

# CHESAPEAKE CONSERVANCY 2021 WINTER NEWSLETTER

# Shorelines

*Saving the Chesapeake's Great Rivers and Special Places*



**Thank You Bay Paddlers & Donors!**

PHOTO BY JODY COUSER

**DONOR SPOTLIGHT PAGE 7**



## Mission

The Chesapeake Conservancy's mission is to conserve and restore the natural and cultural resources of the Chesapeake Bay watershed for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. We serve as a catalyst for change, advancing strong public and private partnerships, developing and using new technology, and empowering environmental stewardship.

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## From the President & CEO

# Hopeful Signs for Lovers of the Outdoors

It's no secret that enthusiasm for outdoor recreation has reached new heights across the country. Today, the outdoor recreation economy represents about 2.1% of U.S. Gross Domestic Product, accounting for 5.2 million direct jobs and \$788 billion in consumer spending.

The global pandemic has bolstered enthusiasm for outdoor recreation here in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. For example, in Maryland, state parks saw 21.5 million visitors in 2020, a 44% increase over 2019 visitation numbers. While this increase is certainly welcome news for us lovers of the outdoors, parks are struggling to keep up with the demand.

Fortunately, policymakers and conservation stakeholders across the Chesapeake Bay watershed are responding to the outdoor recreation boom with new policy ideas. In Maryland, a new State Park Investment Commission was established in August to assess the current status and needs of Maryland state parks, including staffing, maintenance, the need to expand parks and improve public access.

I had the opportunity to testify before the new commission on behalf of Chesapeake Conservancy on two occasions. I shared our ideas and insights about expanding access and improving the park visitor experience for communities like Maryland's Latino community, and how this fits with the Chesapeake Conservancy's 30% by 2030 conservation goal for the Bay watershed.

In September, a Pennsylvania Senate committee advanced legislation that would provide \$500 million to the Growing Greener Fund.

This funding would go directly to protecting open space and funding park maintenance projects across Pennsylvania, along with providing funding for recreational trails and local parks.

In Virginia, many groups are advocating for a dedicated revenue source for conservation. This would provide much-needed and consistent funding for priorities like recreational trails. It would also fund new programs like a Virginia tribal land program and an African-American land retention program. Virginia's Department of Conservation and Recreation has requested \$12 million to support land conservation for tribal communities and \$10 million to fund the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Preservation Fund. We hope the new Administration and General Assembly in Virginia will keep the momentum moving forward and fund these important initiatives.

The pandemic's impact on public demand for parks and recreation has underscored the great need to invest in new and existing public lands throughout the Bay watershed. Thankfully, policymakers are starting to respond with new ideas and investments for parks and public lands, and Chesapeake Conservancy is ready to support these initiatives.

Sincerely,



JOEL E. DUNN, *President and CEO*



Angela McDardell, local REI brand engagement coordinator, and Joel Dunn PHOTO BY JODY COUSER

## Show Your Support!

You can show your support for the creation of the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA)!

Brought to you through the partnership of REI, The Landmark Project, Chesapeake Conservancy and coalition partners, you can purchase a CNRA t-shirt, poster and sticker from five participating REI locations: REI Rockville, REI Tysons, REI Washington DC Flagship, REI Timonium and REI Columbia. If you can't make it to a local REI, you can purchase items to support the CNRA campaign at [thelandmarkproject.com](http://thelandmarkproject.com).

## Bureau of Land Management Eastern States Commemorates Chesapeake Conservancy Partnership

On October 28, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Eastern States held a ceremony commemorating the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Chesapeake Conservancy and officially opening the new Lower Potomac Field Station Office at the Meadowood Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) in Lorton, Virginia.

"Partnerships are vital to sustain public lands," said Bureau of Land Management Eastern States Director Mitchell Leverette. "We are thrilled that we were able to meet here today to unveil our new building and sign the MOU with the Chesapeake Conservancy, signifying our commitment to continue working together for our shared stakeholders."

