

July 7, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Bay Paddle, I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed.

Bay Paddle is an annual paddle race that's drawn hundreds of people to the Chesapeake region, created millions of press and social media attention, was the inspiration for PBS/MPT documentary film and has raised nearly \$400k in just 3 years to help protect the Bay.

Bay Paddle all started with one person getting on the Bay for the first time and feeling a responsibility to do more.

We believe the Bay has the potential to become a paddling destination, similar to the Appalachian Trail for hikers, attracting thousands of paddlers annually to its waters and surrounding towns.

Establishing this new national recreation area would help put the Chesapeake region on the map for paddle adventurers worldwide as one of the top travel destinations for paddling.

Additionally, it would help open up more public access to the Bay and allow more people to enjoy its beauty, creating more citizen soldiers to help protect its waters for generations.

We strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

Chris Hopkinson

Chris Hopkinson

Founder

Bay Paddle

chris@baypaddle.org

Ph: 301-520-8990

www.baypaddle.org

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott