



Saving the Chesapeake's Great Rivers and Special Places

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July 6, 2023

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

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

*RE: Chesapeake National Recreation Area and Gateways Network
Reauthorization*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Chesapeake Conservancy, I write to express our strong support for your bill to authorize the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System, and to permanently reauthorize the National Park Service's Chesapeake Gateways Network. We commend your outstanding leadership and look forward to working with you to pass the bill to protect and interpret the Chesapeake's outstanding natural, historic and cultural resources and increase recreational access to one of America's greatest treasures.


The Chesapeake Bay is as spectacular as Yellowstone or Yosemite, as great as the Great Smokies and as grand as the Grand Tetons. The Bay is home to Indigenous people with a rich cultural heritage spanning generations. In addition to being the birthplace of our nation's founding principles of freedom and equality, it is the birthplace of Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass and the Emancipation Proclamation. The bill will also complement efforts to tell the stories of military service and sacrifice in the Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and Civil War.

By increasing public access to the Bay, your bill will enable current and future generations to better appreciate, enjoy and protect the Chesapeake's nationally significant resources. Your bill will also strengthen public support for watershed and habitat restoration projects, the Chesapeake Bay Program and investments in water quality that create and retain local jobs.

Thanks to your extensive consultation with the public, we believe that your bill provides an appropriate balance to meet the needs of Bay stakeholders. It will ensure public access to our nation's largest estuary and provide for those who live nearby and depend on the Bay for their livelihoods. We support the bill's language relating to "willing seller" private landowners, commercial and recreational fishing and state jurisdiction over fish and wildlife management.

Chesapeake Conservancy stands ready to work with you, local elected officials and Bay stakeholders to recognize the Bay's national significance, designate the CNRA and leave a lasting legacy to future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'Q' followed by a smaller, more complex flourish.

cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott
Governor Wes Moore
Governor Glenn Younkin