWCDs
- Identifying future implementation projects and potential partners within the region
- Developing branding and messaging to begin providing resources to partners and in support of the broader partnership



Core partners:

- US Forest Service
- EPA
- NRCS
- National Association of State Foresters
- Association of State Drinking Water Agencies
- Northeast-Midwest State Foresters Alliance

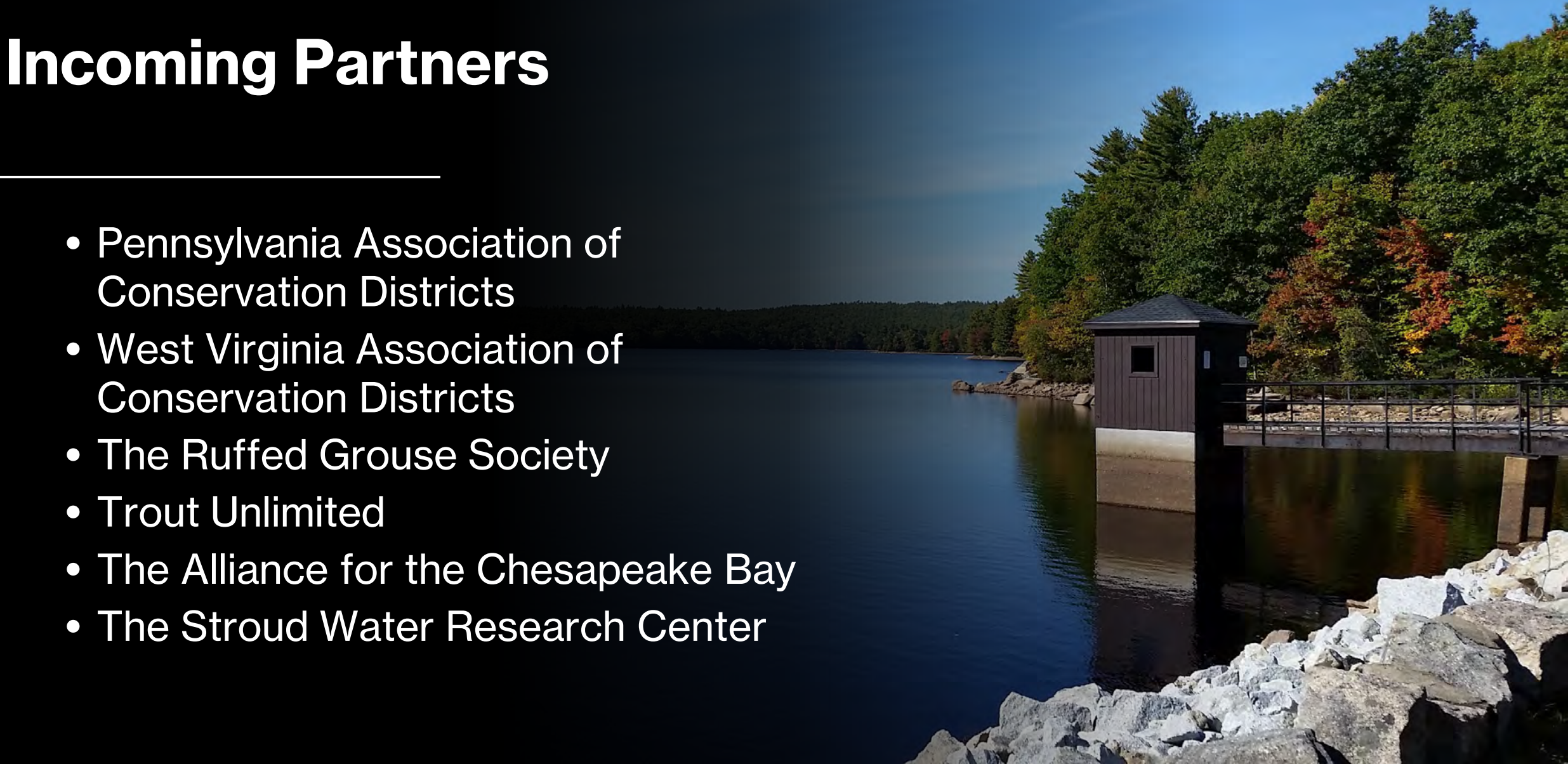
Current Implementation Partners:

