

July 6, 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 REI (Recreational Equipment, Inc.) Co-op and our 23 million members, I'm 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. REI has ten retail stores that serve the Chesapeake Bay area and our 700,000 members in Maryland, Washington D.C., and Virginia who want to see more public waterway access. The Co-op is also committed to supporting efforts that increase access to time outside for the 100 million American's that don't currently have easy access to time outside. The creation of a Chesapeake National Recreation Area will provide access to public lands to REI members and future outdoor enthusiasts to recreate. 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 historical significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. 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.

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 to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

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 Bay.

Sincerely,

Naz Ahmed (she/her)
Manager, Experiences Mid-Atlantic Region
REI Co-op

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



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