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February 27, 2024

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
U.S. 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 and H.R. 5045*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks (Coalition), 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. The Coalition is a non-profit organization composed of over 2,500 retired, former, or current employees of the National Park Service (NPS). The Coalition studies, educates, speaks, and acts for the preservation of America's National Park System. As a group we collectively represent nearly 45,000 years of experience managing and protecting America's most precious and important natural and historic resources. 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,



Philip A. Francis, Jr.
Chair of the Executive Council
Coalition to Protect America's National Parks

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