



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

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of ShoreRivers, thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area, a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. ShoreRivers is a river protection group on Maryland's Eastern Shore with more than 2,000 members. Our mission is to protect and restore our Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, and education. Access to, and recreational use of, our rivers fuel environmental stewardship and inspires individuals and communities alike to protect the natural resources made available to them. Protecting public spaces like our rivers, parks, and open space is an investment in environmental health, and the health of the individuals and communities who live, work, and play within these places. **Designating the Chesapeake Bay as a National Recreation Area will bring attention to the ecological, cultural, and historical significance of the Eastern Shore's bloodlines—its rivers—while making available federal resources and expertise from the National Park Service to improve public access and increase protection for these natural areas.**

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 can impact 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. ShoreRivers strongly supports 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.

Sincerely,
ShoreRivers Riverkeepers on behalf of:

ShoreRivers

Isabel Hardesty, Executive Director
Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper | Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper
Ben Ford, Mile-Wye Riverkeeper | Zack Kelleher, Sassafras Riverkeeper

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