

CHESAPEAKE CONSERVANCY

WINTER 2023 NEWSLETTER

Shorelines

Saving the Chesapeake's Great Rivers and Special Places



Moulton Park: A Tale of Conservation & Community

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From the President & CEO

A Massive but Achievable Undertaking

Just six months ago, July was Earth's hottest month on record, and deadly wildfires raged around the globe. Canadian wildfires led to unhealthy air for people in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and much of the eastern United States. Officials advised us to avoid going outside and to wear heavy-duty masks.

As we saw then, and we see every day, the threat of global warming is urgent and significant. The world's leading scientists are calling for dramatic increases in conservation efforts to conserve 30% of the Earth's lands and waters by 2030, which President Biden responded to with an executive order for the United States. Chesapeake Conservancy is in this race against time to protect 30% of the Chesapeake watershed by 2030. In this pursuit of 30 x 30, our efforts must focus on equity in conservation. The arc of conservation includes the history and culture of all people in the Chesapeake.

To get there, we're working both smarter and harder using groundbreaking high-resolution land use and land cover data and machine learning to practice precision conservation. This means we're helping the entire Chesapeake conservation movement by identifying exactly where the priority lands are that need to be conserved to have the most impact on water quality. See the solar mapping article on page 6 for just one example of how our work can influence the future of conservation in the watershed.

Since 2010, Chesapeake stakeholders have been working hard on the goal of protecting an additional 2 million acres by 2025, which is the Protected Land Outcome in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. Using the latest data and technology, Chesapeake Conservancy's geospatial analysts assessed the land conservation progress for the Chesapeake Bay Program and determined that as of 2022, nearly 1.64 million acres have been added, achieving 82% of that goal.

The good news is that the data shows that we're largely on track to meet the 2025 goal, but the reality is that it's time to move the goalpost. Data show that 9.1 million acres of land in the Chesapeake Bay watershed—22% of the total land in the region—are permanently protected from development. To protect 30% of the Chesapeake by 2030, we will need to increase the annual rate of conservation by 350%! It's a massive but achievable undertaking and one that is paramount to the future sustainability of our watershed.

With your help, we can do it.

Joel E. Dunn
President & CEO

On November 12, Chesapeake Conservancy team members participating in the Bay Bridge Run **raised more than \$25,000!** The Bay Bridge Run also presented Chesapeake Conservancy with a **\$2,500 donation.**



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Partial group photo of Chesapeake Conservancy team at the finishing line tent PHOTO BY J.T. DEAN

Chesapeake National Recreation Area Legislation Introduced!

An idea for the Chesapeake that has circulated for decades took a major step toward reality this summer. U.S. Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) and Rep. John Sarbanes (D-Md.) introduced the Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act (S. 2620 and H.R. 5035), which, if passed into law, would create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA). The CNRA 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 create a national park-worthy visitor experience for all to enjoy.

“Thank you, Senator Van Hollen and Congressman Sarbanes, for making a more than 30-year-long dream come true. The Chesapeake Bay is as spectacular as Yellowstone or Yosemite, as great as the Great Smokies and as grand as the Grand Tetons,” said Chesapeake Conservancy President and CEO Joel Dunn. “Establishing the Chesapeake National Recreation Area expands resources for environmental protection and makes it clear that the United States cherishes the Chesapeake, the birthplace of American identity. As a great gift to future generations, this legislation ensures everyone’s right to visit and recreate on our nation’s largest estuary while balancing the needs of those who live here and depend on the Bay for their livelihood.”

A July 2022 public opinion poll showed profound support for NPS status for the Chesapeake, with 83% of Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C., respondents in favor of establishing a CNRA, a key legislative priority for Chesapeake Conservancy and the United for CNRA coalition.

Co-sponsors of the legislation include Sens. Ben Cardin (D-Md.), Tim Kaine (D-Va.) and Mark Warner (D-Va.) and Reps. Don Beyer (D-Va.), Gerry Connolly (D-Va.), Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), Glenn Ivey (D-Md.), Jennifer Kiggans (R-Va.), Jennifer McClellan (D-Va.), Kweisi Mfume (D-Md.), Joe Neguse (D-Colo.), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.), Jamie Raskin (D-Md.), Dutch Ruppersberger (D-Md.), Bobby Scott (D-Va.), David Trone (D-Md.), Jennifer Wexton (D-Va.) and Rob Wittman (R-Va.).

To learn more, visit united4cnra.com.



PHOTO BY PETER TURCIK

Earl Conservation Center

Thanks to the generosity of James and Sylvia Earl and family, Chesapeake Conservancy and other nonprofits will share a new space for collaboration at the Earl Conservation Center located at 1212 West Street, Annapolis, Maryland.

