

Maryland Heritage Areas Program **Stewardship of Natural Resources**

House Bill 1: Program Creation

The authorizing legislation which created the Maryland Heritage Areas Program includes several elements which can impact heritage area involvement in conservation of natural resources:

- Maryland Heritage Areas Authority may *make and participate in making loans or grants, or otherwise provide financial assistance for any project that serves to preserve, develop, maintain or protect a state designated heritage area.* (13-1107. Powers, #12)
- The system of heritage areas *provides educational, inspirational, economic and recreational benefits for present and future generations.* (13-1109. System of Heritage Areas, #2)
- Recognized heritage areas shall *describe the cultural, historic and natural resources which contribute to the special character of the heritage area* (13-1110. Designating recognized heritage areas, #5)
- Recognized heritage areas shall *describe the techniques and means to be instituted by the local jurisdictions to assure the long term preservation and protection of the cultural, historic and natural resources within the heritage area...*(13-1110, Designating recognized heritage areas, #10)
- The heritage area contains at least one or more *natural or recreational resources determined by the Secretary of Natural Resources to be of statewide significance* (13-1110, Designating recognized heritage areas, C, 2, ii.)
- A management plan shall include *the land use recommendations of the local plans of all local jurisdictions; an inventory and evaluation of significant natural and cultural resources; a description of the techniques or means for the preservation and protection of the natural and cultural resources* (13-1111, Designating certified heritage areas, G, 1, ii; 2, 8)
- Each management plan must demonstrate the capability *to adopt and enforce land use and preservation standards to protect the resources within the heritage area.* (13-1111, Designating recognized heritage areas, H, 4)
- State officials shall prepare a program statement...*Secretary of Natural Resources regarding outdoor recreation and management of natural resources including state greenways* (13-1112, Program Statement, a, 1, iii)
- The Authority may award *grants and loans to local jurisdictions or other appropriate entities for planning, design, acquisition, development, preservation, restoration, interpretation, marketing and programming.* (13-1113, Grants, a, 1)

Heritage Area Management Plans

All heritage area management plans address natural resources in the context of conservation and recreation opportunities. A sampling follows:

Anacostia Trails

There is a large amount of open space in ATHA and recreational opportunities that allow residents and visitors to enjoy much of that space. Every community in the area is a bike ride or a short walk from parks and open space, although some of those connections, as discussed in Chapters Five and Seven, require additional enhancement. There are numerous possibilities for interpreting the environmental and natural history of this area. Natural resources to be found in ATHA are further described in Chapter Two, and related interpretation is described in Chapter Four. Critical aspects of natural resource stewardship in ATHA concern maintenance and enhancement of the parks, trail corridors, and other open spaces that make ATHA attractive for both people and wildlife as well as care for the streams and wetlands that lace the area. Environmental education and interpretation of natural resources is addressed in Chapter Four, and recreational linkages are addressed in Chapter Six.

Four Rivers

STEWARDSHIP STRATEGIES

In Anne Arundel County, historic resources are dispersed throughout the landscape rather than being concentrated in a compact district or districts, and the issue of development pressures on rural and agricultural lands is one that is not encountered in the city. The County also has an active Agricultural and Woodland Preservation Program. The strategies to be carried out to protect the cultural, historic, scenic, and natural resources of the heritage area build upon the strengths of the existing city and county programs to address a range of stewardship issues. Several primary strategies are proposed. The first is to maintain and strengthen the existing regulatory programs in Annapolis and Anne Arundel County that protect historic and archaeological resources. The second encompasses a variety of initiatives designed to protect scenic landscapes and environmentally sensitive resources, primarily in the more rural parts of the heritage area. A third, related strategy is to encourage private investment in the preservation, rehabilitation, and reuse of historic properties and cultural landscapes.

Baltimore

Natural & Recreational Resources

Although Baltimore is a largely urban environment, a number of important natural and recreational resources can be found within the city and BHA boundaries, identified on the map entitled Baltimore Heritage Area Natural & Recreational Resources. Beginning with the first city park in 1827, Patterson Park, the city's natural and recreational resources enjoy a noteworthy history. Most remarkable is the city's acquisition, beginning in 1860,

of seven large estates that gradually became the foundation for the entire park system; many of these provide open space and include historically significant buildings. Other natural and recreational resources also fill a dual role, providing historic and cultural interest as well as public park functions, such as Fort McHenry, Federal Hill Park, and Patterson Park.

