

Shorelines

Saving the Chesapeake's Great Rivers and Special Places



Chesapeake National Recreation Area Advances
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From the President & CEO

An Idea Whose Time Has Come

Many have long dreamed of National Park Service recognition for the Chesapeake Bay. In 1986, an editorial titled “Chesapeake Bay National Park Is a Good Idea,” appeared in *The Capital Gazette*. The editorial states, “The point is that a Chesapeake Bay National Park is no more far-fetched than the Cape Cod National Seashore, or Acadia National Park in Maine, or the Smoky Mountains National Park along the Blue Ridge. ... We think that a Chesapeake Bay National Park is an excellent idea. It would bring access and use of the bay under one of the best federal agencies in the country, the National Park Service.”

Although the National Park Service has had a Chesapeake Bay office in Annapolis for two decades to coordinate the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network, administer two national historic trails and partner with Bay restoration initiatives, status as an actual unit of the National Park System has been elusive. That dream advanced significantly last month when U.S. Sen. Chris Van Hollen and Rep. John Sarbanes were joined by members of a congressional working group to announce and invite public comment on draft legislation that would create a unified Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA).

The crowd that gathered for the press conference included long-time advocates for the Chesapeake Bay, as well as new leaders and others who have joined the Chesapeake restoration movement. We stood in solidarity for this watershed moment: inclusion of the Chesapeake Bay among the national parks, monuments and recreation areas that recognize and honor some of the most cherished landscapes in our nation.

One of the faces in the audience was that of Ann Swanson, who had just retired after more than 34 years as executive director of the Chesapeake Bay Commission. A tireless advocate for the Chesapeake Bay, a founding board member of Chesapeake Conservancy and the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership and a mentor for me personally, Ann has been a key supporter for the CNRA. We were struck by the symbolism of the draft legislation being announced the same week as her retirement party.



Chesapeake Conservancy President & CEO Joel Dunn
PHOTO BY CHRISTINA HAMILTON

In a statement to be entered into the Congressional Record, Rep. Sarbanes said: “Ms. Swanson’s dedication to and effectiveness in conserving the Chesapeake Bay has made her a well-respected figure in the environmental restoration community and beyond. Trained as a wildlife biologist and forest ecologist, she has been awarded honors such as Admiral of the Chesapeake by the State of Maryland, the Chesapeake Bay Environmental Leadership Award from the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Chesapeake Conservancy and an Honorary Doctor of Laws from her alma mater, the University of Vermont. ... All of us in its watershed owe her a debt of gratitude for her tireless efforts to improve the Bay, recognizing that when the environment thrives, so do our communities.”

Please join Chesapeake Conservancy in thanking Ann Swanson for her service and Sen. Van Hollen and Rep. Sarbanes for their leadership on the proposed CNRA. Take a moment to submit your public comment on the draft legislation at

www.vanhollen.senate.gov/cnra. It is our hope that supportive comments come from every corner of the watershed!

Sincerely,

A blue ink signature of Joel E. Dunn, written in a cursive style.

JOEL E. DUNN, President and CEO



Maryland Governor Larry Hogan (center) joins Constellation representatives, elected officials, partners and community members to celebrate the permanent protection of 300 acres near the Conowingo Dam. PHOTO BY MARYLAND GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

Susquehanna Success! 300 Acres Along Chesapeake Trail Protected Forever; Parks Expanded

In October, Constellation helped make a dream come true for communities along the Susquehanna River, and Chesapeake Conservancy saw the vision of our founding board member Patrick Noonan, founder and chairman emeritus of The Conservation Fund, come to fruition.

The donation of land near the Conowingo Dam along the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail (Chesapeake Trail) will help expand local, state and national parks.

“Constellation’s donation of land to support recreation and conservation is a great example of what we can accomplish when we work together,” said Maryland Governor Larry Hogan.

“This donation builds on Constellation’s ongoing sustainability leadership, including advancing environmental stewardship, protecting local wildlife, and supporting local recreational opportunities,” said Kathleen Barrón, Constellation’s chief strategy officer.

“As a Maryland company and as owner and operator of the Conowingo Dam, the state’s largest source of renewable energy, Constellation’s donation will complement our existing investments in environmental programs and projects that directly benefit water quality, aquatic life and recreational resources of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, particularly locally here along the banks of the Lower Susquehanna.”