The MOU establishes a general framework for cooperation between the BLM and Chesapeake Conservancy. Roles and responsibilities between both parties are clearly defined to preserve, interpret and enhance the enjoyment of the Chesapeake Bay area.

The Meadowood Special Recreation Management Area is an 800-acre mosaic

of meadows, hardwood forests, freshwater ponds and riparian acres that support rich and diverse communities of native flora and fauna. The BLM began its efforts in acquiring the Meadowood SRMA in the late 1990s and obtained property ownership in 2001. The Lower Potomac Field Station Office staff is integral to the success of projects, events, programs and activities conducted at the SRMA.

"We are excited to build on the partnership we have enjoyed with the Bureau of Land Management for several years, beginning with the successful Rivers of the Chesapeake Land and Water Conservation Fund Collaborative Landscapes Initiative that resulted in the expansion of Meadowood by 14 acres," said Chesapeake Conservancy President and CEO Joel Dunn. "We found then that our organizations have much in common when it comes to conserving land, providing recreational and educational opportunities and enhancing environmental stewardship within the Chesapeake. The Memorandum of Understanding that we signed today memorializes our pledge to bolster and sustain our partnership."



*From left to right:* Bureau of Land Management Eastern States Director Mitchell Leverette, Chesapeake Conservancy Executive Vice President Mark Conway, Chesapeake Conservancy President and CEO Joel Dunn, Bureau of Land Management Deputy Director for Operations Mike Nedd and Chesapeake Conservancy Chesapeake Fellow Joe McCauley COURTESY PHOTO

## 270 Acres Conserved in Wicomico County



Approximately 70 acres of agricultural land and 200 acres of forest and forested wetlands are now conserved in an extensive area of protected lands in and around the Quantico Creek Rural Legacy Area. PHOTO BY JARED PARKS/LOWER SHORE LAND TRUST

A 270-acre family-owned farm on Rewastico Creek in Wicomico County, Maryland, is permanently conserved. Announced by the Lower Shore Land Trust (LSLT), this success story highlights the collaborative approach to achieving mutual conservation goals.

Partners included Wicomico County, Maryland Department of Natural Resources Rural Legacy Program, U.S. Navy through the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration program, Chesapeake Conservancy, Mt. Cuba Center, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Healthy Watersheds Consortium.

"The preservation of this farm is a true testament to what can be done when we all come together with a common purpose," said LSLT Land Programs Manager Jared Parks.

"Chesapeake Conservancy is deeply grateful to the many partners who made this conservation success story possible," said Chesapeake Conservancy President and CEO Joel Dunn. "Conservation projects can be very time-consuming, especially during a global pandemic,

but we all kept our eyes on the prize, and thanks to the patience and fortitude of partners like Mt. Cuba Center, we have much to celebrate today. Thank you also to the family for choosing conservation. Future generations will be forever grateful for your legacy."

"Mt. Cuba Center is committed to protecting open spaces and native flora throughout our region," said Ann Rose, Mt. Cuba Center's president.

"We thank the Lower Shore Land Trust and Chesapeake Conservancy for leading this important conservation project, which will preserve these forests, fields and wetlands for generations to come. We are pleased that our support will help save the many plant and animal species that call the Nanticoke River watershed home."



# Conservation “Twofer”

## CIC Virginia Study Shows Efforts to Improve Water Quality Also Counter Climate Warming

A new report, *Climate Benefits of Chesapeake Bay Restoration in Virginia*, released in August by Chesapeake Conservancy's Conservation Innovation Center (CIC) examines how efforts to improve water quality in Virginia's portion of the Chesapeake Bay watershed have also provided a secondary benefit of helping to remove carbon from the atmosphere.

“We wanted to understand better how efforts implemented under the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement to improve water quality in Virginia could also generate significant climate mitigation benefits by removing carbon from the atmosphere and storing it in vegetation or soil,” said Chesapeake Conservancy Vice President of Technology Susan Minnemeyer. “The results showed meaningful co-benefits for climate change leaders to consider when scaling conservation and restoration practices throughout the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed. This is proof that restoration projects that aim to improve water quality are also powerful tools to fight climate change.”

