

CHESAPEAKE CONSERVANCY 2020 SPRING NEWSLETTER

Shorelines

Saving the Chesapeake's Great Rivers and Special Places



Virtual Chesapeake

PHOTO BY LINDSAY COOK

COVER STORY PAGE 4

Mission

The Chesapeake Conservancy's mission is to conserve and restore the natural and cultural resources of the Chesapeake Bay watershed for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. We serve as a catalyst for change, advancing strong public and private partnerships, developing and using new technology, and empowering environmental stewardship.

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Braving the Storm

As I write this column in early April, our nation is rising to meet the challenges of a global pandemic, and we are being told that the worst is yet to come. I find myself wondering what our situation will look like when this newsletter reaches your home sometime in May. So much could change in just a few weeks. I hope you and your loved ones are safe, healthy, and looking toward the future.

To date, Chesapeake Conservancy has taken significant steps in response to the coronavirus pandemic to safeguard the health and well-being of our staff, partners, and the general public. Currently, and thanks to our exceptional staff working remotely, our organization is still operating during regular business hours and continues to advance our mission to conserve and restore the natural and cultural resources of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. We are conducting scheduled meetings by video conference, and we have postponed any events and in-person meetings until it is safe to gather again.

In a seemingly uncertain world, one thing is certain—change is the only constant. Chesapeake Conservancy board members and staff are rising to the challenge to continue to protect clean water, wildlife habitat, and our way of life. Like many other organizations, we are confronted by the realities of a global pandemic that demand we no longer conduct business as usual. We will do our best to stay focused on delivering conservation results that will persist when this storm has passed.

I took a break from addressing the impacts of the pandemic for our nonprofit, and saw one of my first osprey of the year, which was wonderful. The amazing annual journey of osprey back to the Chesapeake reminded me that we can do hard things, too.



Chesapeake Conservancy President & CEO Joel Dunn
PHOTO BY MARK HAMILTON

If you need a distraction from the news or need a little bit of Bay magic, please check out our wildlife webcams streaming to millions—now operated in partnership with explore.org. Take a breath and remind yourself of the beauty that surrounds us and that we are called on to protect. Lastly, if you are looking for a bit of inspiration, please check out my recent opinion piece about the future of conservation and the possibilities ahead. (See page 5.) The future will be bright, even as we navigate these difficult times together.

If you have ideas on how Chesapeake Conservancy might help local communities in this time of need, please reach out. Email us at ideas@chesapeakeconservancy.org. We are listening.

Sincerely,



JOEL E. DUNN, *President and CEO*

Chesapeake Conservation Partnership Publication Receives National Attention

The Public Lands Alliance presented an honorable mention award to the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership for *Marking Milestones: Progress in Conserving Lands in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed*, the most comprehensive survey of land conservation and funding in the watershed in a decade.

A Quiet Oasis Worth Shouting About

Located in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, there is a beautiful waterfront park that many consider to be their family's oasis from the rigors of the daily grind. In the winter there is ice skating; in the summer there are kayaks to rent and outdoor music and arts events; and all year long there are people enjoying breathtaking views of the South River. The park's trails are popular for hikers and joggers, while for many others the crown jewel is the popular dog park. This oasis, Quiet Waters Park, is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year.

Of the many visitors to Quiet Waters Park, how many know about Mary Parker, the last owner of the park's original farmland?

Now age 107, Ms. Parker spent most of her life on a 19-acre parcel adjacent to the park. On October 12, 2019, this parcel was sold to Anne Arundel County. The land will be integrated into the rest of county-owned Quiet Waters Park, allowing visitors to forever enjoy the beautiful views, majestic wildlife, water access, and outdoor adventure along the South River shoreline.

Conservation of the original property in 1987 and the establishment of Quiet Waters Park was neither a foregone conclusion nor a walk in the park. The entire landscape was nearly developed as a neighborhood of 250 homes.

Thanks to the vision and dedicated efforts of former Anne Arundel County Executive James Lighthizer, the property has become one of the county's most popular parks and a key place where the public can connect with nature. Lighthizer has said that creating the park was the toughest political fight in his 16 years of politics.

Lighthizer's admirable vision for the park included the entire 359 acres, but a waterfront portion of the farm remained private for Parker's residence. With the county's recent purchase of this land, the current county executive, Stuart Pittman, and the county council have completed the original vision.

