

Conservation for Co-Benefits

Mapping Lands that Provide Multiple Ecosystem Services

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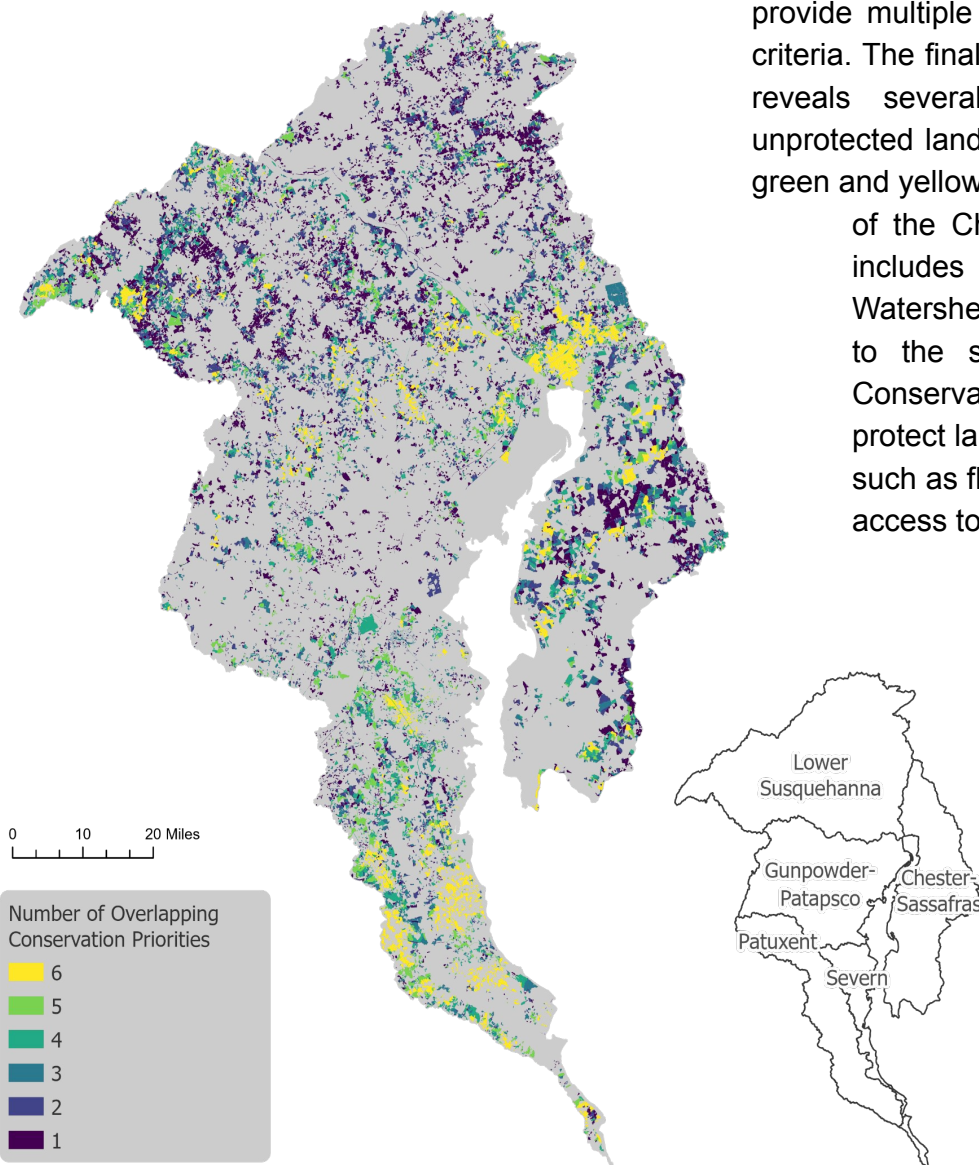
The Role of Co-Benefits in Conservation Planning

A central goal of this project was to identify, quantify, and map the key ecological and economic benefits of conserving additional lands. Quantification of co-benefits, as shown in this analysis, is likely to play an increasingly important role in future conservation efforts. For example, in March 2021, Chesapeake Conservancy and other regional partners advocated for the passage of the Comprehensive Conservation Finance Act (SB0737) in Maryland. The bill would have prioritized funding for conservation and restoration projects with already quantified co-benefits. Although the bill did not pass the senate, the CCFA highlights what is almost sure to be a future trend in conservation funding and the need for the conservation community to begin critically examining co-benefits at a fine, spatial scale.

Where are the Co-Benefits?

Our analysis of co-benefits identified parcels likely to provide multiple services or meet multiple conservation criteria. The final distribution of co-benefit priority parcels reveals several regions with notable clusters of unprotected lands likely to provide co-benefits, shown in green and yellow in the map below. The coastal reaches of the Chesapeake Bay's western shore, which includes portions of the Patuxent and Severn Watersheds, are a hotspot for co-benefits relative to the study area used in this case study. Conservation targeted in this area is more likely to protect lands that could provide critical co-benefits such as flood mitigation, nutrient retention, human access to open space, and habitat connectivity.

These clusters of co-benefit priorities highlight areas which would be strong candidates for further investigation of conservation opportunities with site-specific data. By identifying areas with co-benefits, we can highlight conservation opportunities toward achieving 30% conserved by 2030 and 50% by 2050 across the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.



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