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# Annapolis

NOVEMBER 2015



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# CHARTING *a* TRAIL of ECO-AWARENESS

## *Chesapeake Conservancy follows the wake of Captain John Smith toward Bay restoration*

By Lisa A. Lewis

When Captain John Smith embarked on a journey to explore the Chesapeake Bay more than 400 years ago, he couldn't have known the profound impact he would have on future generations. But as a result of his voyages—in which he created maps of the region and kept journals of his experiences—he secured his place in history. His extraordinary account of his adventures allows people to step back in time and catch a glimpse of what the Bay was like four centuries ago. Indeed, Smith played a major role in the exploration of the Chesapeake Bay, and his legacy endures—immortalized in the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail.

Smith's voyages still serve as a source of inspiration for residents of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. In fact, one group that has been greatly influenced by Smith's contributions is the Chesapeake Conservancy, a nonprofit organization based in Annapolis. Recognizing the need for an organization to promote conservation, stewardship, and access to the Chesapeake Bay, its lands, and its rivers, the Friends of the John Smith Chesapeake Trail and the Friends of Chesapeake Gateways joined together and created the Chesapeake Conservancy in 2010. Since its founding, the organization has embraced the Captain John Smith

Chesapeake National Historic Trail as inspiration that helps shape the foundation of its work.

### *The Big Picture*

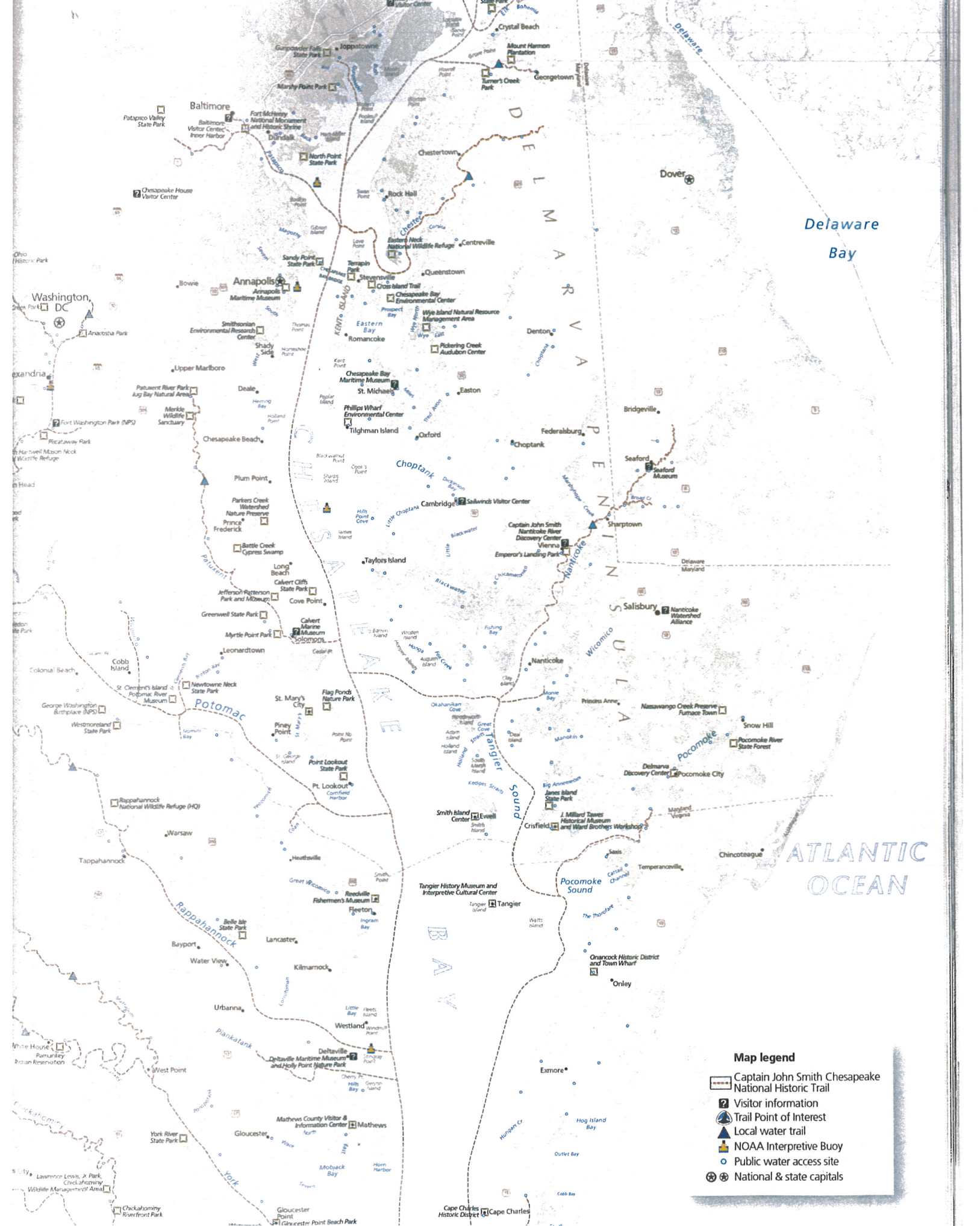
According to the Chesapeake Conservancy, its mission is to achieve a healthier Chesapeake Bay watershed by connecting people with its history and wildlife, conserving its landscapes and rivers, and restoring its natural resources. Indeed, the organization works tirelessly to promote a deep love and appreciation of the Bay. The Chesapeake Conservancy also serves as a catalyst for change by developing strong public and private partnerships and developing and utilizing innovative technology.