The purchase was made possible through their leadership of a remarkable public-private partnership that included state funding from Program Open



Chesapeake Conservancy spearheaded the ambitious public-private partnership that adds 19 acres to Quiet Waters Park, including waterfront access to South River, a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay. DRONE PHOTO BY JACOB CZAWLYTKO AND EMILY MILLS

Space, county funding, and a large private donation from Chesapeake Conservancy made possible by local philanthropists James and Sylvia Earl.

This achievement is worthy of celebration. Instead of a 19-acre property covered with new luxury homes looming over the park, residents and military families stationed here will have expanded recreation and open space opportunities at the park. This will also protect natural habitat for osprey, box turtles, and foxes that live here in one of the last mostly undeveloped sections of South River shoreline, just a short distance from where the river flows into the Chesapeake Bay south of Annapolis.

The Earl family not only helped fund the land acquisition, but also expects to provide additional funds for Chesapeake Conservancy to work with Anne Arundel County Recreation and Parks to explore public recreation options at the site, as well as housing local conservation nonprofits, including Chesapeake Conservancy. By bringing several organizations together in one location, the Earls hope that these conservation organizations can pool

resources, enhance their effectiveness, and accomplish more for the community by improving water quality, protecting wildlife habitat, and preserving quality of life on the shores of the Chesapeake.

"The park's new land includes several structures. One of the hurdles of land protection can be the presence of buildings onsite, because as any homeowner knows, buildings require maintenance," said Chesapeake Conservancy's Vice President and Director of Programs Susan Shingledecker.

Shingledecker took her family on a First Day Hike at the park on New Year's Day. "The hike was a chance to share with my family and the public the results of a partnership that I was proud to work with for over a year. Expanding parks doesn't happen overnight; it takes the hard work of dozens of people. It takes state, local, and private funding sources," said Shingledecker.

"It takes political will and community support, and just the right timing. In the case of Quiet Waters," continued Shingledecker, "it took all of these to add 19 critical acres to the county's most popular park."

Virtual Chesapeake: Bringing Chesapeake Connections—and Hope *By Jody Couser*

As the global pandemic began to take hold in the Chesapeake, and we hunkered down to help stop the spread of COVID-19, I began to see an increase in traffic in Chesapeake Conservancy’s webcams and other virtual experiences. Visits to our three wildlife webcams were nearly triple what they were this time last year. I heard from reporters all over the world who wanted information about them, including the most widely read magazine in the US, *Parade Magazine*, which shared our osprey cam with at least 54 million readers. Here in Annapolis, Maryland, writers for our hometown newspaper, *The Capital*, despite telecommuting from their own homes and stretched to cover the pandemic, still found the time to report on osprey cam stars Tom and Audrey returning from winter residency in Central and South America. Editorial page contributors wrote about Tom and Audrey as a symbol of hope as our community adapted to its new reality.

Thousands of people were finding comfort during these dark days exploring the Chesapeake—although now from their devices and from inside their homes. We realized that we have a lot to offer to help people stay connected to nature, to help teachers do virtual lessons, and to provide a welcome distraction from the news, which was grimmer with each passing day.

The communications team, working remotely from their homes, quickly set up a special “Virtual Visits” section on our partnership website with the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office (NPS), FindYourChesapeake.com. Our weekly newsletter, “Trips and Tips,” took an about-face and switched from sharing places to go visit in person, to sharing virtual experiences. My colleague and neighbor, Director of Conservation Technology Jeff Allenby, quickly built a web application to support our neighborhood’s “Zoofari” (*read more about that below*), which was so successful that he expanded it globally, attracting media attention from *Chesapeake Bay Magazine* and 7,000 visitors the first week.

We continue to meet with partnership leaders and colleagues via video conference calls to brainstorm for new content. With thanks to my teammates, Michael Bowman, partnership

communications coordinator, Kelsey Everett, partnership digital resources associate, and contractor Pat Pasley, we offer you the following ideas to continue exploring and loving the Chesapeake, even if at times it must be virtually.

Neighborhood Zoofari

Looking for a safe way to entertain the kids, or even yourself, while practicing physical distancing? Neighborhoods throughout the watershed are hosting “Zoofari” scavenger hunts. Participants place a stuffed animal in plain sight in their windows or front yards that can be visually found while folks are out on their daily walks or bike rides. It’s a great way to have some fun while getting your exercise. Use our map application to help your neighborhood plan its Zoofari at greatzoofari.com.