“The Earl family’s gift creates a lasting legacy that will benefit Chesapeake conservation for many generations to come,” said Chesapeake Conservancy President and CEO Joel Dunn. “We are beyond grateful for their generosity, which will take some of the pressures and burdens off small area nonprofits whose work is critical to protect our environment.”

The team looks forward to enjoying the new space after renovations are completed in early 2024. Chesapeake Conservancy Chief Operating Officer EJ Amyot welcomes inquiries about the Earl Conservation Center at:

ejamyot@chesapeakeconservancy.org



PHOTO BY SUE BUYASKAS



PHOTO BY MICHAEL WEISS

Family's Decision to Conserve 82-Acre Farm Expands Moulton Park

A Tale of Conservation and Community

By Jamal Childs, *Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps Member*

In an era when urban sprawl and development relentlessly encroach upon the natural world, a shining example of conservation and community collaboration emerges along the banks of the Shenandoah River in Jefferson County, West Virginia. It was here that the Moulton family's remarkable act of generosity resulted in the addition of 82 acres of pristine farmland, forest and riverfront to Moulton Park, not merely preserving a piece of family heritage, but expanding it for the benefit of the entire community.

This endeavor, realized through a "bargain sale" (below fair market value), was made possible by a collective effort involving the Moulton family, Chesapeake Conservancy, West Virginia Land Trust and Jefferson County Parks and Recreation (JCPRC), bolstered by substantial support from the West Virginia Outdoor Heritage Conservation Fund.

The Moulton Legacy: A Stewardship of the Land

The Moulton family's connection to this land runs deep, stretching back four generations. They donated the original three acres of Moulton Park to JCPRC in 1976 to ensure ongoing public access and recreation. Nearly 50 years later, the family's generosity continued, and the June 2023 bargain sale of their adjacent 82-acre farm has now expanded Moulton Park, a county park near Charles Town. The family added conservation goals, stipulating that the land be managed for watershed protection, education, native species protection and soil and forest regeneration, in addition to the family's legacy of creating recreation opportunities and public access.

Their 82-acre farm, nestled along the picturesque Shenandoah River, was a crucial element in the growth of the family's conservation ethic. What started as a beautiful piece of property became



Emma Moulton Huvos, a fourth generation family member, speaks during a ribbon cutting event for the park expansion in August.

PHOTO BY VIRGINIA JOHNSTON

a cherished part of their identity and a treasured resource to preserve for others to enjoy. Over nearly eight decades, it served as a home, a business and a sanctuary and also welcomed many gatherings. In the process, it became a canvas for countless memories.

Yet, as the inexorable march of development loomed, the Moulton family faced a pivotal decision—whether to sell their land for potential development or to take a principled stand for conservation. Their decision to choose the latter demonstrates an unwavering commitment to preserving not only their family's heritage but also the natural beauty and ecological resources of this region.

"We worked with Chesapeake Conservancy to permanently protect our 82-acre farm in Jefferson County, West Virginia. We deeply appreciate the extensive knowledge, skills

and experience the Conservancy brings to protecting the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed and are very grateful for their support and guidance. Four generations of our family have had the privilege of calling this beautiful piece of land home," said Brucie Moulton. "We have all loved the place immensely and none of us could bear the idea of development, however profitable it might have been."

Is your family considering conservation for your land? Contact Chesapeake Conservancy's Senior Vice President of Development and Business Strategy Matt Provost to learn more about our Giftlands program at:

mprovost@chesapeakeconservancy.org.



2023 Champions of the Chesapeake

A remarkable 14-year-old girl who stood up for a forest and a family who created a lasting legacy for conservation are the 2023 Champions of the Chesapeake. Chesapeake Conservancy is honored to present the prestigious awards to Nethra Purushothaman and James and Sylvia Earl.



Nethra Purushothaman
COURTESY PHOTO

A small group of Girl Scouts, led by 14-year-old Nethra Purushothaman, challenged the Girl Scouts National Capital Council on their plans to sell hundreds of acres of forested habitat in Prince George's County, Maryland, for development. Nethra and her friends stood up for East Marlton Forest.

With some mentoring from Chesapeake Conservancy and Sierra Club of Maryland, it appears these big little heroes were victorious, and most of the land will become part of the Charles Branch Stream Valley Park. Look for an update on East Marlton Forest in a future edition of *Shorelines*.



James and Sylvia Earl PHOTO BY JOEL DUNN

James and Sylvia Earl are long-time supporters of Chesapeake Conservancy. Their decision to leave a lasting legacy by providing a workspace for local conservation nonprofits will profoundly affect Chesapeake conservation for generations to come (see *Earl Conservation Center*, page 3).

As Chesapeake Conservancy knows, one of the most difficult challenges nonprofits face is fundraising for overhead costs, such as rent. By enabling the Conservancy to acquire its own building, the Earl family gift will relieve several local nonprofits of that burden, as well as provide space for collaboration and sharing resources. Chesapeake Conservancy is forever grateful for their support of our important work.