“This estimate corroborates findings in a Virginia Department of Environmental Quality evaluation conducted in 2020 which also included analysis of Virginia's Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan, also known as the WIP,” said Chesapeake Bay Program Manager James Martin. “Our estimates suggest that the water quality actions in Virginia's WIP, when fully implemented, could produce more than 2 million tons of climate mitigation co-benefits while also improving soil health and the resilience of Virginia farms to climate change.”

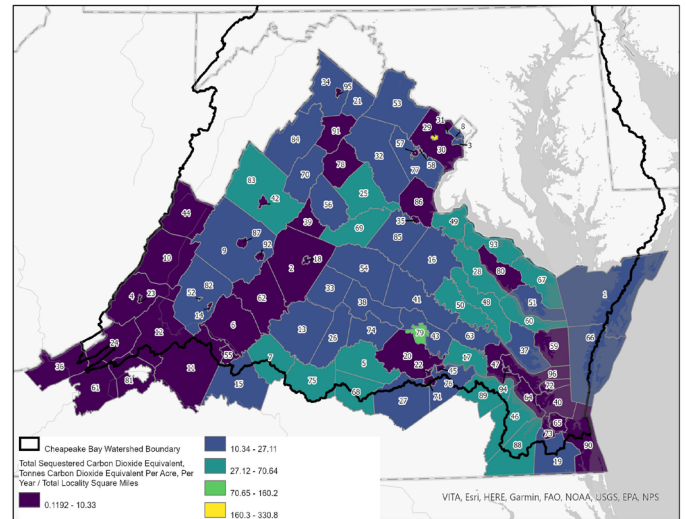
“Based on our analysis for 2019, we estimate that 459,639 tons (416,987 metric tons) of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) equivalent per year are removed from the atmosphere by agricultural conservation practices,” said Chesapeake Conservancy Senior Geospatial Analyst Emily Wiggans.

“This amount equates to the annual carbon sequestration of 510,000 acres of average U.S. forests, or approximately 0.4% of Virginia's energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.”

Results of this study indicate that a large opportunity exists for accelerating climate action within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The 460,000 tons of annual carbon removal benefits generated by ongoing restoration activities within the agricultural sector in Virginia represent a small portion of the potential mitigation that could be generated with targeted planning and additional investment in the practices that promise the greatest co-benefits for water quality improvement and climate mitigation. The Chesapeake Bay Program provides a robust management framework and technical expertise for scaling land-based climate solutions.

### Results

The analysis results showed carbon sequestration from Virginia's 2019 Best Management Practices (BMPs) totaled 459,639 tons (416,987 metric tons) of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent for one year for practices on 1,699,050 acres of agricultural land. Practices that included the establishment of trees and shrubs removed 188,833 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent on 41,646 acres of farmland. The greatest amount of carbon was sequestered in silvopasture, a conservation practice that increases tree canopy coverage to at least 10%. Silvopasture provides shade for livestock, increases climate resiliency, reduces erosion, improves water quality, enhances wildlife habitat and improves soil quality. BMPs that included establishing perennial woody vegetation such as trees and shrubs generated far greater climate mitigation benefits per acre compared to other BMPs such as reduced tillage, cover cropping and fertilizer management.



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Alexandria City	3
Allegheny County	4
Amelia County	5
Amherst County	6
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Arlington County	8
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York County	95

**CIC REPORT ESTIMATES TOTAL CARBON DIOXIDE EQUIVALENTS REMOVED FROM ATMOSPHERE THROUGH BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR VIRGINIA COUNTIES IN 2019.**

However, within Virginia's 3 million acres of cropland, the land area available for tree and shrub establishment is much smaller than the area occupied by crops. Increasing forest and tree canopy cover provides the greatest carbon removal opportunity per acre, while the number of acres available for other agricultural BMPs such as cover crops or reduced tillage is far larger. The total carbon sequestration for cropland conservation practices and herbaceous buffers was 270,807 tons on 1,657,404 acres of land.

