



Citizens Advisory Committee

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March 27, 2020

Dana Aunkst
Director, U.S. EPA Chesapeake Bay Program
410 Severn Ave, Suite 112
Annapolis, MD 21403

Sent via Email

Dear Dana,

We are writing to request that the Chesapeake Bay Program allocate funding to the Stewardship Goal Implementation Team's (GIT5) Public Access Workgroup to conduct a new analysis and develop a map delineating the lengths or stretches of shoreline areas in the Chesapeake Bay watershed that are accessible for public water-based recreation, along with information on the types and quality of the recreational access opportunities available.

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) has long advocated for increased public access to the Chesapeake's waterways as a critical tool for engaging the 18 million people who live in the watershed – and particularly our youth – in the ongoing restoration effort. Since the 1987 Chesapeake Bay Agreement first established public access goals and commitments for the Bay Program, it has been estimated that less than 2% of the tidal shoreline of the Chesapeake is publicly accessible. That 2% figure is believed to represent the sum total of all the federal, state and local public lands along the Bay's shoreline. It is now over 30 years old, reflects only tidal shoreline, and not the thousands of miles of non-tidal shoreline along the watershed's rivers and fifth-order and above streams and does not account for new water-based recreational "areas" that have been established in the past 30 years.

As you know, the *2014 Chesapeake Watershed Agreement* focuses on increasing the total number of access "sites" or "points." These new "sites" or "points" are welcome and needed additions to fill gaps in the watershed's access system but, in our view simply counting sites, does not reflect the quality of access, the multiple opportunities for recreation that may be available or desired by the public on existing public lands or the needs and demands of different recreational users. We believe that, in addition to expanding the number of access "sites" or "points," it would be useful to measure, map and make available to the citizens in the watershed the lengths or stretches of tidal and appropriate non-tidal shoreline that are publicly accessible and the types and quality of recreational options available in those "areas."



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The requested study would build upon the work, definitions and criteria, and recommendations of the 2013 Chesapeake Bay Public Access Plan. It would establish an updated baseline and narrative to be maintained and built on for achieving citizens' needs and demands for improved access to the Chesapeake watershed's bays, rivers and streams. It would provide an important opportunity to further engage the public, as well as local governments, in the stewardship of the Bay's waterways. It may also reveal additional gaps and opportunities in the watershed's public access system and help distinguish lands held in public trust but not currently accessible for reasons of safety or sensitive natural areas.

We hope that you will give full and careful consideration to this request.

Sincerely,



Matt Ehrhart
Chair, Citizens Advisory Committee

cc: John Davy, National Park Service, Co-Chair CBP Public Access Planning Team
Jonathan Doherty, National Park Service, Asst. Superintendent, Chesapeake Bay Office
Jackie Kramer, National Park Service, Co-Chair CBP Public Access Planning Team
Wendy O'Sullivan, National Park Service, Superintendent, Chesapeake Bay Office