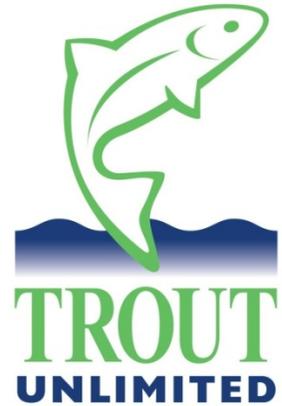




Chesapeake  
Conservancy



March 8, 2011

The Honorable Martin O'Malley  
The Honorable Robert McDonnell  
The Honorable Tom Corbett  
The Honorable Jack Markell  
The Honorable Earl Ray Tomblin  
The Honorable Andrew Cuomo  
The Honorable Vincent Gray

Dear Governors and Mayor:

We are writing to bring to your attention an important opportunity to expand the public's recreational access to the Chesapeake watershed's waterways, and one that can be achieved relatively quickly and at little or no cost.

Enhancing public access to the Chesapeake Bay's shorelines and waterways is a vital component of the broader effort to protect and restore the health of the Bay. Since the 1987 Bay Agreement, ambitious goals have been set – and met – by the States to expand recreational access to the Bay and its tributaries. But despite these efforts, access to the waters of the Bay and its rivers remains limited to less than 2 percent of the watershed's 11,600 mile tidal shoreline. Yet demand for improvements in both the quality and quantity of waterway access for fishing, canoeing, kayaking and other recreational activities remains strong and continues to grow each year. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, more than 50 million people each year take to the nation's waterways in non-motorized watercraft such as canoes and kayaks. Likewise, one out of every 10 Americans -- 31 million people -- has a fishing license. From this, it is clear that expanding access provides significant public benefit.

One opportunity to help meet this demand and address current access limitations is to remove impediments to access to rivers and streams at many of our region's bridge crossings when these bridges are being constructed or reconstructed. Today, every state in the watershed has bridges and approach roadways planned and designed, often unintentionally, with features that serve as barriers for people who wish to access the water for fishing, canoeing and kayaking. Many of these bridges and roadways lack safe shoulders, pull-off areas or parking that could keep canoeists, kayakers and anglers safe from automobile and truck traffic. They sometimes

have guardrails or other design components which unreasonably or unnecessarily (from a highway safety perspective) obstruct access to the water. More often than not, they are constructed or reconstructed without any consideration of how safe access to the waterway from the roadway or bridge could be safely and reasonably accommodated or improved for recreational use.

Our organizations are working with the U.S. Department of Transportation and members of the U.S. Congress to amend the federal Surface Transportation Act to authorize waterway access accommodations at bridge crossings, where appropriate and safe. However, states can do this without additional federal action. For example, the State of California has adopted a code that requires consideration of, and reports on, the feasibility of providing a means of public access to a navigable river for public recreational purposes before construction of any bridge. Tennessee's Department of Transportation and Wildlife Resources Agency are working together to identify waterway access sites at highway bridges and making improvements to facilitate the use of those sites. North Carolina's DOT and Wildlife Resources Commission are also cooperating in providing public access to waterways at that state's bridge crossings. We believe states in the Chesapeake watershed should do likewise. Such provisions would greatly improve safety for recreational users and motorists alike, address the access needs of our citizens, help stimulate the economies and livability of local communities, promote environmental sustainability, and enhance the health and quality of life of our citizens.

Provision of waterway access can be accomplished with little, if any, cost because construction at potential access areas will already occur during bridge construction or repair. Consequently, access features could easily be incorporated into project design for minimal cost. For example, staging areas are created for most bridge and highway construction or reconstruction projects. In many instances these staging areas – expanded shoulders, parking, etc. -- are removed after the project is completed, at a cost to the project. Rather than remove them, states could leave them in place to provide parking for boaters and anglers. Providing access involves no land acquisition costs, because these potential access areas are already located in a public right of way. If there are any costs associated with access improvements, states may use Federal transportation enhancement funds to offset those costs.

We urge you to direct your respective Secretaries of Transportation to work closely with your natural resource and recreation agencies to:

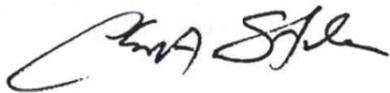
1. Create an inventory of all the bridges crossing navigable and fishable rivers and streams in your states to identify bridges and approach roadways where waterway access for fishing, canoeing and kayaking can be provided reasonably and safely. In creating this inventory, involve the waterway user community and other stakeholders.
2. Review all bridge construction and reconstruction projects currently in the planning and design process to ensure that waterway access is incorporated into planned construction or reconstruction, except where such use cannot be provided safely and reasonably, such as along many interstate highways and high bridge spans.
3. Ensure that provision of waterway access for anglers, canoeists and kayakers is given due consideration in the comprehensive transportation plans developed by each metropolitan planning organization and State.

4. Review the States' policies on use of Federal Transportation Enhancement funds to ensure that waterway access is an eligible activity.

The waterway access provisions offer multiple public benefits including improved roadway safety and public health and enhanced opportunities for outdoor recreation, economic and community development and, of course, meeting public access goals in the Chesapeake watershed.

Your attention to this matter is greatly appreciated and we look forward to working with you to advance this initiative.

Sincerely,



Charlie Stek  
Chairman  
Chesapeake Conservancy



Mark Singleton  
Executive Director  
American Whitewater



Wade Blackwood  
Executive Director  
American Canoe Association



Gordon Robertson  
Vice President  
American Sportfishing Association



Ken Undercoffer  
President  
Pennsylvania Council  
Trout Unlimited



Nicholas Weber  
Chairman  
Mid-Atlantic Council  
Trout Unlimited