- Connecticut Council on Soil & Water Conservation
- Ohio Division of Forestry



Incoming Partners

- Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts
- West Virginia Association of Conservation Districts
- The Ruffed Grouse Society
- Trout Unlimited
- The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
- The Stroud Water Research Center



Work Anticipated in 2024

- Riparian buffer demonstration sites and landowner education events in Pennsylvania in partnership with the districts
- Riparian forest BMP implementation in support of Working Lands for Wildlife Program with support from the districts and wildlife partners in West Virginia
- Natural resource professional trainings on engaging landowners in understanding and implementing BMPs that support forested watersheds and water quality protection.
- Developing communication tools like practice cross walks, developing regional nomenclature for use across the Partnership, and landowner engagement materials in support of Partnership goals.

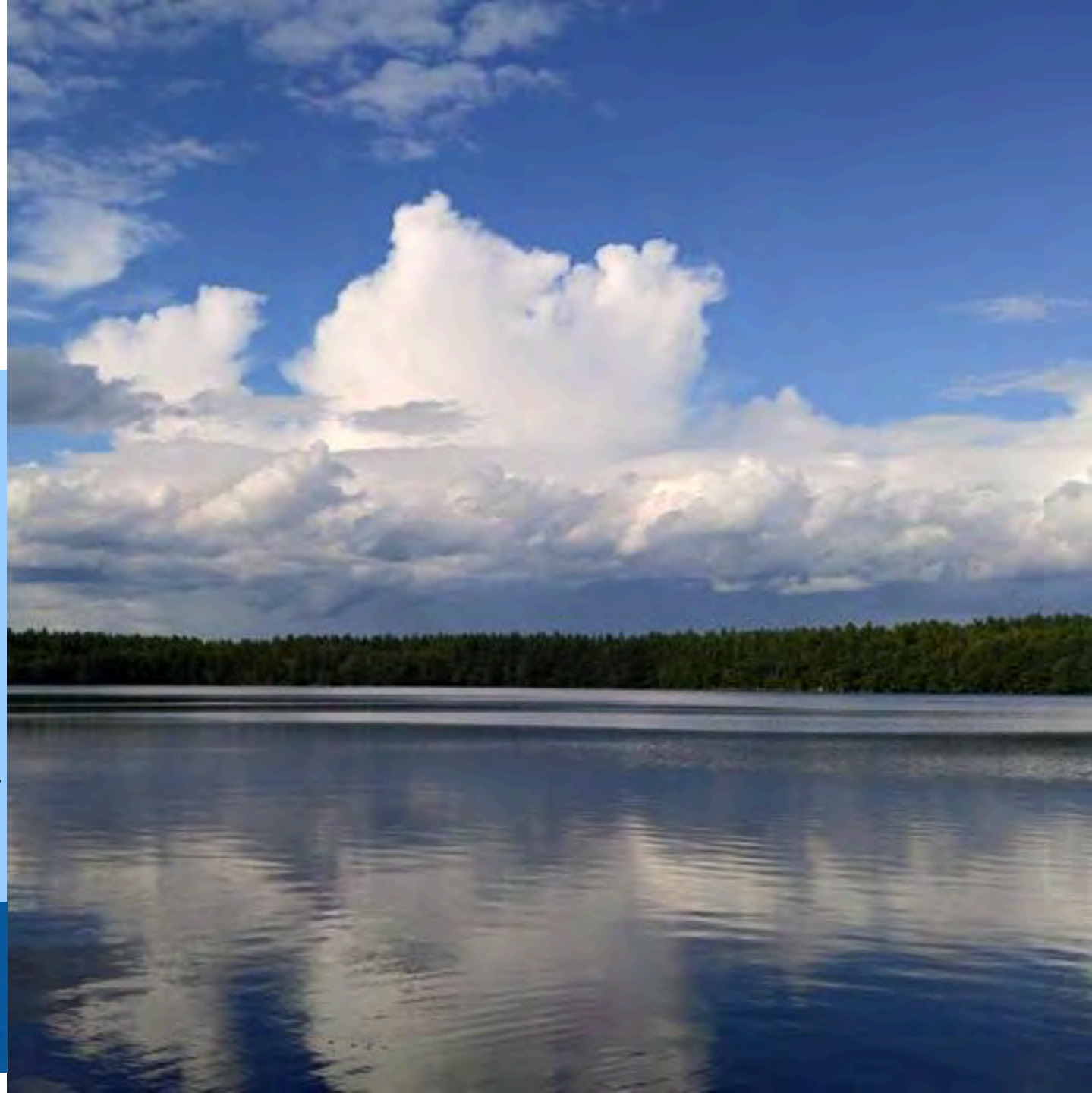


How can interested partners get involved?