Along with its mission, the Chesapeake Conservancy developed a unique vision that approaches conservation "through the eyes of

John Smith." The organization envisions a healthier Chesapeake Bay watershed where residents can be surrounded by beauty: clean water, abundant forests, wetlands, shorelines, open spaces, and a variety of wildlife—a national treasure steeped in history and culture and a resource to be protected and cherished for present and future generations.

"The Chesapeake Bay is North America's largest estuary," says Joel Dunn, president and CEO of the Chesapeake Conservancy. "You might think of it as the Grand Canyon of estuaries! It's a magical place, full of wild things and history. The Chesapeake shapes our culture and traditions and defines our communities. We are all part of the Chesapeake and its great rivers. Its geography naturally weaves together the land and rivers in ways that make the ecosystem and our history inseparable from our daily lives."





## CHARTING *a* TRAIL of ECO-AWARENESS

### Goal Driven

In order to achieve its mission and fulfill its vision for a healthier Bay, the Chesapeake Conservancy established three distinct goals: to connect people to the Chesapeake, to conserve its landscapes and special places, and to restore its lands, habitats, and waters.

### GOAL 1: CONNECT

The Chesapeake Conservancy creates opportunities for people to connect with the Chesapeake Bay for recreation, education, and inspiration. It works to achieve this goal by advocating for more public access so people can enjoy the Bay, using technology to engage people through projects that are accessible via the Internet, and generating interest in conservation.

### Public Access

The Chesapeake Bay watershed comprises 11,600 miles of tidal shoreline. However, public access is extremely limited—comprising less than 2 percent of the shoreline. Indeed, accessibility to the water is a serious issue in Anne Arundel County. Although the county has more than 500 miles of shoreline—more than any other region in Maryland—there are only a few public access sites. The Chesapeake Conservancy is dedicated to increasing access around the watershed and has been involved in several projects to develop new public access sites along the Bay and its rivers and enhance existing launches and facilities.

### The Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail

Officially launched on May 12, 2007, the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, the first national water trail, commemorates Smith's exploration of the Bay based on his maps and journals. Administered by the National Park Service, the trail, which covers approximately 3,000 miles in parts of present-day Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia, follows the routes of Smith's two voyages on the Chesapeake Bay in 1608 as well as his voyages on the York, James, and other rivers between 1607 and 1609.

A unique way to explore the Chesapeake Bay, the trail offers opportunities for tourism, recreation, environmental and cultural education, and conservation.



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# Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail

Chesapeake Bay Region  
Delaware, Maryland, New York,  
Pennsylvania, Virginia, and  
Washington, DC

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



## Plan Your Adventure

The Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail travels nearly 3,000 miles across the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers. The trail was officially launched in May 2007, as part of the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown, Virginia.

Since then, the trail has been extended beyond the route of Smith's explorations to include the rivers and upper reaches of rivers that served as trade and transportation routes for Indian tribes who lived here before the English arrived.

There are countless things to see and do along the Smith trail. The water routes offer great experiences for paddling and power boats, and there are lots of land-based sites to visit by car. You'll find opportunities for boating, hiking, bicycling, and watching wildlife, as well as historic settings with museums, living history exhibits, and visitor centers. Many sites along the trail offer several of these options in one setting or in a cluster of nearby sites.



Trail information and Susquehanna River access facilities available at the Zimmerman Center for Heritage.

Use these resources to learn more about what the Smith Trail offers.

Visit the trail website at [www.smithtrail.net](http://www.smithtrail.net).