Children take part in their neighborhood Zoofari. COURTESY PHOTO

Trips and Tips Newsletter

In partnership with NPS, we publish a weekly newsletter, “Trips and Tips,” typically about things to do and places to explore. During the global pandemic, it now features virtual experiences to help keep people connected to the Chesapeake. Sign up at chesapeakeconservancy.org.

FindYourChesapeake.com and Paddle Sites

Explore the new “Virtual Visits” section of our partnership website FindYourChesapeake.com, which features webcams, virtual tours, live streaming events, and activities you can do at home. Many Chesapeake Gateway sites are adding virtual experiences, so check their websites, too. You can also plan your future paddling trips with the Paddles series websites, including PaddletheChester.com and PaddletheSassafras.com—created by Sultana Education Foundation and NPS—as well as PaddletheSusquehanna.com (launched in late 2019) and PaddlethePotomac.com.

Wildlife Webcams: Great Blue Heron, Osprey, and Peregrine Falcon

Tune in day or night to observe some of the Chesapeake’s most iconic species in their natural habitats. Our wildlife webcams are made possible by our partnership with explore.org and the property owner hosts: the “Crazy Osprey Family,” on Kent Island; the managers of the Transamerica Building in Baltimore, which is home to the peregrine falcons; and the great blue heron rookery property owner on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. Visit chesapeakeconservancy.org to view the cams.

Virtual River Tours

Thanks to our partnership with NPS, Terrain360, and the James River Association, we offer 11 virtual river tours, bringing a “Google Street View” of Chesapeake tributaries straight to your digital device. Plan your next paddle trip or just explore. Tours include: Elk, James, Nanticoke, Northeast, Patapsco, Patuxent, Potomac, Rappahannock, Sassafras, Susquehanna, and York rivers. There are also vignettes of some of the Chesapeake’s special places like Werowocomoco, Fones Cliffs, Baltimore’s Inner Harbor, and Mallow’s Bay–Potomac River. Access them through chesapeakeconservancy.org.

Jody Couser is Chesapeake Conservancy’s Director of Communications.

Technology Puts Future of Conservation in All of Our Hands *By Joel Dunn*

Most of us are deeply concerned by the news of dramatic changes involving the Amazon rainforest, Greenland ice sheets, loss of bird species, and massive population declines in bees. We wake up to headlines about immense fires in Australia and weather extremes.

Here in the Chesapeake Bay region, where we have seen good progress in our efforts to restore our ecosystem, we continue to face daunting issues like sea level rise, pollution, land use change, and invasive species.

Fortunately, the future of the conservation movement and use of technology provide great hope that we can address these issues and save the planet.

How can I possibly say that with all of this terrible news? Because I have seen how technology is democratizing conservation and empowering people to act.

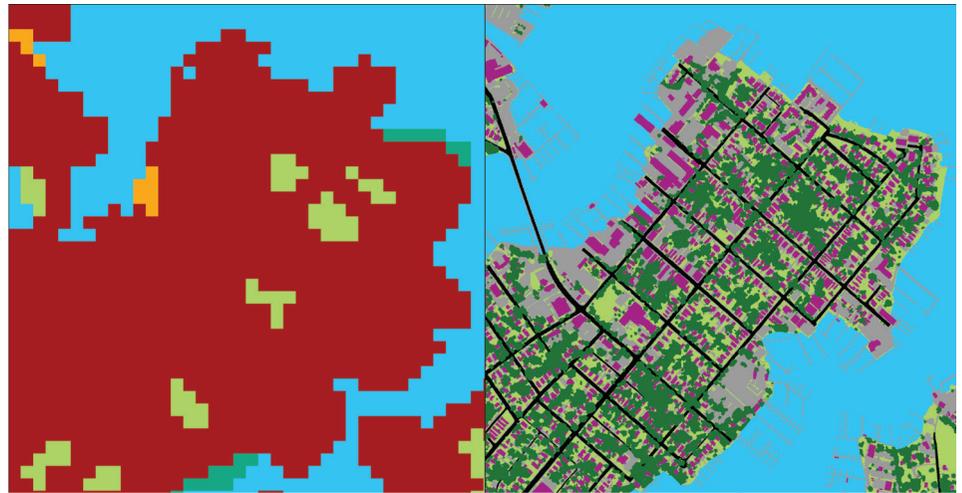
Take for example a remarkable project from the Amazon rainforest: A study released by Rainforest Foundation US and its partners shows how near-real time deforestation data empowered indigenous community members to report threats quickly and achieve “measurable reduction of deforestation.” The alerts were delivered by the University of Maryland’s Global Land Analysis and Discovery Group using a field application from Global Forest Watch.