Canal Place

Objective 2

Preserve the key natural resources of the Canal Place Preservation District

ACTIONS

1.2-1 RIVER/CREEK CLEAN-UP DAY

Establish an annual River/Creek Clean-up Day and other activities in partnership with the Friends of the Potomac, Department of Natural Resources, and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to improve the water quality of the Potomac River and Wills Creek. To maximize the potential recreational opportunities along the Potomac River and Wills Creek, it is imperative that the water and its banks meet high standards. This type of volunteer program can build a greater environmental awareness that can result in local stewardship of these natural resources.

Heart of Chesapeake

Strategy #2: Undertaking a Land Inventory: The heritage area should promote undertaking an inventory of developed land to identify any threatened areas. Although there is much preserved land and publicly owned land, there is need for a comprehensive inventory of developed land. Much of the current residential development is occurring around the waterfront and may be threatening resources or environmentally fragile areas.

Heart of Civil War

Natural, Recreational, & Scenic Resources

While the heritage resources—battlefields, historic homes, museums, form the heart of the HCWHA's offerings, heritage tourists are also known to enjoy an area's natural beauty and opportunities for outdoor recreation. Each county administers the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program, which supports agricultural preservation through purchase of development rights from local farmers.

Unprotected lands that comprise key, high quality views in the heritage area should be given priority attention. To successfully draw Civil War travelers and emerge as a premier Civil War heritage destination, battlefield protection is a must in the heritage area.

In addition to the battlefields, sites of important Civil War activity, views from scenic byways and Maryland Civil War Trails, and towns with significant concentrations of authentic nineteenth century historic fabric are key heritage resources in the HCWHA. The heritage area is experiencing population growth around the edges of many municipalities and in previously undeveloped, agricultural areas, sometimes near battle sites. Ensuring that visitors have an authentic and unique experience requires conserving the integrity of the heritage area's cultural landscape to the greatest degree possible while still accommodating regional growth. Strategies for the preservation and enhancement of each type of resource are discussed in this plan.

Montgomery County

Montgomery County's earnest commitment to preserving and promoting its agricultural heritage began in 1980 with adoption of the nationally recognized *Master Plan for Preservation of Agriculture and Rural Open Space*. This plan included creation of a transfer of development rights program and an Agricultural Reserve. The boundary of the 93,000- acre Agricultural Reserve (as described in the 1980 plan) basically mirrors the boundary of the Farming History Cluster.

Within the current boundaries, a number of complementary programs are available to provide investment, incentives, or conservation/stewardship beyond that provided by the State Heritage Areas Program.

Goals: Preservation & Stewardship

Goal: Support existing Montgomery County planning goals for open space conservation by increasing the economic incentives for retaining rural areas and open spaces.

Goal: Strengthen current preservation activities by creating viable uses for historic structures and cultural landscapes.

Goal: Build on the concept that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts by linking and marketing diverse historic, recreational and cultural resources as coherent units.

Goal: Provide an "umbrella" effort under which heritage programs can reach a broader audience—there is strength in numbers.

Southern Maryland

GOAL 1:

Encourage the preservation and conservation of heritage resources

Objectives:

1.1 Expand and promote heritage education, using natural and cultural resources within the region to communicate the importance of the resources to the quality of life for residents of Southern Maryland and to educate them about threats to those resources and opportunities for action.

1.2 Create an environment for a stronger public policy foundation to support resource preservation and conservation by broadening public understanding of the value of heritage resources.

1.3 Assist the counties, towns, and private interests in their efforts to protect, preserve, enhance and manage the heritage resources of the region for future generations.

1.4 Encourage the adaptive reuse of historic sites and structures.

GOAL 2:

Encourage the preservation and conservation of unique natural areas and rural character which represent the setting for heritage resources.

Objectives:

2.1 Advocate enactment of appropriate resource protection legislation by responsible local government entities.

2.2 Assist local governments in the development of resource protection/management programs to ensure the long term protection of heritage resources.

2.3 Support land trusts and conservancy organizations in their efforts to utilize easements to protect resource lands and where possible encourage their protection efforts to include use of sites for interpretation.

Stories of the Chesapeake

Protect the beauty and heritage of the region: Protect the way of life for heritage area communities through a balance of preservation, economic development, stewardship, and quality of life.

Create partnerships and consensus: Build a consensus among historic preservationists, environmentalists, and local leaders in business, agriculture, government, and education to sustain the character of the heritage area.

Protect the beauty and heritage of the region: protect the way of life and quality of life for heritage area communities through a combination of preservation, economic development, and stewardship.