Check out the map or use the "Adventure Planner" to design your itinerary. Explore your options on a variety of water trails, and read excerpts from the official boater's guide. This website also offers lots of information about Smith, American Indians (past and present), and the Chesapeake Bay of the early 1600s.

Visit [www.findyourchesapeake.com](http://www.findyourchesapeake.com) to inspire your next adventure along the Smith trail and throughout the Chesapeake region. Read travel articles for trip ideas, enjoy stunning photography, and search for specific interests — like boating, camping, geocaching, maritime heritage, and more — in the places you would like to visit.



Paddlers enjoying the John Smith Trail.

Call up a "Smart Buoy."

These yellow buoys float on the water to mark places on the John Smith Trail. They also transmit recordings about that location 400 years ago. You can access buoy information at [www.buoybay.noaa.gov](http://www.buoybay.noaa.gov) and by phone toll free at 877-BUOY BAY.



Map legend

- Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail
- Visitor information
- Trail Point of Interest
- Local water trail
- NOAA Interpretive Buoy
- Public water access site
- National & state capitals

Scale: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 miles



A dramatic view of Great Falls on the Potomac River.



Fishing at Belle Isle State Park.



Delaware Bay



Learning about dug-out canoes at Jamestown Settlement.

ATLANTIC OCEAN



The John Smith Trail extends beyond the route of Smith's explorations to include additional river routes used by 17th-century Indians.



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In fact, there are a variety of ways to experience the trail. Visitors can explore the Bay by boat or via "Smart Buoys," a unique trail guide and observation system that provides instant information. The Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System was developed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration with the support of numerous partners, including the Chesapeake Conservancy and the National Park Service. In addition to providing recreational access to the Bay and its rivers, the trail also provides the Chesapeake Conservancy with a foundation for conservation and education.

"The Chesapeake Conservancy is our lead partner in providing public access and conserving and restoring the resources of the Chesapeake watershed," says Chuck Hunt, superintendent of the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office, which manages the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail. "I greatly appreciate Chesapeake Conservancy's leadership in improving access for the public and conserving resources all along the trail. From innovations in technology, to public outreach, to attracting funding for critical initiatives, we just couldn't have a better partner."

### *Wildlife Webcams*

The Chesapeake Conservancy helps people gain an appreciation of the environment through its wildlife webcams, which feature osprey and a peregrine falcon. A fascinating way to observe the wonders of nature, the webcams allow viewers to observe the birds' activities via the Internet. Both webcams average approximately 8,000 views a day and attract viewers from all 50 states. The peregrine webcam is the Chesapeake Conservancy's second successful webcam, and since its launch in March 2015, it has attracted viewers from about 100 countries, including Iceland, Ghana, the Cayman Islands, Armenia, China, and Belize. The first webcam featured Tom and Audrey, a nesting pair of osprey on Kent Island, and was incredibly popular, with more than 500,000 viewers from 123 countries worldwide in 2014.

## CHARTING a TRAIL of ECO-AWARENESS



### Virtual Tour of the Susquehanna River

The Chesapeake Conservancy has partnered with Envision the Susquehanna on a unique project that allows people to explore the Susquehanna River, the East Coast's longest river, by taking a virtual tour. A one-of-a-kind boat, built by Richmond, Virginia-based Terrain360,

and equipped with cameras, captures high-resolution, 360-degree images along the entire length of the river. Images are taken every 50 feet by six cameras mounted on the boat 10 feet above the water's surface and create a digital map of the river, which is accessible via the Internet.

The virtual tour of the Susquehanna River is expected to be available to the public in late 2015 on the Chesapeake Conservancy's website at [chesapeakeconservancy.org](http://chesapeakeconservancy.org). In addition, the Chesapeake Conservancy hopes to expand the virtual tour of the Susquehanna to the entire Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail.

"What's exciting for me personally is our use of technology in our efforts to conserve and protect the Bay for future generations," says Jeff Allenby, director of conservation innovation for the Chesapeake Conservancy. "Not everyone can get out and enjoy the Bay as often as they'd like, but through

technology, we can help bring the Bay to them through opportunities such as our wildlife webcams, Captain John Smith Trail virtual map, and virtual tour of the Susquehanna River. We're also finding new ways through cutting-edge technology to make conservation more efficient and yield a greater impact with fewer resources, such as time and money."

### GOAL 2: CONSERVE

In order to protect the Chesapeake Bay for present and future generations, large-scale conservation efforts are critical. According to the Chesapeake Conservancy, more than six million acres (45 percent) of the forest and wetland resources in the watershed are vulnerable to development, and forests are converted at a rate of about 100 acres a day. The Chesapeake Conservancy advocates for the conservation of landscapes, waterways, shorelines, wildlife habitat, and cultural resources. To achieve this goal,

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## CHARTING a TRAIL of ECO-AWARENESS

the organization works to protect land, expand funding resources, enhance market-based solutions, foster community-based conservation, and develop customized analysis and planning.

