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Mr. Michael Anastasio’s 60th Birthday
Rupert Armitage
Mrs. Gage Kyle
Georges Kyle
Karen E. Noonan
Patrick Noonan

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2011: A Monumental Year

On November 1, President Obama named Fort Monroe a National Monument. This designation exemplifies the momentum for signature conservation projects that the Chesapeake Conservancy has marshaled, thanks to our partners and funders. 2011 was a year of great progress for our conservation, outreach and access programs. Please read the details in this report, but let me highlight a few. In addition to our work on Fort Monroe, we worked with the National Park Service to complete plans for the Captain John Smith Trail’s first segment. Forty-five watermen completed our heritage tourism training program. Our nominations for 1,000 miles of component connecting trails were forwarded to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Interior. We entered a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect wildlife and habitat along Chesapeake river corridors. We broadened our staff and diversified our sources of funding, attracting a greater proportion of private money to underwrite our work. With your continued support in 2012 and beyond, we will work to create a network of conserved landscapes and special places that sustain the Chesapeake’s unique natural and cultural resources, strengthen the connection between people and the watershed, and encourage exploration and celebration of the Chesapeake region.

Conserving the Bay’s Great Rivers and Special Places

During 2011 the Chesapeake Conservancy advanced conservation efforts on the ground with acquisitions and through planning and policy initiatives. Our work centered on the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, yet also included initiatives that will strengthen Chesapeake conservation beyond the Trail.

Signature Project: Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge
The Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge is one of the most ecologically significant natural areas in the Chesapeake watershed. The Chesapeake Conservancy is working closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to develop and implement a conservation vision for the refuge that connects it to the John Smith Trail and protects its marshlands for the long term.

On the Nanticoke River, we worked with the USFWS and The Conservation Fund to protect 400 acres within Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. The Chesapeake Conservancy served as a conservation catalyst by highlighting the benefits of the acquisition and advocating for the funding with the USFWS and Congress. We provided the same service on an 825-acre parcel within the Nanticoke Unit of the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, a piece of land directly on the Captain John Smith Trail. The acquisition will protect landscapes along the Trail and is the first acquisition in this section of the refuge.

In complement to our land acquisition initiative, we are working in partnership with USFWS, The Conservation Fund and Audubon Maryland-DC to study and address the impact of sea level rise on the refuge and its diverse wildlife and marshes. The Maryland Climate Change Commission projects that low-lying areas such as Blackwater will be dominated by open water by 2050. The partners will map how the refuge’s tidal marshes will migrate as bay water levels rise and will suggest adaptation strategies at the refuge.

Signature Project: Envision the James
On the James River, the Chesapeake Conservancy and its partners, Ecosystem Investment Partners, Audubon Virginia, Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries, and Virginia State Parks, continued support in 2012 and beyond, we will work to create a network of conserved landscapes and through planning and policy initiatives. Our work centered on the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, yet also included initiatives that will strengthen Chesapeake conservation beyond the Trail.

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Signature Project: Envision the James
On the James River, the Chesapeake Conservancy and its
**Fostering Partnerships and Working Toward a Stronger Organization**

For the Chesapeake Conservancy, 2011 was another year of growth as we expanded our board and staff. Former U.S. Senators Paul S. Sarbanes and John W. Warner joined our Board of Directors as honorary members. We established a Chesapeake Council to expand community contacts and widen our circle of advisors.

Board Chairman Charlie Stek was the acting director until June when Joel Dunn was selected by the board to be executive director. Joel has been conservation advisor to the Conservancy since its inception as well as a private individual. He moved into the executive chair from a position as Coordinator of The Conservation Fund’s Sustainable Chesapeake Program.

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Joanna Ogburn joined the organization as Program Director. Joanna has experience in stakeholder-driven conservation efforts and has focused her career on the link between public involvement and land protection. Before joining the Chesapeake Conservancy Joanna ran a county-wide land conservation program in Savannah, Georgia. As the sole staff for the Chatham County Resource Protection Commission, Joanna gained experience in all aspects of conservation. She has a Masters of Environmental Management from Duke University and a Bachelors of Science from University of Richmond.

