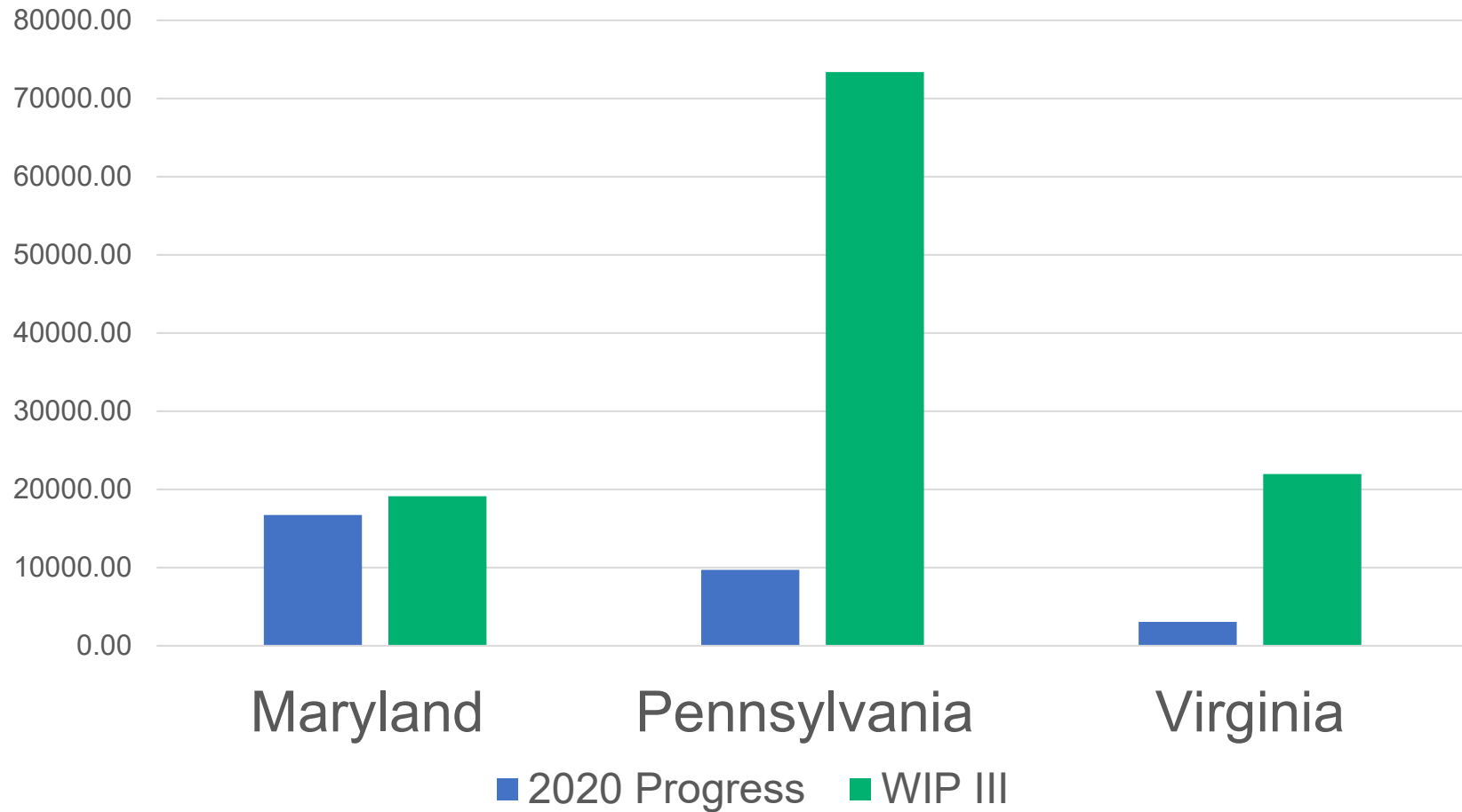


A group of people, including men, women, and children, are engaged in a conservation project. They are planting trees and shrubs along a stream in a rural setting. The scene is outdoors, with a grassy field and a white barn in the background. The sky is overcast. The text "FORESTED BUFFERS" is overlaid in large, white, bold letters across the middle of the image.

FORESTED BUFFERS

Proposed Changes to the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) in the 2023 Farm Bill

Forested Buffer Implementation on Ag Land (ac)



Forested buffers are a key component of states' watershed implementation plans (WIPs)

