

Chesapeake Conservancy

410 Severn Avenue
Suite 405
Annapolis, MD
21403
ph: 443-321-3610

For immediate distribution

Media Contact
Michael Shultz, 410.353.3352

Chesapeake Organizations Merge to Form Chesapeake Conservancy *Group Will Champion Public Access, Land Conservation, and Stewardship*

Today, two non-profit organizations announced a merger under the name Chesapeake Conservancy to promote public access, land conservation, education and stewardship of the Chesapeake and its rivers. The Chesapeake Conservancy will build on the foundation laid by the Friends of the John Smith Chesapeake Trail and the Friends of Chesapeake Gateways to advance and implement the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail and the Chesapeake Gateways and Watertrails Network, and to create and implement a Chesapeake Treasured Landscape Initiative.

"By combining forces, we believe the Chesapeake Conservancy will be a powerful catalyst for conserving the Chesapeake region's most treasured natural, cultural, historic and working landscapes; enhancing public access, recreation and tourism opportunities on the Bay and its tributaries; advocating for a 21st Century Chesapeake Bay National Park; and educating citizens in the heritage and stewardship of our nation's largest estuary," explained Charles A. Stek, Chairman of the Board of the Friends of the John Smith Chesapeake Trail, and now chairman of the Chesapeake Conservancy.

Filling an important niche in the Chesapeake's recovery efforts, the Conservancy will serve as a strong advocate on issues of public access and land conservation watershed-wide. Working closely with government agencies and conservation groups, the Conservancy will help to coordinate conservation and public access priorities in the Chesapeake and advance those priorities through focused advocacy, policy development and a marshaling of public and private funding. The Conservancy will also work closely with the National Park Service, John Smith Trail partners and Gateway sites to connect the public to the Bay and to enhance recreation and tourism opportunities throughout the Chesapeake.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Charles A. Stek
Chairman
Environmental Stewardship
Strategies

Patrick F. Noonan
Vice Chairman
The Conservation Fund

Paul Hagen
Secretary
Beveridge & Diamond, P.C.

Nicholas H. Dilks
Treasurer
Ecosystem Investment Partners

Stephen Adkins
Chickahominy Tribe

Don Baugh
Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Scott Beatty, Jr.
Shore Bancshares, Inc.

Gilbert M. Grosvenor
National Geographic Society

Page Hayhurst
Virginia Living Museum

Ann Loomis
Dominion

Dr. Mamie Parker
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Ret.

Blaine T. Phillips, Jr.
The Conservation Fund


John J. Reynolds
The Student Conservation
Association

William H. Street
James River Association

Ann Swanson
Chesapeake Bay Commission

Homer (Skip) W. Wieder, Jr.

David O'Neill
Chesapeake Conservancy



"Our focus is on advancing public access to connect people and communities to the outdoors, and conserving sweeping landscapes that protect our existing and future investments in the Bay's restoration," explains David J. O'Neill, President and CEO of the Conservancy. "We'll do this by advancing the John Smith Trail, the Gateways Network and complementary programs such as the Chesapeake Bay Treasured Landscapes Initiative."

Since forming a few years ago, the Friends of the John Smith Chesapeake Trail championed the creation of the nation's first all water National Historic Trail. It has also attracted millions of dollars for conservation, public access and education in the Chesapeake Bay region in support of the Trail. The Friends recently established a consortium called the Partners for Chesapeake Treasured Landscapes with nearly 45 federal, state and local governments and nonprofit partners from across the watershed. This partnership will continue to be a priority of the Conservancy.

"This exciting partnership will bring new resources to the Gateways program, expanding the Network's reach across the Watershed," said Scotty Beatty, Chairman of the Board of the Friends of Chesapeake Gateways, and now a board member of the Chesapeake Conservancy. "Millions of visitors will hear a strong environmental stewardship message, while also learning about the history and culture of the Bay."

The Friends of the Chesapeake Gateways have helped the Chesapeake Gateways and Watertrails Network expand to more than 170 sites watershed-wide. These sites are providing interpretation, education and public access to the Bay and its rivers for students and citizens alike.

For more information on the Chesapeake Conservancy, please visit www.ChesapeakeConservancy.org.