- Shape tourism's community impacts (Chapter 4)
- Protect scenic byways through local and state action (Chapter 5)
- Organize more tools for historic preservation action and advocacy (Chapter 7)
- Upgrade local regulations and incentives for historic preservation (Chapter 7)
- Focus on churches and cemeteries (Chapter 7)
- Encourage conditions that allow traditions to continue (Chapter 7)
- Support working farms (Chapter 7)
- Focus on design and preservation in districts, villages and small towns (Chapter 7)

- Enact public requirements for archeology (Chapter 7)
- Continue to improve programs and funding for permanent land protection (Chapter 7)
- Improve land development codes explicitly to address scenic qualities (Chapter 7)
- Enhance design standards for new construction (Chapter 7)
- Establish firm scenic policy guidance and initiatives (Chapter 7)

Create partnerships and consensus: build a consensus among historic preservationists, environmentalists, and local leaders in business, agriculture, government, and education to sustain the character of the heritage area.

- Link schools with sites in the heritage area (Chapter 3)
- Focus on communities (Chapter 7)
- Establish an awards program (all chapters)

Heritage Area Executive Director Surveys

In April 2009, surveys were sent to heritage area executive directors to gather information about each area's activities related to natural resource conservation. Six heritage area directors responded to the survey. Key findings included:

- 1) Heritage Areas' role in the protection of natural resources is:
 - Building awareness
 - Connecting people to resources (conservation organizations)
 - Developing programs around natural resources that enhance the visitor experience (such as the Captain John Smith National Historic Trail)
 - Working with conservation organizations
 - Advocacy

- 2) All six respondents have at least one member of the board who represents natural resource conservation interests.

- 3) In response to the question "What action steps has the heritage area taken a leadership role in to implement protection and conservation of natural resources as outlined in your management plan?" responses included:
 - 0 Initiated local legislation
 - 1 Supported proposed local legislation (introduced by another organization)
 - 2 Supported state legislation
 - 1 Addressed local zoning commission in support of natural resource protection
 - 5 Informed elected officials about the importance of conservation to the heritage area's success in tourism
 - 1 Offered educational programs on natural resource protection (workshops, presentations, etc.)
 - 0 Written articles for local papers about the importance of natural resource protection and conservation
 - 0 Facilitated the purchase of land for its protection
 - 0 Partnered with local or state organizations for clean up events
 - 2 Other Partnerships for advocacy and programming

- 4) Heritage areas have used the capital, noncapital and mini-grant programs for natural resource projects including:
- Trail construction
 - Purchase of land and easements for trails
 - Interpreter/educator/rangers
 - Kayak tours
 - John Smith 400
 - Interpretive signage
- 5) Challenges faced by heritage areas in advocating for conservation of natural resources include:
- 3 It could threaten our local funding to advocate a position that our counties and cities do not support.
- 2 We could lose support of local residents if a conservation position is not popular.
- 0 Our local residents need to be educated about conservation issues, but it is difficult to generate attendance if we offer programs.
- 4 Finding time to attend meetings, learn about issues and develop position statements is difficult.
- Additional comments:
- “None of the above; we just have so much to do and limited resources with which to work.”
- “Since we do not get involved in local land use decisions, none of the above applies.”
- 6) In the next 5-10 years, heritage area envision a role in the conservation and protection of natural resources to include:
- Strengthen our story and influence
 - New, more substantial partnerships
 - Working with partners to protect and interpret
 - Networking and coordination
 - Encourage visitation
 - Creating an exceptional visitor experience
 - Develop and expand themes
 - Continue to connect people and resources
 - Additional grants for ecotourism projects

- 7) How might the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority better encourage natural resource protection and enhancement activities within heritage areas?
- Continue to award grant funds
 - Incentives for capital projects that meet “greener” standards
 - Eliminate TIZs or at least remove the priority given to capital grants in TIZs
 - Natural resources need to be called out more in the grant application and guidelines.
 - Provide examples of how natural resource projects can fit within the grant guidelines and eligibility for funding.
 - Make it a priority for funding.
 - More outreach to DNR.

Recommendations

1) **Increase visibility and priority for natural resource grants.**

Grants are a primary way that the Heritage Areas Program can influence and support natural resource conservation. Surveys completed by heritage area directors indicated a desire for more visibility and prioritization for natural resources grants. The grant application for non-capital and capital projects states that eligible activities must be consistent with the goals and objectives of a heritage area's management plan. However, it is not clear that natural resource conservation is an eligible project category. Most of the focus is on buildings or projects and programs such as interpretive exhibits or events. Application for natural resource conservation projects is further complicated by the requirement that projects be located within a Target Investment Zone, something that is not always feasible for natural resource projects such as trails or water routes.

Recommendation:

Create a grant category for natural resource conservation projects.

Two options are:

1. Create a separate grant category within the existing grant application.
2. Create a separate natural resources grant application (this is preferred for ease of understanding by potential applicants).