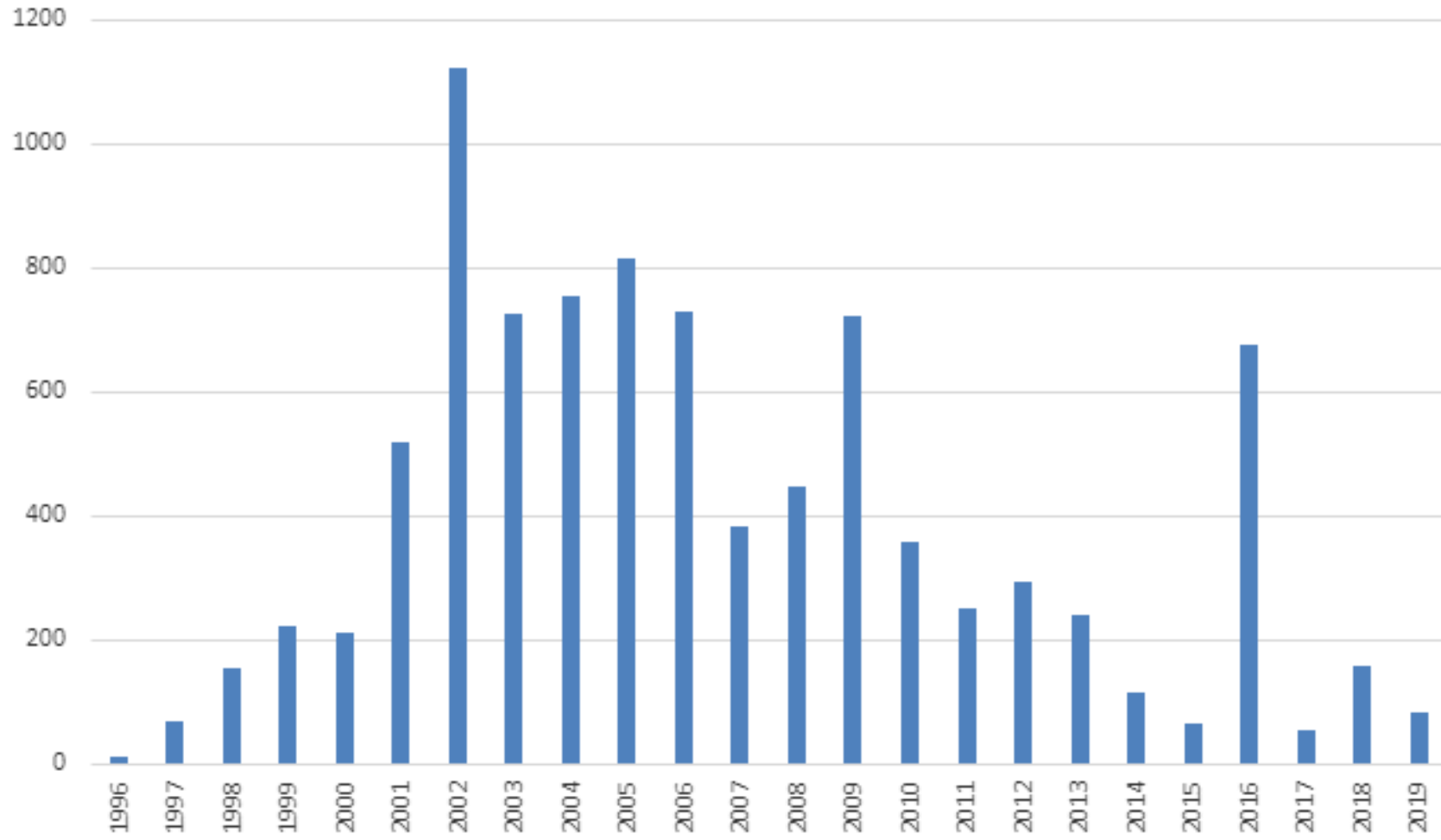


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- Established in the 1996 Farm Bill as a component of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- CREP leverages federal and non-federal funds to target specific state, regional, or nationally significant conservation concerns
- In exchange for removing environmentally sensitive land from production, producers are paid an annual land rental rate along with other incentives specified in each CREP agreement
- In our region, CREP agreements are between USDA and state agencies. Eligible practices include buffers, wetlands, as well as supporting practices like fencing, stream crossings, and water supply systems for livestock



Miles of Riparian Forest Buffers Planted in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, 1996-2019



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CREP drove early implementation

- Low hanging fruit was picked
- Issues with maintenance of buffers
- Lack of USDA support for CRP/CREP
 - Inconsistency in program administration
 - Lack of technical assistance
 - Frustration among state partners



- Buffer management payment to pay full costs of maintenance
- Increased cost-share for associated practices to reflect market rates
- Partial incentive payments when component practices are completed

Unfortunately, no Bay jurisdictions took advantage of these changes because they were concerned there was more to be lost than gained by changing their CREP agreements with USDA.

2023 Farm Bill: Allow states to take advantage of legislative changes by a streamlined amendment process.



- Modeled after the successful James River Buffer Program (jamesriverbuffers.org) a partnership of James River Association, VA Dept of Forestry and CBF
- “Turn-key” program where a third party takes on responsibility for designing, planting and maintaining forested buffers on private lands
- Landowners are not provided financial incentives, demonstrating the value of shifting responsibility for implementation.

2023 Farm Bill: Create a pilot program in the Bay region using CREP



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Chesapeake Bay Region Pilot Program

Thank you!



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