David Blitzer joined the organization as a Chesapeake Fellow. David recently graduated from the University of Vermont with a Bachelors of Arts in history and political science. He works on government relations for the Conservancy.

The Chesapeake Conservancy’s team includes, left to right: David Blitzer, Chesapeake Fellow; Michael Shultz, Communications Advisor; Colleen Whittlock, Director of Administration; David Burke, Conservation and Planning Advisor; Joanna Ogburn, Program Director; and Joel Dunn, Executive Director.

The Chesapeake Conservancy Council

**Providing Counsel, Advice and Strategic Planning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mr. Truman Semans, Sr.</th>
<th>Mr. Stephen Harper*</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Torrey Brown*</td>
<td>Mr. Ed McMahon</td>
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<td>Mr. Charles Collins</td>
<td>Ms. Nancy Merrill</td>
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<td>Dr. Wilton “Will” Corkern*</td>
<td>Mr. John Turner</td>
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<td>Ms. Lavinia Currier*</td>
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<td>Dr. Sylvia Earle*</td>
<td>Mr. Steven Williams</td>
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*Joined 2012

**Signature Project: Conservation along John Smith Trail**

The Conservancy continues to assist the National Park Service in preparing a John Smith Trail conservation strategy that will provide guidelines for protecting “evocative landscapes” and significant historic sites contributing to visitor experiences along the Trail. Such landscapes represent natural areas reminiscent of those that existed at the time of John Smith’s voyages in 1607 and 1608. Particular attention will be given to the recognition of “indigenous cultural landscapes” representing natural resources important to American Indian societies who lived along Smith’s routes. Emphasis will be given to conservation strategies that would integrate the needs of the trail into land protection techniques and programs currently used by federal and state agencies, local governments and nonprofit conservation organizations. Successful implementation of the land protection plan will depend upon partnerships, given the mandates of the National Trail System Act and the Trail’s length of more than 2,500 miles of land and water routes.

**National Recognition for Signature Projects**

The Trail is one way for us to shine a light on the Chesapeake’s national treasures, in particular its rich history, scenic beauty, and ecological value. The America’s Great Outdoors initiative, a nationwide project of the Department of Interior, is another. We were gratified when the Department of Interior chose two signature projects of the Chesapeake Conservancy, Fort Monroe and the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, as among the nation’s best outdoor investments.
**Connecting People to the Chesapeake**

People who have played on the Bay—fished, boated, swum, walked along its rivers and its shores, or explored historical sites—have a heartfelt connection to the Chesapeake. More than others they are ready to help conserve the Chesapeake’s landscapes, create public access, and become stewards in its restoration. This recognition underpins our efforts to connect people to the Bay and her rivers through increased access and recreational opportunities. We moved forward this year both in the realm of policy and on the ground.

**Chesapeake Gateways and Watertrails**

We were successful in our efforts to build support in Congress to reauthorize the Chesapeake Gateways and Watertrails Program. The Gateways bill was introduced in both the House (H.R. 1649) and Senate (S. 1740), obtained numerous co-sponsors, and in the end garnered the support needed to reauthorize the program with $2 million in funding. This money will allow the National Park Service to issue grants in 2012, most of which will be targeted to projects that increase access to the John Smith Trail.

**Captain John Smith Geotrail**

In another effort to encourage people to explore the Trail we launched the Captain John Smith Geotrail. This project leads the way toward developing community supported conservation along river corridors.

**Assessing Conservation Opportunities**

The National Park Service (NPS) completed plans for the James River portion of the Captain John Smith Trail. The Chesapeake Conservancy worked with NPS during the planning and completed five conservation assessments for each of the John Smith Trail focus areas on the lower James.

**Interpretation Along the Trail**

While major planning was done on the James, steps were being taken in other areas to mark and interpret the Trail. The Conservancy produced John Smith Trail signs for the NPS. The new interpretive signs are located on four Maryland Department of Natural Resources owned sites: Sandy Point State Park, Newtoine Neck State Park, Susquehanna State Park and the Vienna waterfront.