Additional recommendations:

1. Project areas should not be restricted to Target Investment Zones.
2. Applications should include examples of the types of projects that could be funded. (These examples could be placed on the website with a link included in the application.)
3. Grant categories could include both capital and non-capital projects and could fall into one of three areas: Events, Projects and Legacies:
 - Events – A special event, festival, program, etc. that focuses on natural resources and showcase the importance of the resource to the area's heritage as well as the necessity of the resource's conservation.
 - Projects – Interpretive exhibits, audiotours, educational curriculum, guided tours, etc. that showcase a natural resource and highlight the need for conservation.
 - Legacies – Large projects such as trails, greenways, land acquisition that involve construction, signage, land purchases, etc. and have a long-term impact on the area's natural resource conservation.
4. Criteria can follow the general outline of the existing grant application with the addition of evaluation of project partners (in particular looking for local, regional and state conservation partners).
5. Grant amounts and match would be the same as capital grants.
6. MHAA should announce this new grant category through the media and posting on its website.

7. Heritage Areas should develop strategies to promote this grant category through local media, email announcements, presentations to eligible groups and other means.

2) **Join Partners for Open Space**

Partners for Open Space is a consortium of more than 150 conservation organizations including the Nature Conservancy, 1000 Friends of Maryland, American Farmland Trust, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Conservation Fund, Environment Maryland, Maryland Recreation and Parks Association, the Trust for Public Land. These groups receive funding from the state's Program Open Space. The group states as its mission "to secure, save and protect Maryland's land conservation programs." Membership is open to anyone who supports that organization's mission.

Program Open Space, through the real estate transfer tax, funds many of Maryland's conservation programs including:

- county parks programs
- state land acquisition and development (state parks, forests, and wildlife management areas)
- Rural Legacy Program, which protects important agricultural, historical and ecological landscapes
- park operations in the City of Baltimore
- Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF), which buys easements to protect productive farmland
- Heritage Conservation Fund, which protects rare and endangered species habitat, as well as providing financial support to administer these programs

Recommendation:

Each heritage area should join Partners for Open Space (membership forms are at www.partnersforopenspace.org). This will allow heritage areas to receive regular updates about conservation issues as well as threats to Program Open Space funding.

Additional recommendations:

1. Heritage Areas should become engaged in Partners for Open Space activities (appoint a board member or volunteer).
2. When Program Open Space funding cuts are threatened (as they were this year), Heritage Areas should rally to support the funding for conservation groups.
3. Heritage Areas should build alliances through Partners for Open Space to educate conservation groups on the importance of heritage areas so that if heritage area funding is threatened, the conservation groups will rally to support them.
4. Heritage Areas should forward Action Alerts received by Partners for Open Space to the email database.

3) **Heritage Area plans will include natural resource conservation activities.**

As detailed in the natural resource conservation survey to heritage area directors, heritage areas are already engaged in various ways in conservation related activities. The five-year action plans and annual work plans that heritage areas will begin preparing should reflect these activities.

Recommendation:

Five-year action plans and annual work plans should identify at least one *local* and one *regional or state* conservation group that the Heritage Area will work with in each year. Project activities should be outlined with the role of the Heritage Area and the conservation organizations specified.

Additional recommendations:

1. Strategies for promoting natural resource conservation grants should be outlined.
2. Heritage Areas should look for opportunities to host or co-host educational programs with conservation themes.
3. Heritage Area websites should include information on natural resources – activities, events, programs, etc – for local residents and visitors.
4. Look for opportunities to co-host conservation-related events and activities. (For example, the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy hosts Rural Heritage Day. They are interested in transitioning this event into several smaller events in various locations which could provide an opportunity to partner with one or more heritage areas.)

4) **Heritage Area boards include conservation representative.**

All six respondents to the director survey have at least one conservation representative on their board of directors.

Recommendation:

All heritage areas should be required to have at least one conservation representative on their board of directors.

5) **State Agency Program Statements reflect conservation issues and opportunities.**

The Department of Natural Resources has prepared a draft program statement outlining assistance and resources to heritage areas.

Recommendation:

All state departments with involvement in issues related to natural resource conservation should include assistance and resources in their program statements. This may include (but not limited to) the departments of planning, natural resources and higher education.

6) **Include conservation resource information on internal website.**

Maryland has a large number of conservation organizations at the local, state and national level. Heritage Areas can help their constituents understand what these organizations do and access their resources for technical assistance through the Heritage Areas internal website.

Recommendation:

Include information on local, regional and state conservation organizations with appropriate website links on the Heritage Areas' internal website. Links can also be included back to individual heritage area websites.