The land donation is a collaborative effort between Constellation, the State of Maryland, and local, county and state conservation and environmental agencies and nonprofit organizations, including Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Park Service, Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway, Inc., Port Deposit, Havre de Grace, Harford Land Trust, Cecil Land Trust and Chesapeake Conservancy.

“The donation of this land will expand Susquehanna State Park and local parks in Havre de Grace and Port Deposit.

It is a dream come true for local communities and park enthusiasts,” said Joel Dunn, president and CEO of Chesapeake Conservancy. “Thanks to Gov. Hogan and Constellation, this critical habitat and world-class outdoor recreation opportunity will never be lost to development, and there will be more public access to the Susquehanna River. We commend Constellation for choosing conservation and recreation for the future of this land.”

The property will become part of local, state and national park systems and conservation projects consisting of parks, trails and other public lands in the Chesapeake Bay watershed that bring national and international attention to the Bay’s significant natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources. The donated land will be permanently preserved for conservation purposes for the benefit of the public. Such protection will promote healthy ecosystems and habitats, bolster environmental stewardship and literacy and support climate resiliency.



Sen. Van Hollen makes remarks at a press conference announcing draft legislation for the CNRA. Behind, from left to right: Rep. John Sarbanes, Anne Arundel County Executive Steuart Pittman, Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation President & Founder Vince Leggett, Blue Oyster Founder Johnny Shockley, Maryland State Senator Sarah Elfreth, Annapolis Mayor Gavin Buckley and Chesapeake Conservancy President & CEO Joel Dunn PHOTO BY ANNE DELANO WEATHERSBY/PLAY BACK SHOTS

Major Step Forward for the Chesapeake National Recreation Area

Draft Legislation Shared, Public Comment Requested

At a November press conference overlooking the Chesapeake Bay, U.S. Sen. Chris Van Hollen and Rep. John Sarbanes were joined by members of a congressional working group to announce draft legislation that would create a unified Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) and to invite public comment on the proposal.

State and local officials, economic leaders, watermen, advocates for conservation and others were on hand to share their support of the proposed CNRA, which would be a land-based, 21st-century park, uniting new and existing National Park Service (NPS) sites and trails, as well as partner parks, to increase public access to the Chesapeake Bay and to create a national-park-worthy visitor experience for all to enjoy.

A July 2022 public opinion poll showed profound support for National Park Service status for the Chesapeake, with 83% of Maryland, Virginia and Washington, DC, respondents in favor of establishing the CNRA.

“After years of work with our committed partners who treasure the Bay and its bounty, we are proud to present a proposal that will spotlight its unique story and historical significance, generate more prosperity for those who make their livelihood from it, leverage more federal investment and encourage greater public access to the Bay’s beauty and cultural landmarks,” said Sen. Van Hollen.

“The release of this discussion draft is just the beginning – we look forward to continuing our engagement with all community stakeholders to get their input on how we can build on this foundation to create a Chesapeake National Recreation Area to achieve our goal of bringing national recognition and greater opportunities to our Bay region,” continued Sen. Van Hollen.

“The Chesapeake National Recreation Area will elevate the collective consciousness and appreciation for the Chesapeake Bay. By combining sites that embody what the Bay means to Marylanders, our region and our country with the expertise of the National

Park Service, this project will direct more resources to the Bay, improve public access and promote environmental stewardship,” said Rep Sarbanes.

“Public engagement has been a hallmark of this undertaking so far. Today’s announcement is the product of great collaboration and creativity among the Chesapeake Bay leaders and members of Congress in our working group. Senator Van Hollen and I are grateful for their continued input, and we look forward to incorporating the public comments into our draft legislation. Alongside our guiding principles, these comments will help inform our decisions and create a National Recreation Area that lifts up this cherished national treasure,” continued Rep. Sarbanes.

“The Chesapeake Bay, our nation’s largest estuary, is a national treasure. The Chesapeake is the birthplace of American identity and the landscape that bore witness to the many diverse people who have lived along its shores, including the Indigenous peoples who lived here for thousands of



years before the Europeans arrived, free and enslaved Blacks, and the watermen and women who've all played a vital role in the story of our Chesapeake Bay. Their stories are worthy of National Park Service interpretation and education," said Chesapeake Conservancy President and CEO Joel Dunn.

Chesapeake Conservancy is grateful to the other members of the coalition advocating for the CNRA and for the financial supporters

of our efforts, including the TeraWulf Charitable Foundation, the Bay Bridge Run and the nearly 150 people who supported Chesapeake Conservancy's team.