**Advancing Connecting Trails**

Meanwhile, an effort to extend the Trail through Connecting Component Trails took a significant step toward success. The NPS Chesapeake Bay office forwarded to the Secretary of Interior four of the six applications for the NPS. The new interpretive signs will set conservation priorities for the river in collaboration with local communities. The project has developed new, internet based tools that allow community members to get information, view ideas, and contribute their thoughts. This project leads the way toward developing community supported conservation along river corridors.

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**A LOOK AHEAD TO 2012**

**Building Conservation Resources for the Chesapeake**

This year we are focused on bringing new resources—both intellectual and financial—to the effort to conserve the Chesapeake region’s great rivers and special places and to bring the Captain John Smith Trail alive.

One challenging and potentially very rewarding opportunity lies in bringing the conservation community, including state and federal agencies and non-government partners, together in an effort to have the Department of Interior create a Chesapeake Land and Water Conservation Fund Collaborative. Having our region selected for this targeted program would bring both new financial resources and a targeted conservation plan to the region.

We are also developing our Special Places Fund. This fund will be used to leverage public and private dollars to help protect landscapes that have significant ecological and cultural value, and particularly those that could provide access to the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail.

The Envision the James Project, a collaborative effort with the James River Association and National Geographic Maps, will set conservation priorities for the river in collaboration with local communities. The project has developed new, internet based tools that allow community members to get information, view ideas, and contribute their thoughts. This project leads the way toward developing community supported conservation along river corridors.

We have begun an effort to understand the roles that technology can play in identifying natural landscape features such as streams, riparian corridors, forests and wetlands that help maintain healthy watersheds in the Chesapeake Bay region by maintaining reduced loads of nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment. We refer to these as “naturally high-functioning landscapes.” In particular, we are interested in identifying technologies that can help us identify these landscapes, for example remote sensing and other monitoring systems. The first phase of the effort is to identify relevant technologies and will involve interviewing experts to identify the best approaches and tools.

We will continue to implement the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail Management Plan with the National Park Service. Our work to identify key land conservation priorities and public access opportunities along the James, Rappahannock, Nanticoke and Susquehanna rivers will continue. We are also continuing our effort to link the Trail to nearly 1,000 miles of connecting trails on the Susquehanna, Chester, upper Nanticoke, and upper James. These rivers share history and American Indian cultures with the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail.

We expect to conclude the first phase of our innovative Watermen Heritage Tourism Training Program this year. Forty-five watermen have completed the course so far and we expect nearly that many will do so this year as well. We are also in the process of developing a Phase II for the program. This second phase would focus on developing a support system to aid the watermen in developing, scheduling, and advertising their tours as well as designing methods to document and evaluate the success of each tour.

We will be working with Gateways partners to develop a platform from which to educate the general public about the natural, historic, and cultural legacy of the Chesapeake Bay. We plan to create four self-guided, themed tours of the Chesapeake (e.g. Capt. John Smith’s explorations, Native American culture, Chesapeake Waterfowl) using the Bay Gateways network. Each tour would lead visitors to the Gateways sites that best represent the theme of that tour and thereby provide tour goers with a comprehensive knowledge of the subject. We will work with the Gateways to provide a consistent message about conservation in the Chesapeake.
Connecting People to the Chesapeake

Watermen’s Heritage Tourism Training Program

The Watermen’s Heritage Tourism Training Program has reached its half-way point. The program was developed to provide Maryland watermen the skills they would need to provide tours about the Captain John Smith Trail, their work, and the ecology and history of local rivers. By the end of the year, 45 watermen had participated in the training. Five had completed the full training program and set up tours as sidelines to their business.

MaeBelle and Clyde “Butch” Walters
Deale Island, Maryland

Both MaeBelle and Butch Walters began working the water as a young age. MaeBelle recalls crewing as a child for her father during his work as a commercial waterman. At fourteen, Butch began his life-long career on the water, crabbing and oystering.

