



July 5, 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:

I am writing to you on behalf of National Park Trust to thank you for your leadership and sponsorship of the legislation to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed.

We are currently celebrating our 40th anniversary of service with continued strong pursuit of our mission to “preserve parks today and create park stewards for tomorrow.” We work to acquire land important to national parks *and* provide children, many of them from underserved schools, opportunities to visit and learn about and love our nation’s parks. We also invest in outdoor programs for and in support of military families, as thanks for their dedicated service to our Nation.

We are a national parks charity headquartered in Maryland, and constantly see and appreciate first-hand the importance of our National Park System to Americans as classrooms and places of enjoyment where treasured memories with friends and family are created. Preservation and protection of these natural, cultural and historical resources are key to our physical and spiritual survival. In view of that, we are particularly honored to have the opportunity to be involved in and to strongly support the establishment of the CNRA. As we have previously commented, our hope is that Holly Beach Farm, a jewel on the Bay, will eventually be included as part of the new recreation area. 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.

The incredible ecosystem of the Chesapeake, for the sake of its rich historical, cultural and recreational attributes, needs increased national and international visibility and protection, as contemplated by the CNRA purposes. A national recreation area will serve as a means to draw the public, governments (local, state, federal), underserved communities, businesses and other stakeholders together to celebrate the Bay, to manage and steward it collectively, and to restore and protect the resources, values and sustenance it provides to all.

We add our voice with others to strongly support the goals of the new recreation area in recognition of the Chesapeake's national significance, and to 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.

In support of creating the CNRA, we endorse the use of previously acquired interests and rights in land, as well as the acquisition of land and other land-based resources via willing donation, purchases from willing sellers, and/or exchanges or transfers from other federal agencies, or from charities, states or municipalities.

We support requirements in the legislation assuring that it will not impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

As we wrote in our Vision Statement regarding Holly Beach Farm and the CNRA:

Ninety-eight percent of the Chesapeake's shorelines are in private ownership, so few members of the public have the opportunity to hike through its coastal woodlands, experience its marshes and coves, and appreciate the Chesapeake in the same way as waterfront landowners can. These gentle experiences, hiking on trails through woods, watching birds or sunsets, being touched by views of the Bay, and learning about the Bay's history, culture and environment, bring out, in the words of Ken Burns, our "best selves" and also the best in our children. Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

For all of these reasons, thank you for your support and leadership for the CNRA. We look forward to the day when the legislation is fully enacted and to working with state, federal and charitable partners to make it a new, robust and wonderful reality: a national recreation area for and about the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,



Grace Lee
Executive Director

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