This is the democratization of conservation, empowering people everywhere to protect the environment where they live. It is literally up to us now—you and me.

The Internet, satellites, aerial imagery, smartphones, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are putting the power to protect the environment into the hands of everyone. These tools provide high-resolution, near-real time information about what is happening on the ground and in the water.

This technology is having a profound impact on efforts to protect natural systems. And it has effectively leveled the playing field of knowledge for individual landowners, indigenous peoples, nonprofit organizations, corporations, and government agencies.

Scientists have known for decades how land use change and deforestation negatively impact animals, plants, and ecosystems. But until relatively recently, the tools by which scientists could monitor natural areas and inform the public about their observations were limited.



A comparison of conventional 30-meter-resolution land cover data (*left map*) and the Chesapeake Bay Program’s new 1-meter-resolution land cover data (*right map*) over the same area of Eastport, Annapolis, Maryland. Land cover classification maps divide the landscape into different categories (e.g. roads, buildings, grass, water) in order to quantify how land is used. The higher resolution data, produced by Chesapeake Conservancy’s Conservation Innovation Center and partners, enables analysts to pick out small-scale features such as patches of trees, driveways, and docks that are otherwise lost.

Vitaly important data, such as the National Land Cover Dataset, were collected by government agencies and their corporate contractors to be released every five to seven years. By the time we could identify a priority, such as a large contiguous forest that connected previously protected areas, it had already been destroyed for the purpose of development, resulting in the loss of biological diversity and ecosystem function.

Now the public can quickly obtain recent, highly accurate observation data and analyze it to great effect.

Conservationists can swiftly provide striking evidence to advance their cause, a quantum leap for defenders of the environment.

Chesapeake Conservancy has been relentlessly leveraging this opportunity in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Our Conservation Innovation Center recently analyzed the change in tree canopy for Anne Arundel County, Maryland, with 1-meter-resolution aerial imagery from 2007 to 2017—and it showed a startling 5,500-acre loss of trees. With this analysis and strong public support (81 percent of county residents, according to a poll by the Arundel Rivers Federation), County Executive Stuart Pittman worked with the county council to pass a major revision in their forest conservation law. Howard County quickly followed suit with even tougher changes. (See related story, p. 6.)

The famed conservationist Aldo Leopold once remarked that “one of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen.” Fortunately, as a result of new technology, this is changing. It comes just in time, as there is widespread recognition of detrimental changes that are happening to the entire planet as a result of human activity.

As a first step to address the climate and biodiversity crisis, US Sen. Tom Udall (D-NM) and US Rep. Debra Haaland (D-NM) have introduced resolutions to protect 30 percent of our nation’s land and ocean by 2030, which have been co-sponsored by Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) and others.

To achieve this admirable and ambitious result, data from individual drones and global monitoring efforts, such as those of Global Forest Watch or Microsoft’s forthcoming planetary computer, will be used to democratize conservation.

When this knowledge is put in the hands of individuals, nonprofits, and governments, it will save the planet.

This opinion piece by Joel Dunn, Chesapeake Conservancy president and CEO, was published in Chesapeake Bay Journal on March 16, 2020, and subsequently appeared in other publications including Patch.com, Delmarva Now, and the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy newsletter.

Beveridge & Diamond

Evynn Overton and Pam Marks, both principals with Beveridge & Diamond, an environmental law firm with offices in Baltimore and Washington, have dedicated their legal careers to protecting the environment on a national level. Here in the Chesapeake, they're also making a difference by serving as pro bono lawyers for Chesapeake Conservancy.

Beveridge & Diamond provides counsel on nonprofit issues such as governance, due diligence, and most recently on the complex set of agreements behind the partnership that added 19 acres to Anne Arundel County's Quiet Waters Park, a potential site for nonprofit offices including Chesapeake Conservancy. The firm has also been generous sponsors of the Conservancy's Champions of the Chesapeake awards. Principal Paul E. Hagen is a former member of Chesapeake Conservancy's board of directors.

"Living here in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, it's important to me to find a way to give back to the community and environment that I call home," said Overton. "My work for Chesapeake Conservancy is very rewarding and meaningful."



