

Chesapeake Conservancy

July 16, 2010

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

Thank you for your leadership of the America's Great Outdoors Initiative and your personal participation at the Annapolis listening session on June 25th. We especially appreciate your comment that the Chesapeake Bay is a "landscape of national significance that needs to be protected and on the national map."

The Chesapeake Conservancy shares your view and has, as a principal mission, "*ensuring the conservation, stewardship, access and enjoyment of the Chesapeake's iconic landscapes and waterways and its cultural and historic assets highlighted by the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail and the Chesapeake Gateways and Watertrails Network.*"

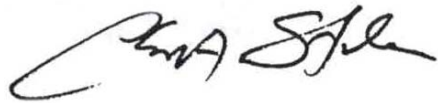
There are two principal issues in the Chesapeake region that serve as barriers to getting more citizens outdoors and more engaged in preserving our heritage: 1) a lack of adequate resources for land conservation; and 2) a lack of public access to our rivers and the Bay. We believe that these issues can be addressed and the goals of the America's Great Outdoors Initiative can be best achieved by:

1. Fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund and dedicating a portion of those funds to a public-private Chesapeake Treasured Landscapes Fund that leverages private and other public financing. The Chesapeake Fund would be used to acquire lands targeted by a new Federal-State, GIS-based conservation planning tool that is modeled on state platforms such as Maryland's GreenPrint program.
2. Establishing a new 21st Century Chesapeake Bay National Park, as recommended in the Chesapeake Executive Order and the Special Resources Study submitted to Congress in January. A new unit of the national park system in the Chesapeake would not only help address critical needs for landscape preservation, but improve opportunities for public access to the Bay, education, and ecosystem protection, in partnership with State and local governments, and non-profit organizations.
3. Fully funding the activities called for in implementing the comprehensive management plan (CMP) for the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, and the Chesapeake Gateways and Watertrails Program. With funding support, these model initiatives will greatly increase targeted conservation, engage citizens in environmental stewardship and expand heritage tourism throughout the 64,000 square mile Chesapeake watershed.

We are delighted that so many people who attended the listening session supported these recommendations during the listening session. In addition to the three recommendations above, we have attached some additional ideas and recommendations to enhance conservation of treasured landscapes, expand public access, and promote citizen stewardship and engagement for your consideration.

We appreciated the opportunity to work with you, Will Shafroth and other partners in the Annapolis listening session and hope that the ideas contained in this letter and those that emerged from the session will be incorporated in the final America's Great Outdoors report submitted to the President.

Thank you again for your outstanding leadership and support for conservation.



Charlie Stek
Chairman



David O'Neill
President

CC: Will Shafroth, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks
Partners for Chesapeake Treasured Landscapes

Attachment: Additional recommendations for the America's Great Outdoors Initiative

Additional Recommendations for the America's Great Outdoors Initiative

Submitted by the Chesapeake Conservancy

Conservation

- The U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Department of Agriculture and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration should work collaboratively with states and local governments to establish new federal land management units and expand existing units, including: National Wildlife Refuges, Bureau of Land Management units, National Forests, and National Marine Sanctuaries.
- The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) should budget and allocate additional Readiness and Environmental Protection (REPI) program funds for conservation of lands and encroachment mitigation adjacent to military installations and coordinate those funds with other federal land conservation programs.
- Federal tax benefits for qualified conservation contributions should be extended.

Public Access

- Public access to waterways should be given due consideration in the transportation planning process and in conjunction with new construction, reconstruction or repair of road and bridge transportation facilities, except where such use is unsafe, not permitted or inappropriate.
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recreation areas should be established in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Outdoor Education and Activities

- The Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education should be fully engaged in the America's Great Outdoors Initiative and should support policies and fund programs to ensure that all students—from pre-K to 20—have the opportunity to learn about the environment and natural world around them.
- The U.S. Department of the Interior, through the National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, should facilitate efforts to provide the public with meaningful watershed experiences along the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail to expand student knowledge of the Bay ecosystem, history and American Indian cultures. This can be accomplished by supporting outdoor education programs, such as the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's student field programs, and the development of heritage and geo-tourism programs, such as the Watermen's Heritage Tourism Training Program.