Both types of practices enhance soil carbon, while only practices involving the establishment of woody vegetation like trees and shrubs sequester large amounts of carbon above ground.

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## Seaford's Oyster House Park Opens for Visitors

On a beautiful day in July, Chief Dennis Coker of the Lenape Indian Tribe of Delaware offered a land acknowledgment, beginning a celebration to open a new park along the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail (Chesapeake Trail) in Seaford, Delaware.

U.S. Senator Tom Carper (Del.), Seaford Mayor David Genshaw, other elected officials, community members, Chesapeake Conservancy Board Chair Randall Larrimore, President and CEO Joel Dunn and Executive Vice President Mark Conway gathered at the banks of the Nanticoke River to celebrate this conservation success.

Construction on this first phase of Oyster House Park, located at the site of the old J.B. Robinson Oyster House, began last December. The public is now welcome to enjoy the expanded river walk, fishing nooks, performance deck, boat docking facilities and a kayak launch along one of the most pristine rivers of the Chesapeake.

"I was raised in Seaford and started this project to bring people back downtown and help with the revitalization of the city," said Chesapeake Conservancy Chair Larrimore. "The project is also personally rewarding.



Chief Dennis Coker of the Lenape Indian Tribe at the opening of Oyster House Park

PHOTO BY KELSEY EVERETT/CHESAPEAKE GATEWAYS

When I was a child, the river was so polluted; we couldn't swim in it. Sixty years ago, my father was mayor of Seaford and led the effort to build a sewage disposal plant. I am so proud to be helping provide greater access to the pristine Nanticoke River that my father helped clean up. This park is part of our mission to protect 30% of the Chesapeake Bay, which is now 22% protected, by 2030 to meet President Biden's challenge."

Chesapeake Trail, a major focus for Chesapeake Conservancy since the organization's founding, is a 3,000-mile water and land trail that highlights the landscapes of the American Indians who lived in the Chesapeake region, the exploratory voyages of Captain John Smith and his crew 1607 to 1609 and the natural resources of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

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The science underpinning forest carbon sequestration is also more established than that for soil carbon sequestration generated by regenerative agricultural practices. The sheer size in acres of croplands has generated a great amount of interest in the climate benefits of climate-smart agriculture. Research is ongoing to develop greater certainty for soil carbon accounting and to establish protocols for soil carbon enhancement practices to increase confidence in soil carbon enhancement.

### Methodology

The methods set out to determine climate benefits of land-based agricultural BMPs towards Chesapeake Bay restoration in Virginia used the COMET-Planner tool developed by Colorado State University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The COMET-Planner tool estimates greenhouse gas reduction and carbon sequestration benefits based on USDA NRCS Practice Standards in the state and county where the practice is implemented. Extensive greenhouse gas emission reductions result from sectors that were beyond the scope of this study. These include conservation practices for animal agriculture, such as improved livestock and manure management. Chesapeake Bay Program BMPs that increased urban and suburban tree planting, green infrastructure for stormwater management and wetland restoration were not included.

To estimate carbon removal benefits for Virginia BMPs, all recorded BMPs for Virginia within the Chesapeake Bay watershed for the year 2019 were identified.

Next, the corresponding conservation practice as defined by the USDA NRCS were identified, and the COMET-Planner tool was used to estimate total carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e) removed from the atmosphere for the area of that practice per county. Carbon removal benefits were estimated only for agricultural BMPs that could be matched to an NRCS conservation practice.

To read the study in its entirety, visit [chesapeakeconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Climate-Benefits-of-Chesapeake-Bay.pdf](https://chesapeakeconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Climate-Benefits-of-Chesapeake-Bay.pdf)



## Conservancy Board & Staff News



Chesapeake Conservancy President and CEO Joel Dunn (left) and Emeritus Director Charlie Stek (right) PHOTO BY JODY COUSER

In appreciation of his heartfelt dedication and countless hours working to advocate for the designation of Mallows Bay as the Chesapeake's first National Marine Sanctuary, Chesapeake Conservancy presented Emeritus Director **Charlie Stek** with a framed art poster by Maryland artist Max-Karl Winkler.