The couple now works together crabbing and oystering. In the summers, Butch crabs while MaeBelle manages the soft crabs at their crab shanty. In the winter, the couple dredges oysters. Butch and MaeBelle enjoy meeting visitors and look forward to expanding their heritage tourism business. They encourage families, couples and seniors to join them for a taste of the waterman’s life on the Bay.

MaeBelle and Clyde “Butch” Walters
Deale Island, Maryland

Mark Connolly and Carol Bean
Pot Pie Farm, Wittman, Maryland

Mark Connolly is a commercial waterman with experience in harvesting oysters, crabs, clams and finfish. Mark has fished the areas of Tilghman Island, Rock Hall, Deal Island, St. Mary's River and the main stem of the Chesapeake Bay. Carol Bean, Mark’s wife, is an active member of the Talbot County Waterman’s Association. She promotes sustainable marine harvesting and is a registered seafood dealer. Carol manages Pot Pie Farm, using organic practices to harvest flowers, herbs, vegetables and eggs.

Carol and Mark hope to ensure that small-scale fishing remains an economically viable option for themselves and others. The couple believes that heritage tourism is an important way to support this lifestyle. They are available for dockside heritage interpretation, tours of Pot Pie Farm, and hosting “Bay to Table” events.

Between 60 and 100 will have completed the program when it ends. In addition to providing the watermen a new source of revenue, the program increases the numbers of local guides able to introduce people to the Chesapeake Bay and its history. Below are two examples of this successful program. Visit www.chesapeakeconservancy.org/whttp.html for more information about the program.

Promoting Opportunities To Explore and Celebrate the Chesapeake

Every week for the past year we published “Chesapeake Tips andTips,” the popular e-newsletter that provides a guide to events and activities offered by Gateways Network partners around the Chesapeake Bay.

NPS published A Boater’s Guide to the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, an online resource that provides invaluable information to those who want to explore the Trail. The guide is a joint project of the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office, the Chesapeake Conservancy, and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

Invest in the Chesapeake Bay’s Great Rivers and Special Places

At the Chesapeake Conservancy, we believe in conserving the cultural and historical landmarks and ecologically valuable rivers that give the Chesapeake region its unique character. Your gift to the Chesapeake Conservancy will help advance conservation and expand recreation opportunities for the Chesapeake region’s residents and visitors. With your support we will connect the public to the Chesapeake Bay’s lands and waters, and leave a lasting natural and cultural legacy for future generations to enjoy.

Chesapeake Tips and Tips

highlights interesting, unusual and off-the-beaten path ways to discover authentic Chesapeake places and enjoy the Bay’s natural and historic treasures.

Visit www.chesapeakeconservancy.org to subscribe.

Innovative Technology

In partnership with the Chesapeake Office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Conservancy launched an iPhone app that can bring to the palm of your hand detailed information about environmental conditions at the monitoring buoys located along the John Smith Trail. There are now 10 of these buoys; NOAA launched the tenth Smart Buoy near the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, completing the backbone of the Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System. We ensured funding for the system. Visit www. buoybay.noaa.gov for more information on Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System (CIBIS).
Chesapeake Conservancy Projects
Across the Bay in 2011

1 r Former Jesuit Properties in Maryland Provide Opportunities for Conservation, Public Access

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources has developed plans for three properties formerly owned by the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus since colonial times. The properties include some of southern Maryland’s most beautiful land and nearly 20 miles of shoreline. Now owned by the state, they expand access to the Potomac River, protect important natural habitat, offer the opportunity for wetland and forest restoration and expand opportunities for tourism and healthy, outdoor recreation along the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail. In 2011 we developed an interpretive sign for Newtowne Neck State Park, one of the properties. The Conservancy was the chief advocate for the state buy the properties in 2009.