- Sign up for more information on the Partnership website (to be released)
- Begin thinking about potential projects that might advance your state's Forest Action Plans and link sustainable forest management and water quality protection
- Consider what resources or messaging may be most valuable for your work in deepening the linkages between the forestry and water sector
- Reach out to Annica McGuirk, NACD @ annica-mcguirk@nacdnet.org



National Association of
Conservation Districts





The RCP approach is a model for how NACD plans to implement this partnership

Get involved!

1) **Have you reviewed your State Forest Action Plan?**

<https://www.stateforesters.org/forest-action-plans/>

2) **Is your RCP located in a Drinking Water Protection Area?**

Your state drinking water program can assist you.

<https://www.asdwa.org/sourcewatercontacts/>

3) **Do you know how to use the State Revolving Fund** in your state to purchase easements/fund permanent land protection?

4) **Are you working with your NRCS and U.S. Forest Service colleagues?**

NRCS and the USFS have millions of dollars available to help protect drinking water sources and can fund land conservation/easements.

Karl Honkonen, Watershed Forester, U.S. Forest Service


339-788-1150 or karl.w.honkonen@usda.gov





**Maine State Revolving
Fund (SRF)
Pilot Project and
opportunities for RCPs
with Federal funds**

**Case Study of a Maine RCP:
The Saco Watershed Collaborative**



Overview of Maine SRF Pilot Project and how RCPs can benefit from the lessons learned

- **Background on EPA-sponsored SRF pilot projects**
- **Maine SRF source water protection pilot project objectives**
- **Project outcomes**

EPA Funded SRF Pilot Projects

- Since 2018, EPA has sponsored SRF pilot projects
- Projects explore and implement untapped opportunities for using the SRF for water quality projects
- Projects are conceived by state agencies and their partners
- Pilot projects completed in 12 states, including:
 - Promoting **reforestation** in Maryland
 - Making the case for investment in **forest restoration** in Arizona
 - Fast-track program for funding **conservation easements** in Minnesota
 - Adaptive management in Wisconsin watersheds
 - Creating a sponsored lending program in Vermont; VTDEC now allows SRF to fund **land trusts** directly



Maine SRF Pilot Project Objectives

- Work with the Saco Watershed Collaborative (the Collaborative) to pilot the use of SRF to protect a significant Maine water supply (***note that it is a Maine RCP***)
- Create a coordinated, sustainable funding and priority plan for the Collaborative
- Identify opportunities and process for maximum utilization of DWSRF and CWSRF funding (from ME and NH) to assist the Collaborative in carrying out key projects



EPA-Funded Saco River Drinking Water Resiliency Project Informed this SRF Pilot Project

Primary risks to Saco River include:

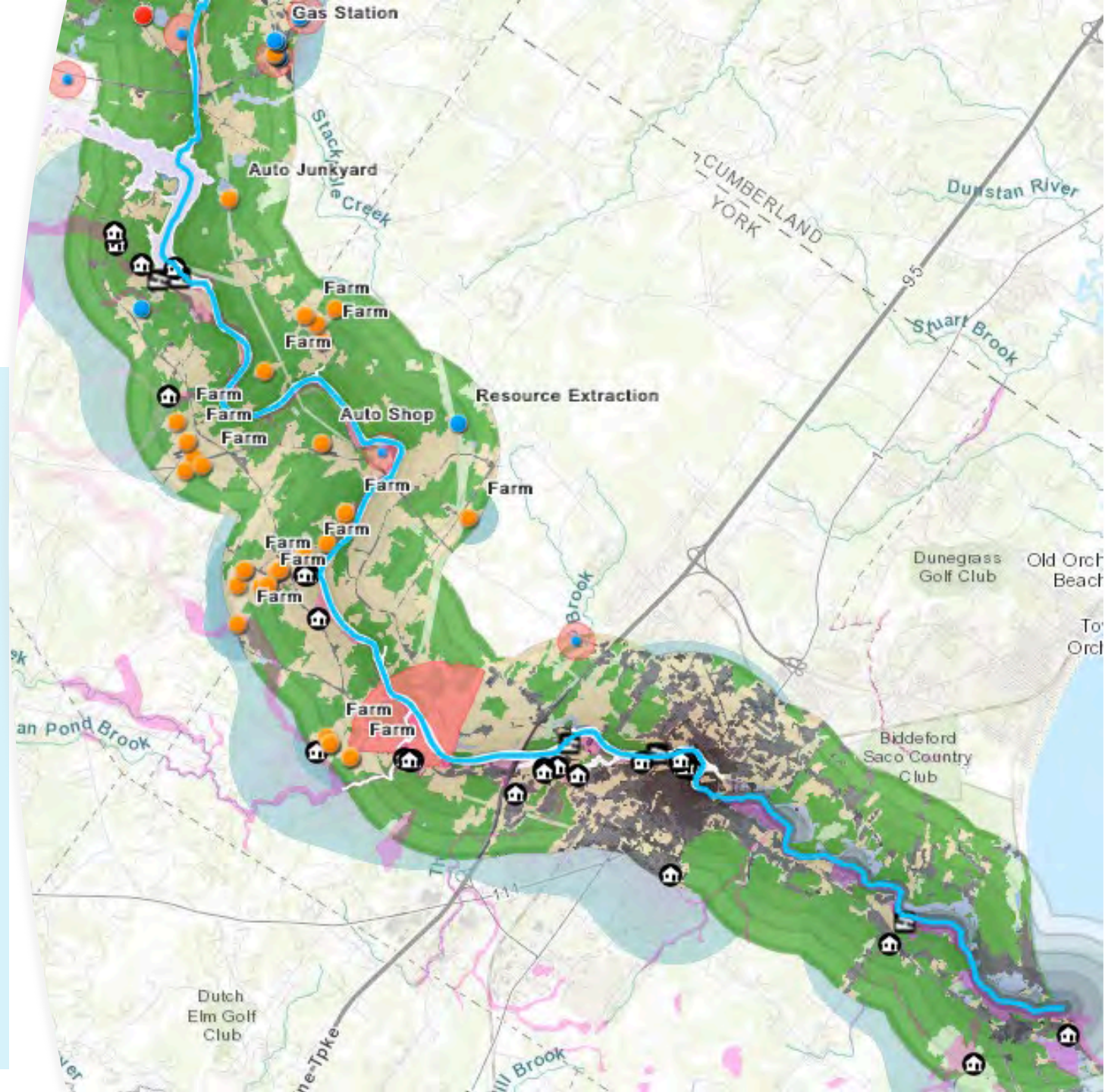
- Agricultural runoff
- Development of forested lands