Join the call for the creation of the proposed CNRA! Learn more and sign the petition at united4cnra.com and review draft legislation and provide public comment at www.vanhollen.senate.gov/cnra.

2022 Champions of the Chesapeake

Since 2014, Chesapeake Conservancy's annual Champions of the Chesapeake awards have recognized individuals and organizations for exemplary leadership and dedication to protecting and restoring the Chesapeake's natural systems and cultural resources. We are honored to present the 2022 Champions of the Chesapeake awards to Rappahannock Tribe Chief Anne Richardson and Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation President and Founder Vince Leggett.

In announcing the awards, Chesapeake Conservancy President and CEO Joel Dunn stated: "Chief Richardson and Vince Leggett were the driving forces and incredible partners behind two of the most significant conservation achievements in the Chesapeake this year."

Chief Anne Richardson has been instrumental in the return to the Rappahannock Tribe of a 465-acre sacred site at Fones Cliffs on the eastern side of the Rappahannock River. The site will be permanently protected by a conservation easement and used for recreation and education.

Vince Leggett is recognized for his efforts of more than 15 years to preserve Black history and culture on the Chesapeake Bay. Specifically, his work with Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation resulted this spring in preservation of Elktonia Beach as a city park for Annapolis, MD, to provide direct public access to the Chesapeake and a place to interpret the area's rich African-American heritage.



The awards will be presented at the Chesapeake Conservancy's December board meeting. In a statement congratulating this year's recipients, Joel Dunn noted: "It is our honor to present this prestigious award to these two individuals who have exemplified what it means to be a Champion of the Chesapeake through inclusivity, passion and collaboration."

(See the spring 2022 *Shorelines* for additional information on the work of this year's Champions of the Chesapeake.)



Rappahannock Tribe Chief Anne Richardson
PHOTO BY ZHIVKO ILLEIEFF/THE CONSERVATION FUND



Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation President & Founder Vince Leggett
COURTESY PHOTO

Good News for Maryland's Forests but Challenges Remain

Released in November, a new study found that forest conservation measures successfully reduced Maryland forest loss 30 years after the Forest Conservation Act, but challenges remain. The anniversary marks an important occasion to recognize the successes of Maryland's forest protection legislation and reflect on opportunities to further leverage forests and tree canopy to enhance benefits for habitat, water quality protection, climate resilience and mitigation, human health and environmental justice.

The *Technical Study on Changes in Forest Cover and Tree Canopy in Maryland*, or Maryland Forest Technical Study, uses high-resolution data to analyze forest and tree canopy change at the local scale and provides a greater understanding of the key drivers of change. The most comprehensive study of Maryland's forest cover and tree canopy finds that over time, Maryland's rate of forest loss has declined, and the state is approaching a goal of achieving no net forest loss. With priorities focused on tree plantings and increased funding available for land protection and agricultural conservation practices, Maryland has the opportunity to achieve no net forest loss soon and tip the balance towards forest gain.

The Maryland Senate enacted a bill authorizing the study in 2019. The study was commissioned by the Harry R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology and conducted together with Chesapeake Conservancy and the University of Vermont Spatial Analysis Lab in consultation with the Chesapeake Bay Program and an advisory committee comprised of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Department of the Environment, Department of Planning, Department of Agriculture and the Chesapeake Bay Program.

At regional and county scales, patterns of forest change vary widely, and some concerning trends continue. Counties in central Maryland with rapid development and population growth experienced greater rates of loss, especially loss associated with development. While forest levels as a whole are stabilizing, continued urbanization is fragmenting forests and encouraging spread of invasive species. Fragmentation and invasive species spread are likely to continue, given current patterns of change, especially in rapidly growing areas of the state.



Technical Study on Changes in Forest Cover and Tree Canopy in Maryland

November 2022



Harry R. Hughes
CENTER FOR AGRO-ECOLOGY



COLLEGE OF
AGRICULTURE &
NATURAL RESOURCES



Chesapeake
Conservancy



University of Vermont
Spatial Analysis Lab

“The findings from this study are key for decision-makers at both the statewide and local levels as they consider future strategies for trees and forests,” said Dr. Kate Everts, executive director of Harry R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology. “This study comes at a critical time in Maryland as populations continue to increase and as we consider the future of Chesapeake Bay restoration. The Hughes Center is grateful for the opportunity to release this study and help tell the story of changes among our forests and trees so that science-based decisions can drive Maryland’s approach to protect them into the future.”