Beveridge & Diamond principals Evynn Overton and Pamela Marks help support their pro bono account, Chesapeake Conservancy. COURTESY PHOTO

"As a member of Lawyers for a Sustainable Economy (LSE), Beveridge & Diamond pledged to provide \$500,000 worth of pro bono legal services by the end of 2020 in support of environmental sustainability," said Marks. "In addition to helping Chesapeake Conservancy, we are also supporting the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, which is working to promote the sustainable management of the Atlantic menhaden fishery; the C&O Canal Trust, the official nonprofit partner program of Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park; the Food Recovery Network,

an organization that recovers and donates perishable food that would otherwise go to waste; and Coastal Foodshed, whose mission is to strengthen the local food economy by making it easier for growers to sell local foods."

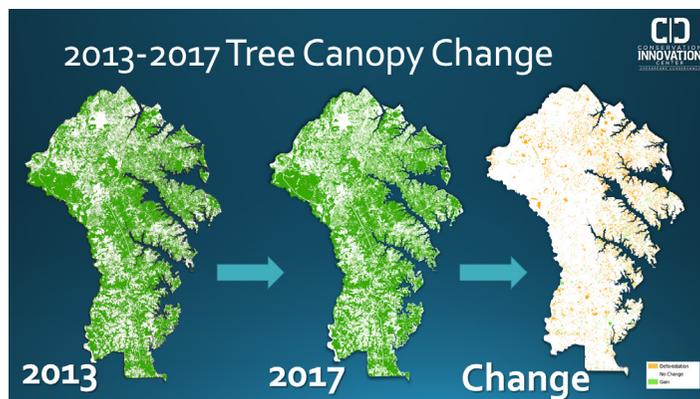
"We're very grateful to Beveridge & Diamond for their generous pro bono support," said Susan Shingledecker, Chesapeake Conservancy's vice president and director of programs. "Having access to some of the country's top legal minds is a game changer for our organization. It has allowed us to approach complex issues in a strategic and thorough manner."

Better Data Informs Better Policy

Chesapeake Conservancy's Conservation Innovation Center provided tree canopy data and analyses for Anne Arundel County, Maryland, that showed the county lost about 2,500 acres of tree canopy between 2013 and 2017. The data, which revealed the county was losing trees faster than almost any other county in the state, surprised lawmakers and was a contributing factor to their consideration of a forest conservation bill introduced by County Executive Stuart Pittman. The county council passed the bill, which became law in November 2019.

"This was definitely a case where better data was used to inform better policy," said Chesapeake Conservancy's Director of Conservation Technology Jeffrey Allenby. "As a result, we're seeing that other counties in the Chesapeake Bay watershed are inspired to act as well."

"Chesapeake Conservancy commends the Anne Arundel County Council on passing a bill to strengthen the Forest Conservation Act that will help protect the county's forests for generations to come. We thank County Executive Pittman for his leadership," said Chesapeake Conservancy President and CEO Joel Dunn.



US Forest Service 2019 Regional Forester's Honor Award

The US Forest Service honored the Open Space Institute, Chesapeake Conservancy, and the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests Eastern Divide Ranger District with the Regional Forester Honor Award. The recognition came under the category of "Sustaining Our Nation's Forests and Grasslands," for the Grace Furnace conservation project, which added nearly 4,700 acres in the Blue Ridge Mountains at the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests.

Board Welcomes Four New Members

The current officers of the board are Chair **Randall W. Larrimore**, Vice Chair **Molly Joseph Ward**, Treasurer **Leslie Delagran**, and Secretary **Marc Bunting**. **Anne Scott** recently stepped down as board chair to focus on professional commitments. **Maite Arce**, **Michael Brubaker**, **Jeffrey Sabot**, and

Nancy B. Walters were recently elected to serve on the board as four members finished their terms—**Robert Friend**, **Heather Gartman**, **Robert Gensler**, and **Jeffery More**.

“We are very pleased to welcome our new board members, who bring a wealth of expertise in everything from accounting, to diversity and inclusion, government relations, and organizational management, and who represent various regions of the Chesapeake Bay watershed,” said Chesapeake Conservancy President and

CEO **Joel Dunn**. “Our board is positioned to lead as Chesapeake Conservancy enters the next phase of growth and opportunity.”