The Saco River is a major drinking water source for southern Maine

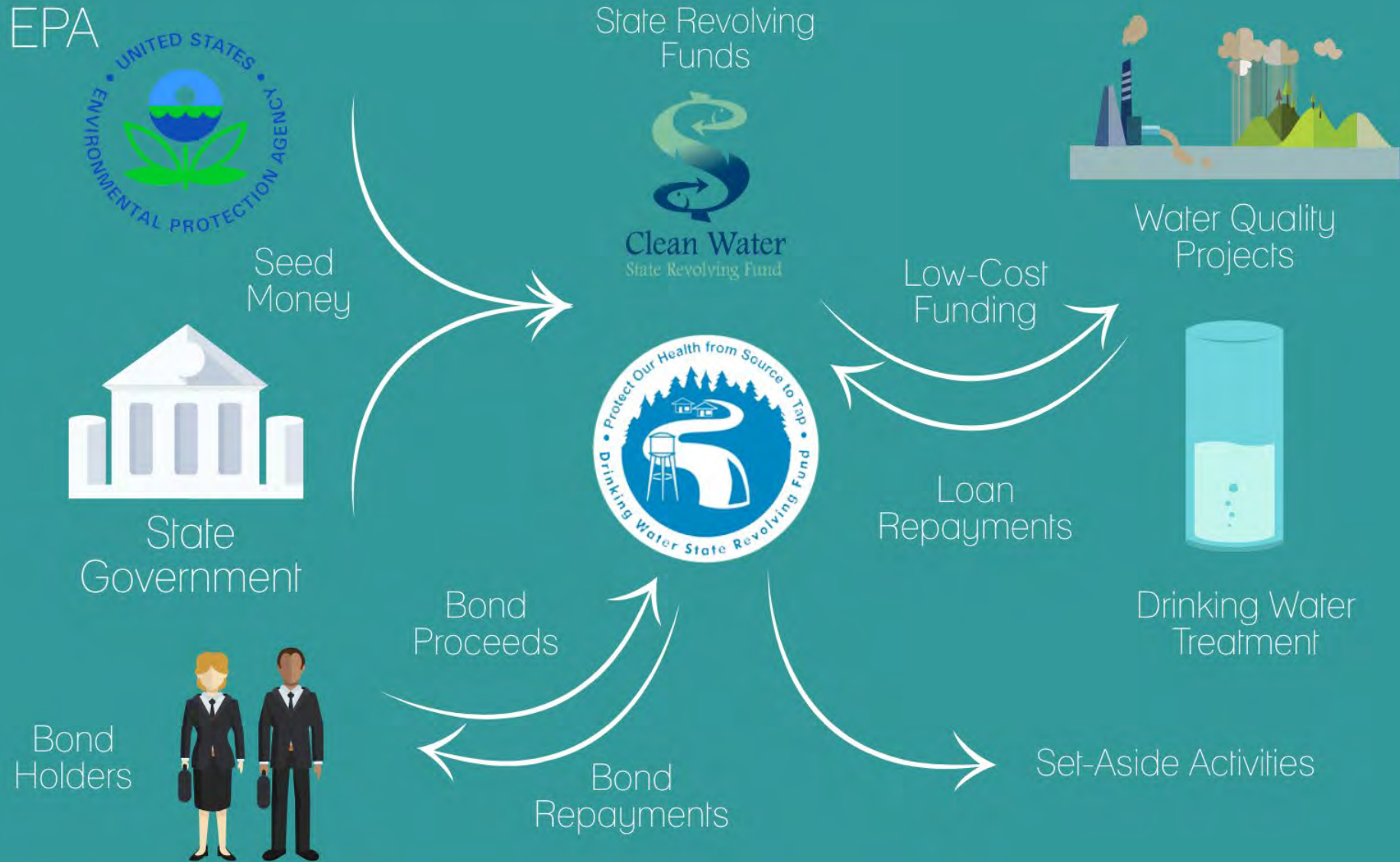
- Backup source for Portland Water District

Significant driver of economic activity

- Saco River supports recreational values
 - ✓ Outdoor recreation accounts for \$105 million in Southern Maine's Gross Regional Product
- Business values e.g., breweries
 - ✓ Jobs
 - ✓ Tax revenues



The SRFs Provide Low-Cost Funding for Drinking Water and Wastewater Projects





Loan Forgiveness

- Amount of available forgiveness varies by year
- Maine CWSRF 2021 forgiveness:
 - Hardship/affordability
 - Development of climate adaptation plans
- Maine DWSRF 2021 forgiveness:
 - Disadvantaged communities
- The annual Intended Use Plan on each program's website provides substantial information

Maine Drinking Water State Revolving Fund
(Maine CDC, Municipal Bond Bank)

- **Loans for drinking water infrastructure**
- **Funds for Source Water Protection, Small System Technical Assistance and more**
- **\$14 million available in 2021/2022**
 - \$126,981 for technical assistance for source water protection
 - \$2,055,606 for land acquisition for conservation easements/source water protection
 - Loan forgiveness (\$3.9M planned)
 - Amounts can vary by year based on demand and availability
- **Eligible borrowers: public water systems**
- **Capacity increase with Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)**