2 r Watermen’s Program
The Watermen’s Heritage Tourism Training Program trains Maryland watermen in skills they need to provide tours about the Captain John Smith Trail, their work, and the ecology and history of local rivers. In addition to providing watermen a source of revenue, the program increases the numbers of local guides able to introduce people to the bay.

3 r Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge
We helped secure 825 acres within the Nanticoke Unit of the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, protecting wildlife habitat and the view shed along the John Smith Trail.

4 r Zekiah Fort
Zekiah Fort was established in 1680 when Lord Baltimore directed the Piscataway to the area, where they remained until 1692. The fort’s long-sought location was re-discovered last summer. We are working to conserve this indigenous cultural landscape and to develop standards for identifying and conserving others.

5 r Fredericksburg Boat Launch
We continued to work with Fredericksburg, Friends of the Rappahannock and the National Park Service to create a safe public access point to the river and John Smith Trail at Old Mill Park.

6 r Lawrence Lewis Jr. Park Launch Site
We worked with the Dominion Foundation, Charles City County, and Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to fund and plan this new launch site on the James River.

7 r Envision the James
This project will develop a conservation vision for the James River and serve as a blueprint for community engagement and conservation for use throughout the Chesapeake region. The James is the first segment of the Captain John Smith Trail targeted for planning and development by the National Park Service.

8 r The Captain John Smith Trail
The National Park Service completed plans for the James River portion of the John Smith Trail, a project the Conservancy worked on. The Conservancy assists the National Park Service in preparing land protection plans, developing interpretive signs, conducting studies, and introducing people to the Trail. The Department of Interior named the Trail one of America’s Great Outdoors projects.

9 r Fort Monroe
President Barack Obama designated the 325-acre Fort Monroe National Monument in November. The site is directly on the Capt. John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, and we anticipate improved access to the Trail.

20 r Smart Buoy Launched
NOAA launched the tenth Smart Buoy near the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, completing the backbone of the Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System.

WASHINGTON, DC
Richmond
Baltimore
Maryland
Virginia

Connecting Component Trail
Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail

Advancing Connecting Trails
Our effort to link several significant rivers to the John Smith Trail moved forward when the National Park Service forwarded to the Secretary of Interior four connecting trail applications for approval: the Susquehanna, Chester, upper Nanticoke, and upper James rivers.
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Watermen’s Heritage Tourism Training Program

The Watermen’s Heritage Tourism Training Program has reached its halfway point. The program was developed to provide Maryland watermen the skills they would need to provide tours about the Captain John Smith Trail, their work, and the ecology and history of local rivers. By the end of the year, 45 watermen had participated in the training. Five had completed the full training program and set up tours as sidelines to their business.

Between 60 and 100 will have completed the program when it ends. In addition to providing the watermen a new source of revenue, the program increases the numbers of local guides able to introduce people to the Chesapeake Bay and its history. Below are two examples of this successful program. Visit www.chesapeakeconservancy.org/whhttp.html for more information about the program.

MaeBelle and Clyde “Butch” Walters
Deal Island, Maryland

Both MaeBelle and Butch Walters began working the water at a young age. MaeBelle recalls crewing as a child for her father during his work as a commercial waterman. At fourteen, Butch began his life-long career on the water, crabbing and oystering.

The couple now works together crabbing and oystering. In the summers, Butch crabs while MaeBelle manages the soft crabs at their crab shanty. In the winter, the couple dredges oysters. Butch and MaeBelle enjoy meeting visitors and look forward to expanding their heritage tourism business. They encourage families, couples and seniors to join them for a taste of the waterman’s life on the Bay.

MaeBelle and Clyde “Butch” Walters
Deal Island, Maryland

Mark Connolly and Carol Bean
Pot Pie Farm, Wittman, Maryland

Mark Connolly is a commercial waterman with experience in harvesting oysters, crabs, clams and finfish. Mark has fished the areas of Tilghman Island, Rock Hall, Deal Island, St. Mary’s River and the main stem of the Chesapeake Bay.

