



February 27, 2024

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: *Support for the Chesapeake National Recreation Area  
S.2620 & H.R. 5045*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Capital Region Land Conservancy (CRLC), 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. Since its beginning efforts with the Chesapeake Conservancy and the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership, CRLC has been an avid supporter of the CNRA including hosting a community meeting in Richmond, Virginia to learn more about the benefits. Our mission is to conserve the natural and historic resources of Virginia's Richmond region for the benefit of people and nature.

Since 2018, CRLC has protected an additional 1,400 acres of public land including five sites with significant cultural meaning to our community. This includes 15-acre Mayo Island in downtown Richmond as well as 5 acres along the James River that has now protected the "View that Named Richmond" from Libby Hill Park. It includes 871 acres at Malvern Hill Farm and 353 acres at Deep Bottom in Henrico County. The latter was settled by the indigenous Arrohattoc people and has a 1634 historical reference to "Powhatan's tree" where it is said Opechanacnough reaffirmed peace with the colonist about 1620. It was also the site of several Civil War battles where the U.S. Colored Troops fought in 1864 including the Battle of New Market Heights. Finally in Petersburg, we have acquired land and islands associated with the early industrialization of Virginia including the ruins of six mills that date to as early as 1791 as well as a series of dams and canals that feed off the Appomattox River.

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.

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.

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.

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 introducing the Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act, S.2620 and H.R. 5045. We look forward to working with you to ensure final passage in the Congress to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,



Parker C. Agelasto  
Executive Director

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