“It is notable that since 2000, forest loss slowed across Maryland while population grew nearly 17% and areas of loss are concentrated in a few rapidly growing counties,” said Chesapeake Conservancy’s Vice President for Climate Strategy Susan Minnemeyer. “This study provides key insights into tangible progress in increasing tree cover and tools local governments can use for planning future forest investments. Forests are green infrastructure for strengthening our communities, providing clean water and greater climate resilience.”

To review the methods and read the study in its entirety, visit www.chesapeakeconservancy.org/mdforeststudy2022

Bay Bridge Run Raises \$17,000

This year, the Bay Bridge Run warmly welcomed Chesapeake Conservancy as an official charity partner, with team proceeds benefiting advocacy efforts for the proposed Chesapeake National Recreation Area. The 10k race happens only once a year and is a rare opportunity for participants to walk or run the 4.35-mile-long Chesapeake Bay Bridge, which is typically closed to pedestrians. Chesapeake Conservancy team members raised nearly \$17,000 from 140 supporters! The Bay Bridge Run also presented Chesapeake Conservancy with a \$2,500 donation.

“We are so grateful to our team participants and their donors, our corporate partners including Beveridge & Diamond, Ad Hoc, Andrews Land Surveying and District Concrete and to the Bay Bridge Run,” said Chesapeake Conservancy’s Director of Individual and Major Gifts J.T. Dean. “We hope you will join us next year for this one-of-a-kind experience that allows participants to enjoy a national treasure, the Chesapeake Bay.”



Chesapeake Bay Program Director Dr. Kandis Boyd (second from left) joins a few of the Chesapeake Conservancy Bay Bridge Run team participants.

PHOTO BY MATTHEW PROVOST



Beveridge
& Diamond



ANDREWS
LAND SURVEYING

Ad Hoc

DISTRICT CONCRETE

Conservancy Board & Staff News

Congratulations to Chesapeake Conservancy board member **Richard Batiuk** and former board member **John Neely**, who co-created the vision for the Maryland Fly Fishing Trail. Launched by Fish & Hunt Maryland in October, the first statewide fly fishing trail in the nation features 48 sites, 2 sites in each of Maryland’s 23 counties and Baltimore City. Among its goals: introduce more women, younger anglers and people of color to everything that fly fishing has to offer as an outdoor experience.

Chesapeake Conservancy welcomes Director of Institutional Giving **Allison Anderson**, Chesapeake Conservation Corps member **Mike Bonnell**, Project Manager **Sue Buyaskas**, Director of Individual and Major Gifts **J.T. Dean**, Assistant to the Executive Vice President **Sarah Killian**, Communications Associate **Remi Shaull-Thompson**, Live Stake Coordinator

Elizabeth Reitzloff with the CORE Susquehanna AmeriCorps and Acting Director of the Conservation Innovation Center **Steve Storck**. Former Chesapeake Conservation Corps member **Shannon Thomas** joined Chesapeake Conservancy full-time as project coordinator.

Susan Minnemeyer has taken on a new role as vice president for climate strategy. Please join us in congratulating **Carly Dean**, promoted to director of Chesapeake tributary strategies, **Adrienne Gemberling**, promoted to program manager and **Patrick McCabe**, promoted to senior geospatial analyst.

Thank you to **Julian Segovia**, **Ivis Rica Chavez** and **William Urvina** for their service as seasonal bilingual interpretive outreach assistants and to **Ja’Bria Oliver**, multimedia production intern.



Maryland launches first statewide fly fishing trail.
PHOTO BY RICH BATIUK

Lastly, we extend our heartfelt thanks to **Emily Wiggins** who has left to pursue other professional opportunities.



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USE YOUR REAL ESTATE TO LEAVE A LEGACY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

One of the most significant ways you can leave a legacy for future generations while enjoying tax savings is by choosing Chesapeake Conservancy as the next steward of your land. As development encroaches on the last open spaces in the Chesapeake watershed, we encourage landowners to consider Chesapeake Conservancy's Gift Lands program. This is the greatest gift that you can leave behind.

This is your legacy. For more information, contact Matt Provost at mprovost@chesapeakeconservancy.org.



PHOTO BY WILL THOMAS