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There's something for the whole family (even Fido) at our new online store!

shopchesapeakeconservancy.org

Gather and Grow! \$2 Million Grant Will Increase Urban Forests

Trees provide a variety of benefits including mitigating the impacts of climate change. As communities increase tree plantings to boost resilience, there is a growing need for skilled workers. Fortunately, a new grant from the Urban and Community Forestry Program made possible by the Inflation Reduction Act, provides Chesapeake Conservancy and our workforce development and university partners with \$2 million to train the next generation of conservationists with hands-on experience. Called "Gather and Grow," the partnership will train hundreds of young people, expand the use of native plant material and plant thousands of trees in disadvantaged communities across Central Maryland and Pennsylvania. For more information, contact Carly Dean at cdean@chesapeakeconservancy.org.



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Urban trees and forests help mitigate extreme heat, conserve energy, provide shade, absorb storm water, create wildlife habitat and filter air and water.

PHOTO BY USDA PHOTO SERVICE

First of Its Kind Map Shows Growth of Solar Power in Chesapeake Bay Watershed

With funding support from the Grayce B. Kerr Fund, Inc., Chesapeake Conservancy's data science team developed a deep learning model that automatically maps ground-mounted solar arrays in satellite imagery. Using this Artificial Intelligence system, annual maps were created of all solar arrays within Washington, D.C., Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Virginia and West Virginia from 2017 to 2022. This dataset is the first of its kind and is publicly accessible. The results were published in the peer-reviewed journal *Biological Conservation* (July 2023).

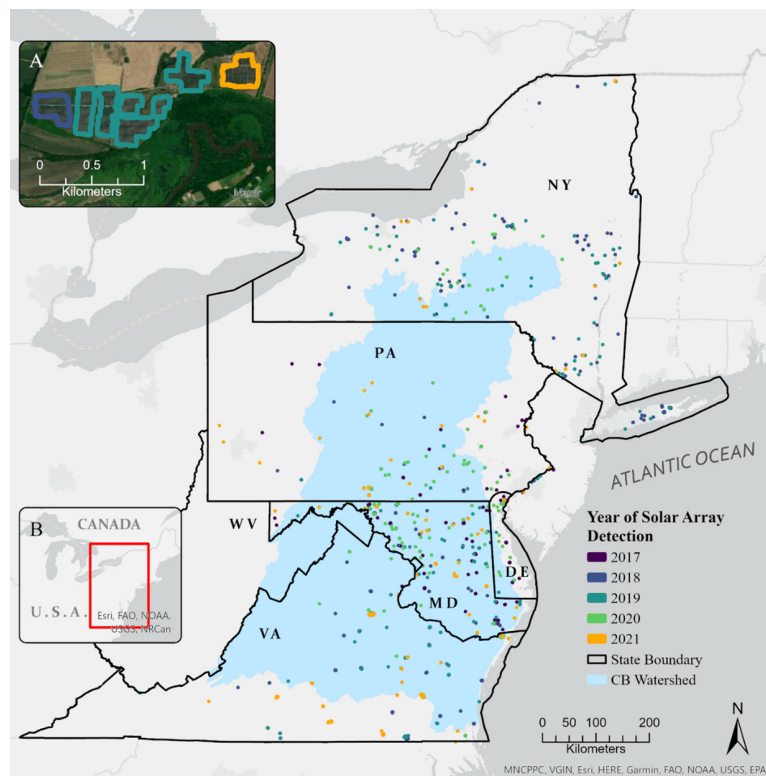
"We thank the Grayce B. Kerr Fund, Inc., for helping us create data that can empower government leaders, land use planners and conservation professionals in the region," said Michael Evans, Ph.D., a senior data scientist with Chesapeake Conservancy's Conservation Innovation Center (CIC). "These data reveal the land use transitions associated with past solar energy growth, and the transitions we're likely to see in the future if those trends continue."

Findings

Among the findings: the six states and District of Columbia have been adding solar capacity at different rates, with Maryland and Virginia expanding most rapidly. Thus far, solar arrays have primarily replaced cultivated areas, including agricultural fields, pasture and timber lands, while avoiding more natural land cover like deciduous forests and wetlands. Agriculture was both the



A solar array near Radcliffe Creek in Kent County, Maryland PHOTO BY WILL PARSON/CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM



most frequently converted land use in terms of total area and showed the highest strength of selection in terms of area converted to solar in proportion to available area.

"From a conservation perspective, we were encouraged to see natural areas being avoided over the past six years. In places where solar is replacing previously degraded land cover, these facilities may also present a unique opportunity to restore biodiversity and ecosystem services in the watershed if native vegetation is maintained in areas under and around arrays" continued Dr. Evans.