Carol Bean, Mark’s wife, is an active member of the Talbot County Waterman’s Association. She promotes sustainable marine harvesting and is a registered seafood dealer. Carol manages Pot Pie Farm, using organic practices to harvest flowers, herbs, vegetables and eggs.

Mark and Carol hope to ensure that small-scale fishing remains an economically viable option for themselves and others. The couple believes that heritage tourism is an important way to support this lifestyle. They are available for dockside heritage interpretation, tours of Pot Pie Farm, and hosting “Bay to Table” events.

Invest in the Chesapeake Bay’s Great Rivers and Special Places

At the Chesapeake Conservancy, we believe in conserving the cultural and historical landmarks and ecologically valuable rivers that give the Chesapeake region its unique character. Your gift to the Chesapeake Conservancy will help advance conservation and expand recreation opportunities for the Chesapeake region’s residents and visitors. With your support we will connect the public to the Chesapeake Bay’s lands and waters, and leave a lasting natural and cultural legacy for future generations to enjoy.

Promoting Opportunities To Explore and Celebrate the Chesapeake

Every week for the past year we published “Chesapeake Trips and Tips,” the popular e-newsletter that provides a guide to events and activities offered by Gateway Network partners around the Chesapeake Bay.

NPS published A Boater’s Guide to the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, an online resource that provides invaluable information to those who want to explore the Trail.

The guide is a joint project of the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office, the Chesapeake Conservancy, and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

Chesapeake Tips and Tips

Chesapeake Tips and Tips highlights interesting, unusual and off-the-beaten-path ways to discover authentic Chesapeake places and enjoy the Bay’s natural and historic treasures.

Visit www.chesapeakeconservancy.org to subscribe.

Innovative Technology

In partnership with the Chesapeake Office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Conservancy launched an iPhone app that can bring to the palm of your hand detailed information about environmental conditions at the monitoring buoys located along the John Smith Trail. There are now 10 of these buoys; NOAA launched the tenth Smart Buoy near the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, completing the backbone of the Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System. We ensured funding for the system. Visit www.buoybay.noaa.gov for more information on Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System (CBIBS).
Connecting People to the Chesapeake

People who have played on the Bay—fished, boated, swum, walked along its rivers and its shores, or explored historical sites—have a heartfelt connection to the Chesapeake. More than others they are ready to help conserve the Chesapeake’s landscapes, create public access, and become stewards in its restoration. This recognition underpins our efforts to connect people to the Bay and her rivers through increased access and recreational opportunities. We moved forward this year both in the realm of policy and on the ground.

Chesapeake Gateways and Watertrails

We were successful in our efforts to build support in Congress to reauthorize the Chesapeake Gateways and Watertrails Program. The Gateways bill was introduced in both the House (H.R. 1649) and Senate (S. 1740), obtained numerous co-sponsors, and in the end garnered the support needed to reauthorize the program with $2 million in funding. This money will allow the National Park Service to issue grants in 2012, most of which will be targeted to projects that increase access to the John Smith Trail.

Captain John Smith Geotrail

In another effort to encourage people to explore the Trail we launched the Captain John Smith Geotrail. We designed and created the trail in partnership with the National Park Service and with the expertise of our staff and talented geo-caching volunteers from the Maryland GeoCaching Society. GeoCaches were placed at more than 40 sites on five rivers representing particular stories or scenes from John Smith’s adventures on the Bay. The popular treasure hunt like challenge has already attracted thousands of visitors.

Advancing Connecting Trails

Meanwhile, an effort to extend the Trail through Connecting Component Trails took a significant step toward success. The NPS Chesapeake Bay office forwarded to the Secretary of Interior four of the six connecting trails applications that the Conservancy and our partners developed. The applications—for the Susquehanna, Chester, upper Nanticoke, and upper James Rivers—gained the support of five Governors, two Indian Nations, and numerous partners. Of the two Connecting Component Trails not yet sent to the Secretary, NPS ruled that one, the upper Anacostia, was already a part of the Trail system and the other, the Choptank, was eligible but a strong local partner needed to be found.