"We're in the middle of a profound watershed-wide ecosystem collapse," Dunn says. "The Chesapeake region, which has a population approaching 18 million and climbing, is experiencing rapid conversion of open space, deforestation, and dangerously poor water quality. Despite one of America's longest and most intensely coordinated efforts to protect and restore the estuary, in general, the ecosystem's health and productivity continue to sharply decline. Now more than ever, we as a community hold the power to protect or destroy the place we love. How we take the next step is the crux of our challenge. We need to be wildly creative and achieve a collective impact. This requires

unprecedented collaboration, new tools, and strong community engagement."

### Precision Conservation

To address the serious issues facing the Chesapeake Bay watershed, it's critical to reassess the ways in which conservation is approached. This requires utilizing the latest high-resolution datasets to target and implement best management practices.

According to Dunn, one promising mechanism is the use of emerging technology and conservation science integrated with community-based conservation. The Chesapeake Conservancy is pioneering the application of emerging technologies and high-resolution aerial imagery and elevation data to develop new information to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of conservation and restoration practices throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

This approach, called precision conservation, involves "getting the right practices, in the right place, at the right scale." By implementing precision conservation, the Chesapeake Conservancy works to provide communities with the information they need to make evidence-based decisions.

"With tens of thousands of acres of forest and wetland vanishing each year, persistent pollution problems, and the looming impacts of climate change, now is the time to work together," Dunn says. "Through a good strategy of better science, technology, collaboration, and funding, the Chesapeake Conservancy is advancing collective action for the Chesapeake."

### GOAL 3: RESTORE

The Chesapeake Conservancy partners with public agencies, nonprofit organizations,

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and private landowners to restore vital natural resources, such as forests and wetlands. The organization works to achieve this goal by developing new science and using cutting-edge technology to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of restoration projects.

*Continued on page 70*



## GET INVOLVED

### CONNECT WITH THE CHESAPEAKE CONSERVANCY

To learn more about the Chesapeake Conservancy and the important work it does, visit [chesapeakeconservancy.org](http://chesapeakeconservancy.org). You can also follow the organization on Facebook and Twitter.

### EXPLORE THE CHESAPEAKE BAY

To encourage interest in the Chesapeake Bay, the Chesapeake Conservancy creates a weekly e-newsletter called "Trips & Tips," which highlights exciting events taking place in the region.

To sign up to receive it, visit [chesapeakeconservancy.org/Trips-and-Tips](http://chesapeakeconservancy.org/Trips-and-Tips).

### MAKE A DIFFERENCE

As a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, the Chesapeake Conservancy relies on the generosity of citizens like you who love the Chesapeake Bay. You can help support the organization by making a donation. Your gift is greatly appreciated.

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## CHARTING a TRAIL of ECO-AWARENESS

For the past several years, the Chesapeake Conservancy has built partnerships, developed data for conservation, and fostered funding mechanisms for land conservation and restoration, which has led to the protection of new lands and the creation of more public access. Its work with its partners has resulted in the development of new trails, parks, and wildlife refuges throughout the Chesapeake region.

One restoration project in which the Chesapeake Conservancy had the opportunity to play a significant role was a large tree-planting project at Kent County High School and Worton Park. Called the "Treemendous Project," it involved the planting of various trees, shrubs, and flowers throughout the two areas. A collaboration between the high school, the Chester River Association, the Chesapeake Conservancy, and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the project was made possible by a grant from the DNR. The Chesapeake Conservancy, which became involved in the project because it wanted to implement the use of a modern geographic information system to work on the water flow for the two sites.

### Future Outlook

Although the Chesapeake Bay will never look the way it did when Smith first laid eyes on it, the Chesapeake Conservancy and its partners are dedicated to implementing innovative strategies to make the Bay healthier for present and future generations to enjoy.

"My vision [for the future] is for people to live in harmony with the Chesapeake Bay," Dunn says. "I also like the idea that my two-month-old daughter, Harper, will one day run along the shore of a park we helped create, climb a tree in a forest that we helped plant, and watch a monarch butterfly or osprey fly by because of our work. It's rewarding to think that she will have the same opportunities to enjoy this beautiful place that I did when I was a kid." ♦

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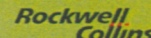
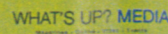
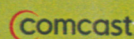
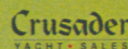
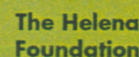
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