Board Member **Dr. Mamie Parker** recently facilitated a connection between the Harbor City Links' (HCL) Scholars Program; Coppin State University (CSU), an HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities), and Masonville Cove in Baltimore, the nation's first Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership. Comprising over 16,000 professional women in 288 chapters in 41 states, the Bahamas, and the United Kingdom, The Links, Inc., is one of the oldest African-American nonprofit and nonpartisan community service organizations. This fall, CSU students attended an Urban Wildlife Conservation Celebration at Masonville Cove, where they joined HCL chapter members to greet and register visitors as well as supported experts at stations where visitors learned about geocaching, kayaking, and fish and wildlife habitat conservation.



Left to right: Harbor City Links, Inc. National Trends and Services and Wild STEM Lead Gail Johnson, Harbor City Links, Inc. President Savonne Ferguson, and consultant to MDOT MPA at EcoLogix Group, Inc. and member of The Links, Inc., Dr. Mamie Parker.

PHOTO BY JILLIAN BALL/MDOT MPA

According to Dr. Parker, "Our hope is that this connection to Masonville Cove will help provide CSU students with connectivity to environmental careers and career pathways." Also present at the Urban Wildlife Conservation Celebration were Maryland House Speaker **Adrienne Jones** who joined her fellow HCL chapter members, **Martha Williams**, who at the time of this writing is President Biden's nominee for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director, and Baltimore City Council member and Chesapeake Conservancy Executive Vice President **Mark Conway**. Conway, along with Chesapeake Conservancy's Manager of Equity and Community Engagement **Gabriele Roffe**, also participated in a career awareness workshop earlier in the year organized by HCL together with Chesapeake Conservancy and other partners, including the Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Port Administration (MDOT MPA).

Board member **Rich Batiuk** was featured in the second episode of this season's Chesapeake Conservancy podcast, "Chesapeake Conversations," hosted by Joel Dunn. In this episode, Dunn and Batiuk talk about how to revolutionize Chesapeake Bay restoration. Batiuk recently retired as the associate director for science, analysis and implementation at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Chesapeake Bay Program Office. Chesapeake Conversations is available on the Conservancy's website or wherever you listen to podcasts: [chesapeakeconservancy.org/chesapeake-conversations-podcast](https://chesapeakeconservancy.org/chesapeake-conversations-podcast)



Left to right: Katie Walker, Jacob Czawlytko and Jake Leizear PHOTO BY JODY COUSER

Three members of Chesapeake Conservancy's Conservation Innovation Center (CIC) team were recently promoted. **Katie Walker** is now geospatial program manager, **Jacob Czawlytko** was promoted to geospatial data engineer and **Jake Leizear** is conservation GIS project manager.

**Elliot Kurtz** joined the CIC as a senior geospatial analyst, focusing on automating and scaling data processing workflows to identify and prioritize best management practices for water quality.

Strengthening its program work in Pennsylvania, Chesapeake Conservancy recently added three team members who will support our partnerships toward restoring local creeks and streams. **Ryan Hill**, project coordinator/geospatial analyst, helps identify where tree plantings have the greatest benefit to support our precision conservation efforts. **Frank Rohrer**, restoration project advisor, serves as Chesapeake Conservancy's on-the-ground person in central and north central Pennsylvania, connecting with partners and landowners to implement agricultural restoration projects.

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# Donor Spotlight: 100 Paddlers, 8 Teams, 200+ Miles, 9 Days... Over \$100,000 Raised for Chesapeake Bay Protection and Restoration!

We want to thank the 100 paddlers and the 1,100+ generous donors who supported the 2021 Bay Paddle! Thanks to Bay Paddle 2021, founded by Chris Hopkinson, the Oyster Recovery Partnership and Chesapeake Conservancy split the \$100,000 proceeds to support their important work to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay. Bay Paddle donations will enable the planting of 5 million new oysters in 2022 and Chesapeake Conservancy's efforts to establish the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) – America's 424th national park unit. Thank you!