Assessing Conservation Opportunities

The National Park Service (NPS) completed plans for the James River portion of the Captain John Smith Trail. The Chesapeake Conservancy worked with NPS during the planning and completed five conservation assessments for each of the John Smith Trail focus areas on the lower James.

Interpretation Along the Trail

While major planning was done on the James, steps were being taken in other areas to mark and interpret the Trail. The Conservancy produced John Smith Trail signs for the NPS. The new interpretive signs are located on four Maryland Department of Natural Resources owned sites: Sandy Point State Park, Newtowne Neck State Park, Susquehanna State Park and the Vienna waterfront.

A LOOK AHEAD TO 2012
Building Conservation Resources for the Chesapeake

This year we are focused on bringing new resources—both intellectual and financial—to the effort to conserve the Chesapeake region’s great rivers and special places and to bring the Captain John Smith Trail alive.

One challenging and potentially very rewarding opportunity lies in bringing the conservation community, including state and federal agencies and non-government partners, together in an effort to have the Department of Interior create a Chesapeake Land and Water Conservation Fund Collaborative. Having our region selected for this targeted program would bring both new financial resources and a targeted conservation plan to the region.

We are also developing our Special Places Fund. This fund will be used to leverage public and private dollars to help protect landscapes that have significant ecological and cultural value, and particularly those that could provide access to the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail.

We will continue to implement the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail Management Plan with the National Park Service. Our work to identify key land conservation priorities and public access opportunities along the James, Rappahannock, Nanticoke and Susquehanna rivers will continue. We are also continuing our effort to link the Trail to nearly 1,000 miles of connecting trails on the Susquehanna, Chester, upper Nanticoke, and upper James. These rivers share history and American Indian cultures with the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail.

We expect to conclude the first phase of our innovative Watermen Heritage Tourism Training Program this year. Forty-five watermen have completed the course so far and we expect nearly that many will do so this year as well. We are also in the process of developing a Phase II for the program. This second phase would focus on developing a support system to aid the watermen in developing, scheduling, and advertising their tours as well as designing methods to document and evaluate the success of each tour.

We will be working with Gateways partners to develop a platform from which to educate the general public about the natural, historic, and cultural legacy of the Chesapeake Bay. We plan to create four self-guided, themed tours of the Chesapeake (e.g. Capt. John Smith’s explorations, Native American culture, Chesapeake Waterfowl) using the Bay Gateways network. Each tour would lead visitors to the Gateways sites that best represent the theme of that tour and thereby provide tour-goers with a comprehensive knowledge of the subject. We will work with the Gateways to provide a consistent message about conservation in the Chesapeake.

Like a high-tech treasure hunt, geo-caching provides a challenge to these three young geocachers on the Captain John Smith Geotrail.

PHOTOGRAPH BY NPS, WAYNE KENNEDY.
Fostering Partnerships and Working Toward a Stronger Organization

For the Chesapeake Conservancy, 2011 was another year of growth as we expanded our board and staff. Former U.S. Senators Paul S. Sarbanes and John W. Warner joined our Board of Directors as honorary members. We established a Chesapeake Council to expand community contacts and widen our circle of advisors.

Board Chairman Charlie Stek was the acting director until June when Joel Dunn was selected by the board to be executive director. Joel has been conservation advisor to the Conservancy since its inception as the Friends of the John Smith Chesapeake Trail. He moved into the executive chair from a position as Coordinator of The Conservation Fund’s Sustainable Chesapeake Program.

Joanna Ogburn joined the organization as Program Director. Joanna has experience in stakeholder-driven conservation efforts and has focused her career on the link between public involvement and land protection. Before joining the Chesapeake Conservancy Joanna ran a county-wide land conservation program in Savannah, Georgia. As the sole staff for the Chatham County Resource Protection Commission, Joanna gained experience in all aspects of conservation. She has a Masters of Environmental Management from Duke University and a Bachelors of Science from University of Richmond.

David Blitzer joined the organization as a Chesapeake Fellow. David recently graduated from the University of Vermont with a Bachelors of Science from University of Richmond.

