Mid-Atlantic Business Plan
Executive Summary

“Prior to widespread European colonization, fires set by Native Americans and settlers, and to a lesser degree, lightning strikes, played a major role in creating and sometimes perpetuating forest conditions dominated by shrubs and small trees. Herbivores (e.g., beaver, bison, and elk), topography, soil conditions, and storm-related events (e.g., floods, ice storms, and tropical storms) also played significant roles. Together, these agents of change maintained a shifting mosaic of early successional habitat embedded within a landscape that was likely dominated by old growth forest and a variety of grassland, shrubland and wetland habitats. The degree to which these factors affected the landscape varied by region and with local conditions such as soil type, forest type, slope, and aspect.”

Maryland’s 2020 Forest Action Plan

1. Current Condition: What are the problems we are trying to solve?
   - Historically, we have lost extensive forestland. The Chesapeake watershed, which comprises a significant percentage of the Mid-Atlantic region, was 97% forested before settlement but is only 57% forested now.¹
   - Largely because we’ve suppressed natural disturbances, our remaining forest landscapes are dominated by an unnaturally single-aged, century-old forest (many of which have been high graded or had the best timber removed for sawtimber), which wildlife biologists describe as a ‘sea of sameness,’ esp. lacking older, younger, and open-canopy stands.
   - The lack of habitat diversity has dire consequences for forested wildlife, with golden-winged warblers, wood thrush, ruffed grouse, and American woodcock all considered species of greatest conservation need.

2. Desired Conditions
   - Healthy, resilient forests have more structural and age-class diversity, with good ‘interspersion’ or co-mingling of age classes.
   - Forest wildlife need 20-30% of forests to be mature, with old forest conditions, created by time or management
   - Forest wildlife need 15-20% of forests to be young, thru managing existing forests or reforesting thru management and/or ecological succession.
   - Forest wildlife need more forests to have open-canopy conditions, through prescribed fire or active management.
   - These desired conditions are combined in the concept of dynamic forest restoration blocks (DFRBs) or dynamic forest blocks (DFBs).

3. Obstacles
   - Lack of forest product markets in some areas (e.g., NE PA, western MD, NJ).
   - Lack of coordination and planning of active forest management diminishes habitat benefits, esp. lack of interspersion.
   - Opposition to active forest management by certain natural resource agencies and preservationist environmental organizations, and public ignorance regarding the benefits of management.
   - Lack of capacity in certain agencies (USFS, US Army Corps of Engineers) limits management.
   - Lack of engagement in land management of many family forest owners, despite their strong support for wildlife habitat.

4. Priority Actions/Operational plan
   - Stewardship agreements with US Forest Service (USFS), starting with the Monongahela NF, and MOUs with agencies, including US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).
   - Partnering with consulting foresters to engage private landowners, beginning with our 2020 NFWF grant in PA.

¹ https://www.chesapeakebay.net/state/tree_cover
- Developing funded partnerships with forest product companies, including Domtar, WestRock, and other companies in other regions.
- Connecting chapters with ongoing landscape-scale habitat work, especially in PA, with the 15 established DFRBs.
- Exploring ways to build support for active forest management and early successional habitat by developing partnerships around DFRB implementation

5. **Staffing plan**
- Supported by the fundraising contained in this plan, we will need to hire 2-3 consulting foresters across the region, with initial foresters in WV and PA.
- We will also explore funding opportunities to support the hiring of part- or full-time coordinator in PA.

6. **Metrics, Evaluation, and Reporting**
- DRFB implementation will be our primary success metric.
- This plan will enable the creation of 13 DFRBs, as outlined below, which will amount to a ten-fold increase in our habitat impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Metrics</th>
<th>DFRB goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>’21-</td>
<td>Implement a DFRB through a stewardship agreement with the Monongahela National Forest (WV)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plan and implement a DFRB that integrates climate resiliency and aquatic habitat restoration on the Mon NF</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>’22-’23</td>
<td>Funded forest product company partnerships to establish DFRBs in VA, WV, and PA</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work with private landowners to expand on habitat mosaic already created on PA Game Lands on Kittatinny Ridge</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In eastern NJ, DE, MD and/or VA, develop a woodcock-oriented DFRB</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In MD, collaboratively develop and implement 3 DFRBs</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>’24-’25</td>
<td>Additional DFRBs on GW-Jeff National Forest and/or The Monongahela National Forest</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>