



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION
Saving a National Treasure

Outdoor Learning Network Initiative Welcomes Baltimore City Public Schools

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CHESAPEAKE BAY TRUST

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(Annapolis, MD) – The Chesapeake Bay Trust, in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, is pleased to welcome Baltimore City Public Schools to the Outdoor Learning Network Initiative (OLNI).

OLNI is a capacity building opportunity designed to advance environmental literacy goals by establishing local networks comprised of school districts and organizations who are committed to partnering and working collectively to embed environmental education into school system curriculum long-term. The Initiative provides training, technical assistance, and ongoing support from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Local Concepts, as well as direct funding from the Chesapeake Bay Trust and NOAA over a two-year period.

“Meaningful environmental education lays the foundation for future restoration and protection of our local natural resources, said **Dr. Jana Davis, president of the Chesapeake Bay Trust**. “This program creates long-lasting networks and partnerships for the school system to ensure that environmental literacy is not just a focus but becomes an integral part of the curriculum as a whole.”

Baltimore City Public Schools will partner with Baltimore City Recreation & Parks and Living Classrooms Foundation to build their collaborative network. OLNI offers the training and support to establish a local environmental literacy leadership team, develop an environmental literacy plan for the school district, establish new partnerships, provide teacher professional development training, and design and implement a systemic Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience program.

“The OLNI partnerships strive to ensure that every student in the district graduates with a comprehensive understanding of the environment, their community’s connections to it, and the responsibility we all share in protecting it,” said **Tom Ackerman, Vice President for Education for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation**.

It has been demonstrated in the Mid-Atlantic region that integrating environmental education programs into the curriculum has benefits for environmental literacy, academic achievement, and building an environmental stewardship ethic. Yet data of systemic environmental literacy programs in the region shows geographic gaps. In 2015, the Chesapeake Bay Program working with the State Departments of Education developed an environmental literacy survey to assess school districts capacities and needs. The results of the survey showed the degree of support needed to advance the implementation of environmental education programming regionally. As a result, OLN was designed to address the identified gaps in high-need school districts on a regional scale.

“The education of all students should include a strong environmental component,” said **Manager of Environmental Literacy and Partnerships for NOAA’s Chesapeake Bay Office, Shannon Sprague**. “By filling the gaps and creating lasting programs with meaningful environmental experiences for our students, we ensure the future advancement of research and restoration in the Chesapeake Bay region.”

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 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 Maryland Treasure the Chesapeake license plate; donations to the Chesapeake Bay and Endangered Species Fund on the Maryland State income tax form; donations made by hunters, fishers, and boaters in the Maryland online natural resource licensing system; donations from individuals and corporations; and partnerships with private foundations and federal, state, and local governments that enable grant-making watershed-wide. The Trust has received the highest rating from Charity Navigator for over two decades: On average, 90% of the Trust’s expenditures are directed to its restoration and education programs.

About the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office (www.fisheries.noaa.gov) uses science, service, and stewardship to improve the health of the Chesapeake Bay and ensure its sustainable use for generations to come. As part of NOAA Fisheries’ Office of Habitat Conservation, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office apply science and engage communities to tackle problems and challenges facing the Bay. Work includes habitat science, oyster restoration, sustainable fisheries, climate resiliency; and environmental literacy. To carry out this work, the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office is organized into three branches: Environmental Literacy and Partnerships, Ecosystem Science and Synthesis, and Scientific Operations. NOAA is a partner in the Chesapeake Bay Program, leading the Program’s fisheries, environmental literacy, and climate resiliency efforts, and supporting the habitat work. The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office was formally established by Congress in 1992. We are based in Annapolis, Maryland. Staff are also stationed at the Environmental Science Training Center on the Cooperative Oxford Laboratory campus in Oxford, Maryland, and at the NOAA Marine Center in Norfolk, Virginia.

About the Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Founded in 1967, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (www.cbf.org) is the largest independent conservation organization dedicated solely to saving the Bay. CBF fights for effective, science-based solutions to the pollution degrading the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers and streams. Our motto, "Save the Bay," is a regional rallying cry for pollution reduction throughout the Chesapeake's six-state, 64,000-square-mile watershed, which is home to more than 18 million people and 3,000 species of plants and animals. With offices in Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia and 15 field centers, CBF leads the way in restoring the Bay and its rivers and streams. For more than 50 years, we have created broad understanding of the Bay's poor health, engaged public leaders in making commitments to restore the Chesapeake, and fought successfully to create a new approach to cleanup that features real accountability—the Chesapeake Clean Water Blueprint.

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