The Chesapeake Conservancy’s team includes, left to right: David Blitzer, Chesapeake Fellow; Michael Shultz, Communications Advisor; Colleen Whitlock, Director of Administration; David Burke, Conservation and Planning Advisor; Joanna Ogburn, Program Director; and Joel Dunn, Executive Director.

The Chesapeake Conservancy Council

The Chesapeake Conservancy Council’s members bring the Conservancy a wide range of expertise and community contacts. They are key advisors in the important effort to protect our cultural and natural resources and they support our mission through fundraising, leveraging relationships, providing advice and being ambassadors for our organization with businesses, governments, foundations and private individuals.

Mr. Truman Semans, Sr.  Mr. Stephen Harper*
Dr. Torrey Brown*  Mr. Ed McMahon
Mr. Charles Collins  Ms. Nancy Merrill
Dr. Wilton “Will” Corkern*  Mr. John Turner
Ms. Lavinia Currier*  Mr. Douglas Wheeler
Dr. Sylvia Earle*  Mr. Steven Williams

*joined 2012
2011: A Monumental Year

On November 1, President Obama named Fort Monroe a National Monument. This designation exemplifies the momentum for signature conservation projects that the Chesapeake Conservancy has marshaled, thanks to our partners and funders. 2011 was a year of great progress for our conservation, outreach and access programs. Please read the details in this report, but let me highlight a few. In addition to our work on Fort Monroe, we worked with the National Park Service to complete plans for the Captain John Smith Trail’s first segment. Forty-five watermen completed our heritage tourism training program. Our nominations for 1,000 miles of component connecting trails were forwarded to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Interior. We entered a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect wildlife and habitat along Chesapeake river corridors. We broadened our staff and diversified our sources of funding, attracting a greater proportion of private money to underwrite our work. With your continued support in 2012 and beyond, we will work to create a network of conserved landscapes and special places that sustain the Chesapeake’s natural and cultural resources, strengthen the connection between people and the watershed, and encourage exploration and celebration of the Chesapeake region.

Conserving the Bay’s Great Rivers and Special Places

During 2011 the Chesapeake Conservancy advanced conservation efforts on the ground with acquisitions and through planning and policy initiatives. Our work centered on the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, yet also included initiatives that will strengthen Chesapeake conservation beyond the Trail.

Signature Project: Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge

The Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge is one of the most ecologically significant natural areas in the Chesapeake watershed. The Chesapeake Conservancy is working closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to develop and implement a conservation vision for the refuge that connects it to the John Smith Trail and protects its marshlands for the long term.

In the James River, the Chesapeake Conservancy and The Conservation Fund to protect 400 acres within Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. The Chesapeake Conservancy served as a conservation catalyst by highlighting the benefits of the acquisition and advocating for the funding with the USFWS and Congress. We provided the same service on an 825-acre parcel within the Nanticoke Unit of the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, a piece of land directly on the Captain John Smith Trail. The acquisition will protect landscapes along the Trail and is the first acquisition in this section of the refuge.

In complement to our land acquisition initiative, we are working in partnership with USFWS, The Conservation Fund and Audubon Maryland-DC to study and address the impact of sea level rise on the refuge and its diverse wildlife and marshes. The Maryland Climate Change Commission projects that low-lying areas such as Blackwater will be dominated by open water by 2050. The partners will map how the refuge’s tidal marshes will migrate as bay water levels rise and will suggest adaptation strategies at the refuge.

Signature Project: Envision the James

On the James River, the Chesapeake Conservancy and its partners, Ecosystem Investment Partners and The Conservation Fund, worked closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect landscapes along the Trail and is the first acquisition highlighting the benefits of the acquisition and advocating for the funding with the USFWS and Congress. We provided the same service on an 825-acre parcel within the Nanticoke Unit of the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, a piece of land directly on the Captain John Smith Trail. The acquisition will protect landscapes along the Trail and is the first acquisition in this section of the refuge.

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