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Rohrer has more than 20 years of experience working with landowners and partners to restore streams in Pennsylvania. **Shannon Thomas**, a Chesapeake Conservation Corps member, joined the team as the new live stake coordinator. She is responsible for coordinating volunteer events to collect tree and shrub cuttings to plant more streamside acres with vegetation.



Morgan State University students **Nicholas Wright** (left) and **Khadija Smith**  
PHOTO BY EMILY MILLS

Over the summer, CIC partnered with Charles County Government and Morgan State University to bring aboard two student fellows, **Khadija Smith** and **Nicholas Wright**, through the Patuxent Environmental and Aquatic Research Laboratory (PEARL) summer internship program. Smith, a graduate student, focused on building climate resilience in Charles County through green infrastructure and stormwater improvement. Wright, a Navy veteran and undergraduate student, primarily worked on improving Charles County residents' access to green space and parks and recreation facilities by using ArcGIS Online. His work included recommending key sites to improve walkability.

Chesapeake Conservation Corps member **Amelia Lowe** joins the team assisting with the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership.

The National Park Service (NPS) Chesapeake Gateways outreach staff was back in the field for COVID-19-safe outdoor events this year. The "Roving Ranger" mobile visitor center, operated in partnership with Chesapeake Conservancy, is currently staffed by **Christopher Orozco-Fletcher** and **Devin Valcich**, two Chesapeake Conservation Corps (CCC) members placed with the NPS Chesapeake Bay Office.



NPS Chesapeake Bay Office Superintendent **Wendy O'Sullivan** (center) with 2021 Chesapeake Gateways outreach team members. PHOTO BY ANDREW RUSSETTE

The successful bilingual ranger partnership program had a strong summer at Maryland's Sandy Point and Patapsco State Parks with five bilingual interpretive outreach assistants, including returning staff **Julian Segovia**, **Daniel Salomón** and **Isabel Layton** and new arrivals **Matias Orrego** and **Jenna Feinauer**.

Geospatial Program Manager **Rachel Soobitsky** has taken a new position as a senior research scientist at Science Systems and Applications, Inc. (SSAI) where she will be a contractor to NASA's disasters program. Part-time Communications Associate **Erin Montgomery**, whose work focused on the Chesapeake Trail, left to pursue other professional opportunities. We extend our thanks for their hard work and dedication.

Chesapeake Conservancy welcomes **Jerri Marr** as the new superintendent of Colonial National Historical Park. She will also oversee Fort Monroe National Monument and the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail (Chesapeake Trail). Marr joins NPS from the U.S. Forest Service, where she has served as assistant director of recreation, heritage, youth and volunteer resources since 2014, with oversight of a \$5.5 million budget.



Colonial National Historical Park Superintendent **Jerri Marr** PHOTO BY NPS





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CHESAPEAKE CONSERVANCY RELIES ON OUR MANY FRIENDS TO PROTECT AND CONSERVE THE CHESAPEAKE'S GREAT RIVERS AND SPECIAL PLACES. YOUR TAX-DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION OF ANY AMOUNT IS TRULY APPRECIATED. CHESAPEAKE CONSERVANCY HAS A 4-STAR RATING FROM CHARITY NAVIGATOR. OUR TAX ID NUMBER IS 26-2271377. OUR CFC ID NUMBER IS 27293.

# LEAVE A LEGACY OF THE CHESAPEAKE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Please consider making a special gift to Chesapeake Conservancy by naming the organization in your will or by designating Chesapeake Conservancy as a beneficiary of your bank account, 401(k) or other retirement account, or life insurance policy as part our Seven Generation Society.

You can help immediately by joining the Chesapeake Stewards Club and providing monthly support for Chesapeake Conservancy's ongoing habitat and land conservation programs.

For more information, call 443.321.3610.



PHOTO BY SCOTT MCDANIEL