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The Chesapeake Bay Trust Unveils Green Headquarters in Annapolis to “Walk the Walk”

The renovation is a model of realistic, cost-effective solutions for addressing stormwater, energy, materials waste, and human health

(Annapolis, MD) – The Chesapeake Bay Trust, with support from the State of Maryland, Anne Arundel County, Grayce B. Kerr Fund, Inc., France-Merrick Foundation, and dozens more supporters, unveiled its net-zero Green Headquarters in Annapolis on May 15. The half-acre parcel, once almost entirely impervious surface that added to local stormwater pollution, now models a variety of sustainable practices in the realms of green energy, stormwater treatment, and health and wellness.

Established in 1985 by the Maryland General Assembly, the Bay Trust empowers people to restore and experience nature by providing grants to communities who want to improve wildlife habitat, manage and treat stormwater, and create outdoor experiences for community members – very much like the practices it just installed on its own property. The organization has grown tremendously to meet increasing demand by communities, doubling four times in the last twenty years and now making \$20-30 million in grants per year, and needed more space. The Bay Trust purchased a half-acre property in 2018 in the maritime community of Eastport and repurposed an existing structure into a headquarters for its growing operations. To match its mission, the Bay Trust raised funds from generous donors (rather than taking resources away from grantees) and completed a renovation to “walk the walk” and transform the lot into a net-zero energy and as close to net-zero stormwater as possible property.

Today, a ceremonial ribbon cutting with state and county leaders, vendors, donors, and other stakeholders celebrates this demonstration site for the area.

“The Chesapeake Bay Trust is a model for empowering and engaging people to take everyday actions that protect the Chesapeake Bay and other local waterways and natural resources,” shared Congresswoman Sarah Elfreth, who helped secure funding for the renovation when she served as a Maryland State Senator for District 30. “This renovation mirrors this grantmaking approach, serving as a model for local office buildings and average property owners to make sustainable choices.”

To address the site’s original 90% imperviousness, rain gardens, pervious parking, and rain barrels were installed to treat the water produced during most rainstorm events. The combined stormwater practices at the site treat 100% of every 5.2-inch rainstorm event (which happens on average every 10 years, called the “10-year storm”) or less, and even most of the “100-year storm” (8.2 inches of rain) that hits the property, keeping pollutants from flowing into Spa Creek, the Severn River, and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. The Bay Trust administers grants for others, like faith-based institutions, local governments, schools, community centers, and homeowners associations, to install rain gardens, permeable surfaces and rain barrels just like the practices found on its property.

“As a nonprofit supporting on-the-ground projects to protect local streams, rivers and bays, this renovation was an opportunity to demonstrate that going green can be cost-effective and accessible,” shared Maryland State Senator for District 32 Pamela Beidle, who also helped secure funding from the State for the renovation. “The property’s green practices, indoors and outdoors, promote sustainability and health.”

Other green practices installed on the property address energy, materials waste, and human health. The rooftop solar array was designed to be “net energy zero,” producing as much energy as the property uses, and batteries store that energy to further reduce the need to rely on the electrical grid. Outdoor recreation and gathering spaces encourage time outdoors, improving human health for staff and the community. An electric vehicle (EV) charging station will soon be available for visitors to charge up, reducing the greenhouse gas emissions that affect the climate. Inside, the Bay Trust follows more than a dozen sustainable business practices, ranging from use of recycled building materials to energy efficient lightbulbs to low-flow toilets.

"This moment marks a significant step forward in building a more sustainable Anne Arundel County," said County Executive Steuart Pittman. "Our partnership with the Chesapeake Bay Trust, supported by the 2023 county bond, is critical to advancing green infrastructure and stormwater management practices. I deeply value the Trust's leadership and believe the net-zero campus will have a long-term, positive impact on our communities."

In addition to the State of Maryland, Anne Arundel County, Grayce B. Kerr Fund, Inc., and France-Merrick Foundation, the renovation was also funded by Clayton Baker Trust, Batza Family Foundation, Brown Advisory, The MHE Foundation, Inc./Matthew Earl and Diane K. McBee, Doug Lashley, Southface Institute, Tom and Michelle Ervin, Robert W. and Janellen Frantz, Christoffer Graae and Mary Kfoury, Great Chesapeake Bay Swim, W. Warren and Anne Hamel, Henry H. and Nancy A. Hopkins, Dr. and Mrs. Kris H. Jenner, The Núñez and Hamilton Family, John and Lise Valliant, and dozens more generous supporters.

“The Bay Trust leverages collaborations with individuals, corporations, foundations and governments to empower thousands of everyday people every year to lead projects in and for their communities, and we wanted to follow their example by doing the same on our own property,” shared Dr. Jana Davis, president of the Chesapeake Bay Trust. “We are incredibly thankful to all of our stakeholders and donors who made this renovation possible, helping us inspire other property owners and community leaders to go green.”

For more about the net-zero property, visit <https://cbtrust.org/green-headquarters/>.

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About the Chesapeake Bay Trust

The Chesapeake Bay Trust (www.cbtrust.org) envisions a restored and protected Chesapeake Bay watershed and other natural resources in our area, from the Coastal Bays to the Chesapeake to the Youghiogheny River. We empower local community-based groups on the ground with the resources they need to take on a meaningful and measurable role in restoring forests, streams, rivers, bays, wildlife, and more in their own communities. Every year, the Trust empowers about 400 groups by providing grants and technical assistance to accomplish environmental education, community outreach, and local watershed restoration projects. The Trust is supported by the sale of the Protect the Chesapeake & Coastal Bays 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. The Trust has received the highest rating from Charity Navigator for over two decades. On average, 90 cents of every dollar are directed to the Trust’s restoration and education programs.