



Check It to Protect It: Tax Time is for Conservation

Donations made to the Chesapeake Bay and Endangered Species Fund through Maryland's income tax check-off program support education, community stewardship, and Bay restoration efforts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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(Annapolis, MD) February 17, 2021 – Tax season is here, and Marylanders can help protect one of our state's greatest natural treasures, the Chesapeake Bay and its wildlife, by making a tax-deductible contribution to line 35, the Chesapeake Bay and Endangered Species Fund, on the Maryland tax form.

Where does the money go? The *Chesapeake Bay and Endangered Species Fund* was created to support Bay restoration and education programs and to protect Maryland's rare, threatened, and endangered species. The fund is split evenly between the Chesapeake Bay Trust, a highly rated nonprofit organization, and the Wildlife and Heritage Division of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. The line on the state income tax form allows Marylanders to quickly and easily donate to help the Bay and conserve Maryland's native wildlife and endangered species. Nearly \$1 million was contributed through the 2019 tax check-off, which funded Bay restoration initiatives, community stewardship projects, and environmental education programs across Maryland from the mountains to the ocean.

Now more than ever, it is important to protect – and visit - our natural resources. Many outdoor spaces, such as state parks, saw a significant increase in visitors during the COVID-19 pandemic when indoor venues like movie theaters and the mall were off limits.

“More and more people are beginning to understand what science has shown us for decades: People who spend time outdoors are healthier, which means they likely have fewer underlying conditions, which means they are poised to be able to withstand attacks like COVID-19 better,” said Jana Davis, executive director of the Chesapeake Bay Trust. “We need to make sure ALL of our residents have access to healthy, clean, green outdoor spaces and that we work to solve any disparities in this access, and contributions to this fund can help.”

Launched in 1990, the Chesapeake Bay and Endangered Species Fund is one of the most successful voluntary tax check-off programs in the nation. Last year, more than 30,000 Maryland state income tax statements were returned with contributions to the fund. To make your contribution, simply complete line 35 on your Maryland state income tax form or ask your certified public accountant or tax preparer. Donations of any dollar amount can be made and all are tax deductible. For more information on the Chesapeake Bay Trust, visit www.cbtrust.org/taxdonation, or for details on the Department of Natural Resource's Wildlife and Heritage Division, visit www.dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife.

Additionally, Certified Public Accountants and tax preparers have joined in on restoration efforts to improve the health of the Bay and conserve our at-risk species through the CPAs for a Healthy Bay program led by the

Chesapeake Bay Trust. If you would like to work with a Bay-friendly CPA this tax season, or if you are a CPA who would like to participate in this program, visit www.cbtrust.org/cpas to learn more.

About the Chesapeake Bay Trust

The Chesapeake Bay Trust (www.cbtrust.org) is a nonprofit grant-making organization established by the Maryland General Assembly dedicated to improving the natural resources of Maryland and the Chesapeake region through environmental education, community engagement, and local watershed restoration. The Trust's grantees engage hundreds of thousands of individuals annually in projects that have a measurable impact on the waterways and other natural resources of the region. The Trust is supported by the sale of the Chesapeake Bay license plate, donations to the Chesapeake Bay and Endangered Species Fund on the Maryland State income tax form, donations from individuals and corporations, and partnerships with private foundations and federal, state, and local governments. The Trust has received the highest rating from Charity Navigator for sixteen years. On average, 90 percent of the Trust's expenditures are directed to its restoration and education programs.

About the Wildlife and Heritage Division of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources

The Wildlife and Heritage Service regularly reviews its database to determine areas it considers priorities for acquisition to maintain the quality of the unusual ecosystems, natural communities, or habitats for rare species. These recommendations are used by Maryland Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy, and other conservation organizations interested in purchasing ecologically significant properties. The Department of Natural Resources receives dedicated funding, through a very small percentage of the real estate transfer tax, called the Heritage Conservation Fund to be used specifically for the purchase of important natural areas harboring habitats for rare species or unique natural communities.