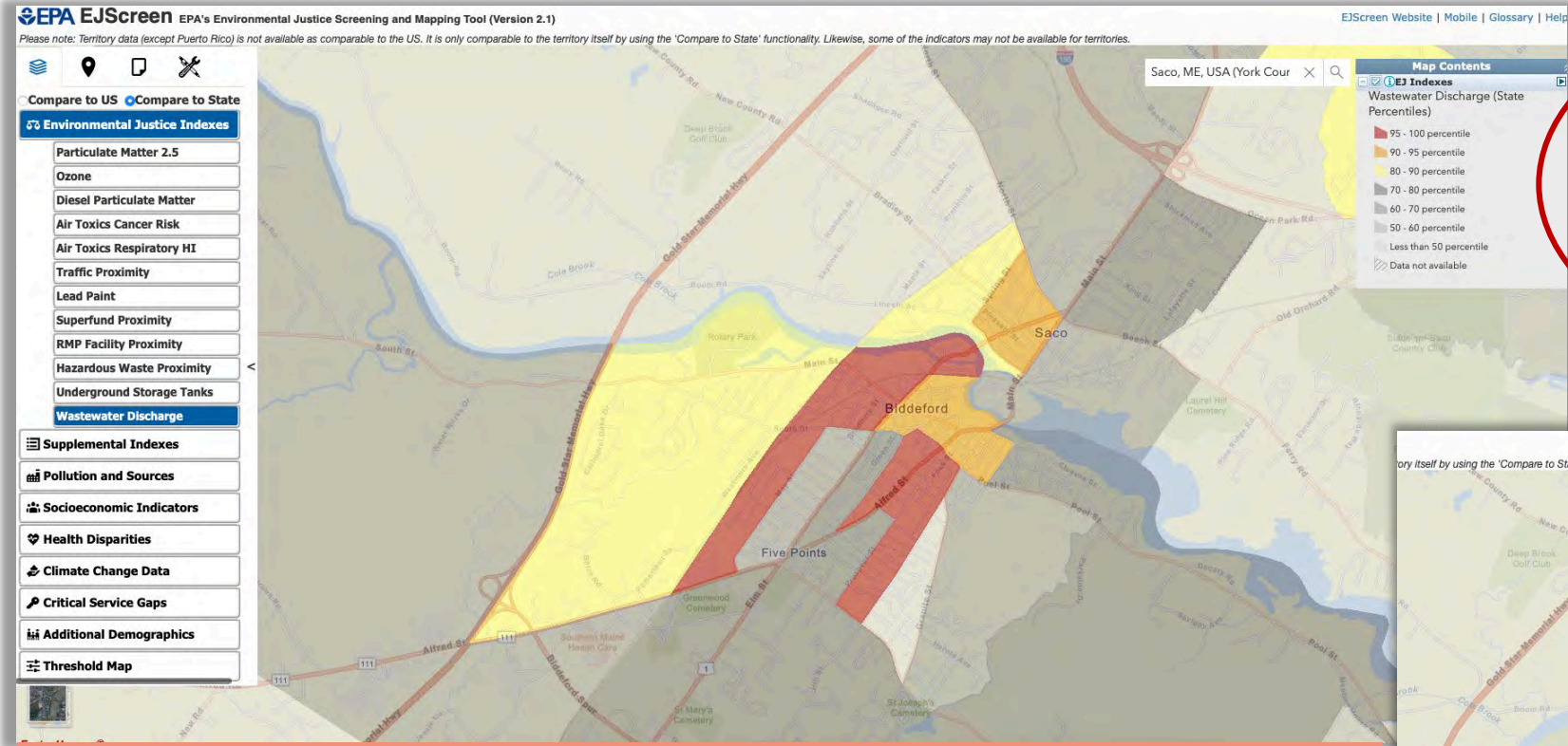
Maine Clean Water State Revolving Fund
(Maine DEP, Municipal Bond Bank)

- **Loans for wastewater treatment infrastructure, green infrastructure, nonpoint source, and estuary projects that benefit water quality**
 - Includes land acquisition, source water protection
- **\$71 million available in 2021/2022**
 - \$4.9 million loan forgiveness
- **Eligible borrowers:** public or private entities
 - Subject to project type
- **Capacity increase with Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)**

Maine DWSRF Set-Aside Programs

PROGRAM	ELIGIBLE ENTITIES	PURPOSE	AMOUNT AVAILABLE
CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT GRANTS	Community and public water systems	Grants for preparation of documents that will assist them in the maintenance or enhancement of water quality by identifying possible improvements in technical, financial, and managerial operations	Up to 75% of project costs, max \$30,000.
SOURCE WATER PROTECTION GRANT	Community and public water systems with surface water source(s)	Projects demonstrate protection of a surface water source	Up to \$10,000. A few grants up to \$20,000 for exceptional projects
LAND ACQUISITION LOAN	Community and public water systems	Low interest loans for purchase of land or conservation easements needed for SWP	No project limit. \$20,000 principal forgiveness for the first \$100,000.

