



# BIODIVERSITY

## DEFINITION/DESCRIPTION

A diverse ecosystem where all species are protected is important to maintaining the web of life on which all living things depend. Once a habitat, plant or animal species is lost globally or even regionally, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to bring back. Healthy biodiversity contributes to water resource protection, soil health, pollution breakdown and absorption, and climate stability. There is an intrinsic value to ecosystem health as well. Imagine Baltimore without our beloved black-eyed susans, orioles, or blue crabs.

## CURRENT STATUS

The City is working to restore and conserve habitat and manage invasive species on City parkland through programs such as Weed Warriors and the development of a deer management strategy. Organizations including the National Wildlife Foundation, Audubon Society, Wildlife Habitat Council, Blue Water Baltimore's Herring Run Nursery, and others, provide education and support for the creation and improvement of wildlife habitat where people live, work, play, and learn in the city. In 2013, Masonville Cove was designated as the first Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership, in the country by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. To build off of this success, a plan for an expanded "Baltimore Rivers to Harbor" Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership is being pursued. The Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition, a regional partnership of public, private, and nonprofit organizations connects people to greenspaces and promotes equity, discovery, biodiversity, and resilience.

## EQUITY INDICATORS

The city's existing priority natural systems areas are primarily concentrated in higher income areas with abundant tree canopy and open space. While it is important to restore and conserve habitat in these areas, residents citywide must have the opportunity to share in the benefits of a healthy and diverse ecosystem. Ensuring that biodiversity efforts address existing open space areas on both public and privately land will help residents better understand and experience the benefits of these efforts.

## STRATEGIES

### **1. Demonstrate an increase in restoration, creation and maintenance of habitat for native species, and provide educational opportunities showing its benefits.**

Provide improved and expanded habitat for native species, along with educational materials, by restoring natural systems areas, including forest patches, wetlands, stream valleys, shorelines and other habitat areas, and encourage the creation and maintenance of new habitat on public and private land.

**Action 1** – Work with partners to create and maintain new or improved habitat for pollinators on public lands such as parks, school grounds, and vacant land and provide educational materials.

**Action 2** – Encourage the creation and maintenance of habitat on private properties such as homes and businesses.

**Action 3** – Create a mechanism to ensure that habitat areas created and maintained on public lands be protected in perpetuity.

**2. Demonstrate progress towards the management of invasive species in natural systems areas and implementation of the invasive species management recommendations in existing plans.**

The City is currently pursuing the creation of Forest Health Assessments for the City's four largest forested parks, which will identify recommendations for invasive species management in these forests. The City has also developed a Deer Management Plan for managing the deer population, the growth of which is a threat to both the health of the city's forests and the health of the deer themselves.

**Action 1** – Continue to utilize a site management plan approach to managing invasive species by completing Forest Management Plans the city's largest forested parks and identifying other priority natural systems areas for future management plans.

**Action 2** – Demonstrate progress towards the implementation of invasive species management recommendations identified in the Forest Management Plans.

**Action 3** – Demonstrate progress towards the implementation of the City's Deer Management Plan.

**Action 4** – Create and demonstrate progress towards the implementation of an Integrated Pest Management Plan for City-owned properties.

**3. Increase community awareness of the benefits of biodiversity and the impacts of invasive species through education and outreach.**

Increasing public awareness can encourage stewardship to help to improve biodiversity and reduce the spread of invasive species as well as the restriction of pesticides and herbicides.

**Action 1** – Continue to create and maintain demonstration projects on public land with educational signage.

**Action 2** – Continue to support programs and organizations that provide education and stewardship to promote biodiversity and reduce the spread of invasive species.

## **METRICS FOR SUCCESS**

**Strategy 1:** Demonstrate an increase in habitat area restored, created, and maintained from (XXX) to (XXX)

**Strategy 2:** Demonstrate progress in implementing actions identified in forest management and deer management plans.

**Strategy 3:** Demonstrate number of residents reached annually