

Tree Solutions Now Act of 2021

Big Picture:

- As a climate mitigation goal, the state seeks to **plant and maintain 5 million native trees** by the end of calendar year 2031
- Intent that at least **500,000** of those trees be planted in an “underserved area”
- Tree plantings to be **considered additional** to those already projected as part of the 2030 Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act (GGRA) Plan
- **\$15 million** per year (2022-2031)

Leadership and Implementation:

- **Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE)**
 - Lead for tracking, program coordination, accounting
 - Tree programs coordinator; staff new tree/markets Commission
- **Maryland Department of Natural Resources (\$2.5m)**
 - Technical assistance and coordination of planting/management
 - 13 new contractor positions and expanded program funding
 - Only named restrictions in bill: private land plantings maintained 15 years; trees not intended for harvest
- **Maryland Department of Agriculture (\$2.5m)**
 - Manage one-time \$1000 per acre signing bonus for landowners who enroll planted forest streamside buffers via CREP
- **Chesapeake Bay Trust (\$10m)**
 - Develop and manage new Urban Trees Program

Urban Trees Program:

- Administered by Chesapeake Bay Trust
- Planting native tree species in “underserved areas” beginning in FY2023
- Grants to “qualified organizations” for “eligible expenses” under “award prioritization” criteria
- *Underserved areas:*
 - **Urban areas** in MD as delineated by the US Census Bureau *AND*
 - Neighborhood at any point in time, **redlined or graded as “hazardous”** by the home owners’ loan corporation; *OR*
 - A census tract with a recent **average rate of unemployment** that exceeds that of the the State; *OR*
 - A census tract with a recent **median household income** that is equal to or less than 75% of the median household income for the State; *OR*
 - A **housing project** defined in 12-101 of the Housing and Community Development Article

- *Qualified organizations:*
 - Nonprofit organization
 - School
 - Community association
 - Service, youth, or civic group
 - Institution of higher education
 - County or municipality
 - Forest conservancy district board
- *Eligible expenses:*
 - Personnel costs
 - Supplies
 - Site preparation
 - Other expenses and materials related to project planning, implementation, and maintenance
- *Award prioritization:*
 - Grant applications **from** qualified organizations **located within** the underserved areas where the proposed project will be implemented
 - Grant applications that include **plans for engaging** individuals, organizations or businesses **located within** underserved areas to implement and maintain projects in their communities

MDE's Approach:

- Leadership and coordination in the **tracking and alignment** of implementation relative to state goals
- To do this, the agency will:
 - Help optimize tree planting locations to focus on **co-benefits**
 - Support data collection and analysis that enables **effective tracking and monitoring** (e.g., spatial data)
 - Develop monitoring strategy that **streamlines tree and carbon accounting** with existing approaches (e.g., GHG inventory, Bay Program)
 - Ensure approach to quantification can be **leveraged for other applications** (e.g., markets or co-benefit crediting)
- Hire new Tree Programs Coordinator
- Support new *Commission for the Innovation and Advancement of Carbon Markets and Sustainable Tree Plantings*; their charge includes:
 - Develop plan to achieve the 5 million native trees goal
 - Develop plan to ensure planted trees are properly maintained
 - Recommendations regarding establishment of MD-based carbon offset market to support the State's tree-planting goals
 - Recommendations on reviewing State policies to reduce/fully mitigate tree clearing during construction of highway and transportation projects