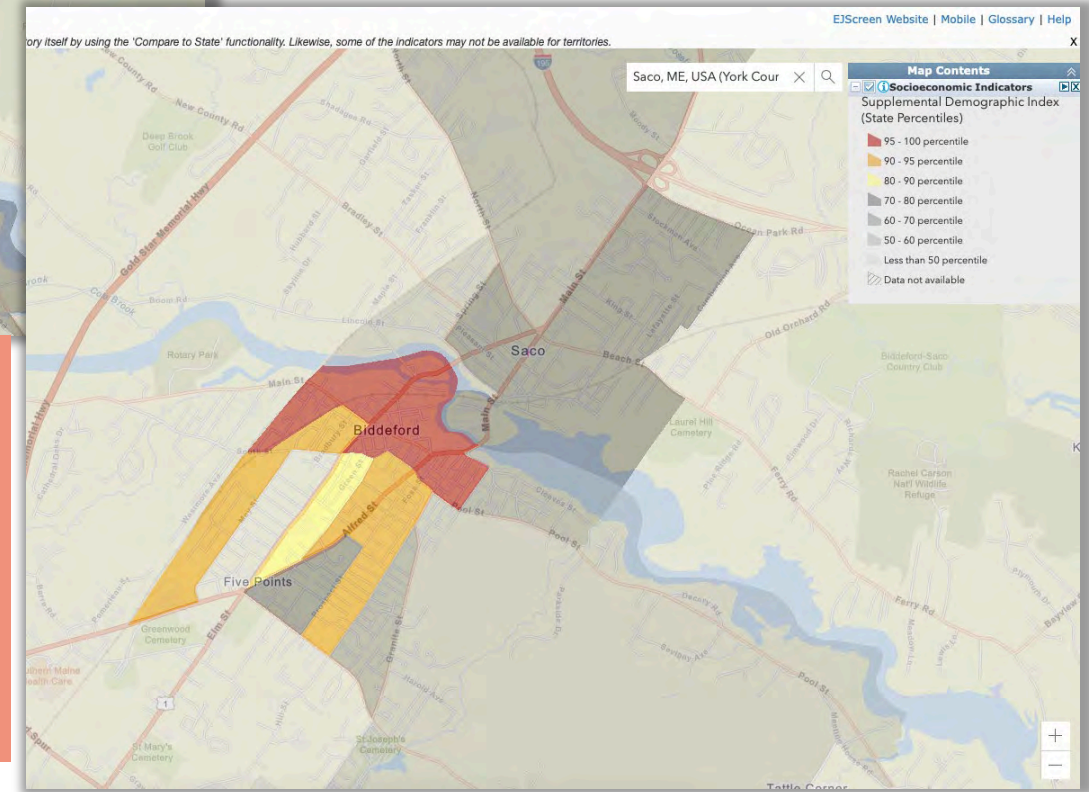
Funding Drinking Water Protection Supports EJ Communities









- Helps Maine's DWSRF program comply with EPA's Justice 40 Initiative
- Biddeford and Saco may qualify as EJ communities

Providing more financial assistance to:

- Implement SWP strategies to mitigate increased DW treatment impacts on ratepayers
- Provide educational opportunity
- Give EJ communities a voice in planning efforts that impact overall quality of life



What's Next?

- **The Collaborative continues to pursue projects for DWSRF and CWSRF financing (Note: the Collaborative has been meeting regularly with Maine Water Company in 2023 to review best projects for funding)**
 - Started with smaller projects to build expertise
- **Pursue additional partners**
 - Utilities and municipalities in Southern Maine 
 - Private partners: breweries, Poland Spring, nonprofits, **land trusts** etc.   
 - Sources of match financing, implementation assistance, planning 
- **Submit applications** (1-2 DWSRF set-aside projects in Fall 2023 and 1 CWSRF project in Spring 2024)
- **Build upon successful projects** – successful Capacity Development grant! 

What Comes Next?

Implement Projects in partnership with Maine Water Company and the Cities of Biddeford and Saco (Saco River supplies their water)

	Sample Projects
Erosion & Sedimentation Controls	Establish a Community Forestry Program
	Living Shorelines
Nutrient Management	Saco River Watershed Management & Protection Plan
	Saco River Ecosystem Restoration Project
	Saco River Watershed Conservation Easement Program
Agricultural BMPs	Conservation tillage program
	Grazing management
Stormwater Management	Culvert removal
	Gastrointestinal Stormwater controls
Septic Systems	Microbial source tracking study
	Repair and replacement of failing septic system program

Thank you!

Time for Discussion

**Please contact me at 617-918-1817 or
jacobs.kira@epa.gov**

**a special thank you to John O'Neil of
Manchester Water Works for many of the
beautiful photos used in this presentation**