Coauthors of the article with Evans are Chesapeake Conservancy's Data Science Lead/Senior Data Scientist Kumar Mainali, Ph.D., and three former Chesapeake Conservancy team members who have since pursued other professional opportunities: Geospatial Program Manager Rachel Soobitsky, Geospatial Technology Manager Emily Mills and Vice President of Climate Strategy Susan Minnemeyer.

Read the publication "[Predicting Patterns of Solar Energy Buildout to Identify Opportunities for Biodiversity Conservation](#)" online via [Science Direct](#).

(Left) Solar arrays were mapped for the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Colors indicate the year in which arrays were constructed.

Donor Spotlight

Founded by outdoor recreation industry leaders Kelty, Patagonia, REI and The North Face, The Conservation Alliance (TCA), now 270 members strong, pools their resources to make a collective impact for conservation through grantmaking. Their generosity has led to more than \$31.5 million in grants and the protection of 81 million acres of land.

Nominated by REI, a Rappahannock Tribe and Chesapeake Conservancy partnership project was selected from among 23 finalists by vote of TCA members to receive a \$45,000 grant. The grant will help permanently conserve 703 acres of

Fones Cliffs along the Rappahannock River in Virginia and return this sacred ancestral homeland to the Rappahannock Tribe.

“Being nominated by REI for this opportunity was a win, but winning votes from the employees of the TCA member companies like Patagonia, The North Face, Kelty and more is truly meaningful. Funds from this award will directly support our land back efforts with the Rappahannock Tribe, so having this particular group support us feels incredible,” said Chesapeake Conservancy’s Director of Institutional Giving Allison Anderson.



Fones Cliffs along the Rappahannock River PHOTO BY JEFFREY ALLENBY/CHESAPEAKE CONSERVANCY

Conservancy Board & Staff News



Rising Star Joel Dunn and Rappahannock Tribe Chief Anne Richardson PHOTO BY DUANE BERGER

Chesapeake Conservancy welcomes three new members to the board of directors: Nansemond Tribe **Principal Chief Keith F. Anderson**, **Michelle Bailey Hedgepeth** and **Vibha Jain Miller**. **Thad Bench** and **Beattria Wilson** concluded their board service.

“Our three new board members each bring exceptional leadership skills, and we are grateful that they have chosen to share their wisdom, time and energy with our ambitious nonprofit as we work to protect 30% of the Chesapeake Bay watershed by 2030,” said Chesapeake Conservancy Board Chair Randall Larrimore.

At the 2023 Sovereign Nations of Virginia Conference, **Joel Dunn**, president and CEO of Chesapeake Conservancy, was awarded the “Rising Star Award” and bestowed the name “Red Warrior” by **Chief Anne Richardson**. “This honorable recognition not only represents Joel, but the entirety of the Chesapeake Conservancy’s selfless work, genuine desire to help, and deep sense of understanding. Chesapeake Conservancy is a valued partner and friend to the Rappahannock Community and together we will continue to make our mark,” said Rappahannock Tribe Chief Anne Richardson.

Chesapeake Conservancy announces the following staff additions: Chief Operating Officer **EJ Amyot**, Director of the Conservation Innovation Center (CIC) **Emily Beach**, Chesapeake Conservation and Climate Corps Member **Jamal Childs**, Chesapeake Conservation Partnership (CCP) Program Coordinator **Chase Douglas**, Geospatial Modeler **Steven Guinn** and AmeriCorps Member **Maggie Ritchey**. **Steve Storck** has assumed the role of deputy director of the CIC, and **Ben Alexandro** is now program manager of CCP. **John Griffin**, who previously served as the CCP program manager, now serves as a senior policy advisor to Chesapeake Conservancy.

Lastly, we extend our heartfelt thanks to **Mike Bonnell**, **Reed Perry** and **Elizabeth Reitzloff** who are pursuing other professional opportunities. We thank our seasonal bilingual interpretive outreach assistants: **Renata DiCicco**, **Maggie Krieg**, **Isabel Layton**, **Javier Orellana Ostorga** and **Daniel Salomón** for their service at Sandy Point State Park, Patapsco Valley State Park and North Point State Park, and **Brenden Powers**, an interpretive outreach assistant stationed with the Bureau of Land Management Eastern States at Meadowood Special Recreation Management Area in Virginia. We also thank our summer interns for their service: Development Intern **Ashlynn Burrows**, Chesapeake WILD Coordination, Partnership Intern **Allegra Eyles**, and Natural Resource and Conservation Mapping and Management Intern **Sarah Johnson**.



2023 Bilingual Ranger Seasonal Staff



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Like West Virginia's Moulton family, 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 Giftlands 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.



The Moulton family partnered to expand a park on the Shenandoah River (see story p. 4) PHOTO BY VIRGINIA JOHNSTON