“I’d like to welcome our new members and thank Robert Friend, Heather Gartman, Robert Gensler, Jeffery More, and Anne Scott for sharing their time, energy, and expertise to help lead Chesapeake Conservancy. Their dedication and wise counsel contributed to the growth of our organization,” said Larrimore.



Maite Arce

Maite Arce is the founder, president, and CEO of Hispanic Access Foundation. Her organization and leadership have made key contributions in the designation of six national public lands monuments and the permanent authorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund; placed more than 300 young people in internships and jobs on public lands and watersheds; and engaged hundreds of partners in recreational, volunteer, stewardship, and roundtable events through signature initiatives, such as Latino Conservation Week.



Michael Brubaker

Mike Brubaker is the co-founder and managing partner of Principled Strategies, a business advisory firm dedicated to helping businesses grow by identifying barriers and creatively and collaboratively seeking solutions through mergers and acquisitions, new market creation, financing, real estate acquisition, and government relations. In 2006, Brubaker was elected to the Pennsylvania State Senate for two consecutive four-year terms. While representing the 36th District, he served four-year terms as chair of the Agricultural & Rural Affairs Committee and chair of the Senate Finance Committee. Additionally, Brubaker served as board member of the Chesapeake Bay Commission for eight years and served for two years as chair of the Tri-State Commission.



Jeffrey Sabot

Sabot is a leader in both audit and consulting services to not-for-profit organizations and trade associations, for-profit companies in the governmental and manufacturing industries, NGOs, and privately-held companies and their principals. He has a deeply rooted passion for environmental conservation and stewardship. A significant percentage of his nonprofit clients have been organizations with missions in land conservation or environmental concerns. In over 30 years in public accounting, he has provided audit services to many of the most recognizable conservation nonprofit organizations and executives in the Washington Metro Area.



Nancy B. Walters, PhD

Dr. Nancy Walters, a retired educator and program manager, has experience that includes teaching, research, analysis of land and water development proposals, and higher education administration. At the start of her career in Minnesota, she worked for the US Fish and Wildlife Service as a program analyst in the Ecological Services Division. She then transitioned to work on federal programs for the Minnesota Office of Higher Education. Now as a retiree living in Virginia, Dr. Walters continues to work as a reviewer for the US Department of Education and as a contributing faculty member for an online graduate education program.

Staff Updates

Former chief financial officer (CFO) at the Entrepreneurs’ Organization, **Ellen Gardner** joins the team as CFO. A certified public accountant, she brings more than 20 years of experience in senior-level forecasting, budgeting, and grant accounting.

Matt Provost, former vice president of strategic partnerships at the National Park Foundation (NPF), joins as associate director of development, focusing on corporate and strategic partnerships.



Several staff promotions were celebrated recently, including **Michael Bowman** to partnership communications coordinator, **Adrienne Gemberling** to project manager, **Mende Naylor** to executive assistant, and **Gabrielle Roffe** to manager of equity and community engagement. **Susan Minnemeyer** was promoted to assistant director of the Conservation Innovation Center (CIC).

Program Manager **Carly Dean** and Director of Communications **Jody Couser** celebrated their fifth anniversaries with Chesapeake Conservancy. Earlier in the year, Couser was also appointed co-chair of the Maryland Commission on Climate Change Education, Communication, and Outreach Work Group.

Joe McCauley, Chesapeake Fellow, was elected to the board of directors of the Rappahannock Wildlife Refuge Friends. He has been an active member of the organization since its inception in 2003.

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CHESAPEAKE CONSERVANCY RELIES ON OUR MANY FRIENDS TO PROTECT AND CONSERVE THE CHESAPEAKE'S GREAT RIVERS AND SPECIAL PLACES. YOUR TAX-DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION OF ANY AMOUNT IS TRULY APPRECIATED. CHESAPEAKE CONSERVANCY HAS A 4-STAR RATING FROM CHARITY NAVIGATOR. OUR TAX ID NUMBER IS 26-2271377.

LEAVE A LEGACY OF THE CHESAPEAKE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Please consider making a special gift to Chesapeake Conservancy by naming the organization in your will or by designating Chesapeake Conservancy as a beneficiary of your bank account, 401(k) or other retirement account, or life insurance policy. You can help immediately by joining the Chesapeake Stewards Club and providing monthly support for Chesapeake Conservancy's ongoing habitat and land conservation programs. For more information, call 443.321.3610.

Photo by Claire Gillman

