

Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) Informational Session: Local Government Advisory Committee

DECEMBER 2023

The Offices of Senator Van Hollen and Congressman Sarbanes



A National Park Unit for the Chesapeake

- The CNRA would elevate individual sites of cultural, historic, environmental, and recreational importance across the Bay as a “string of pearls.”
- The designation of National Recreation Area would help conserve the Bay, increase public access, and deliver additional federal resources to spur economic growth and prosperity.



CNRA Timeline

- 1986:** First call for a Chesapeake National Park- idea for “string of pearls” linked land-based sites around Chesapeake
- 2004:** NPS releases a special resource study that finds the Chesapeake Bay is “unquestionably nationally significant and a major part of the nation’s heritage.”
- 2019:** Sen. Van Hollen begins working with Rep. Sarbanes, requesting drafting service from NPS to outline legislation.
- 2020:** Maryland Governor Larry Hogan and Virginia Governor Ralph Northam share their backing in letters to Congress.
- 2021:** The lawmakers announce a working group to foster further discussion with stakeholders and community members on the project.
- 2022:** The lawmakers release a set of guiding principles and a draft legislative text.
- 2023:** The lawmakers revise the draft based on stakeholder input and introduce the *Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act* (S. 2620 & H.R. 5045).

CNRA Guiding Principles

Senator Van Hollen and Congressman Sarbanes believe that any legislation creating a Chesapeake National Recreation Area should align with the following principles, which were developed in collaboration with the CNRA Working Group:

- 1. National Significance of Bay**
- 2. Land-based Proposal**
- 3. Respect Land Rights**
- 4. Public Engagement**
- 5. Alignment with Goals of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement**
- 6. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**
- 7. Increasing Public Access**
- 8. Increasing Tourism in the Bay Watershed**
- 9. Creating a Culture of Stewardship**
- 10. Citizen Advisory Commission**

www.vanhollen.senate.gov/cnra

CNRA Advisory Commission

The Advisory Commission of 19 members will represent Maryland and Virginia equally.

Membership will consist of:

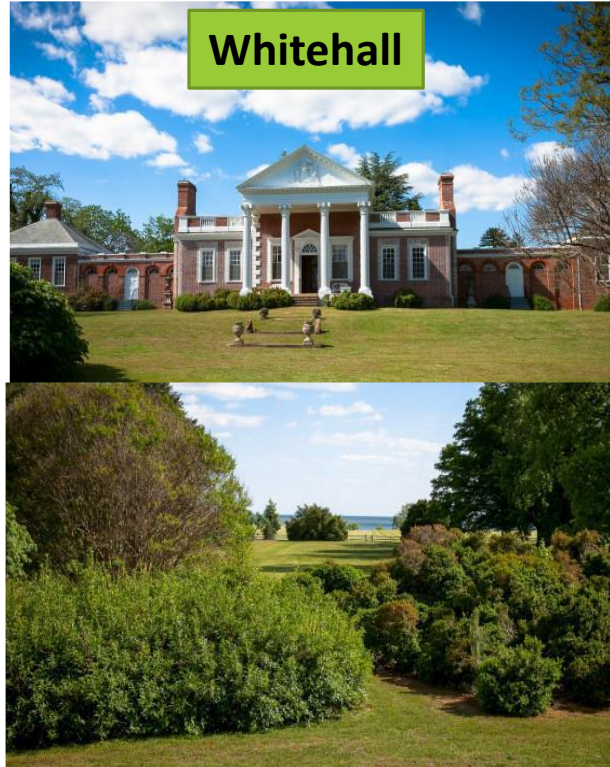
- 8 representatives with **knowledge of environmental, recreational, environmental justice, cultural or historic resources, education, or interpretation;**
- 2 representatives with **knowledge of the agricultural interests of the Bay;**
- 2 representatives with **knowledge of the commercial fishing interests of the Bay;**
- 2 **youth representatives;**
- 2 **Tribal representatives** from state and federally recognized Tribes that are traditionally associated with the Chesapeake Bay;
- 2 representatives, 1 **selected by each of the Governors of Maryland and Virginia;** and
- the **Executive Director of the Chesapeake Bay Commission.**

Initial CNRA Sites

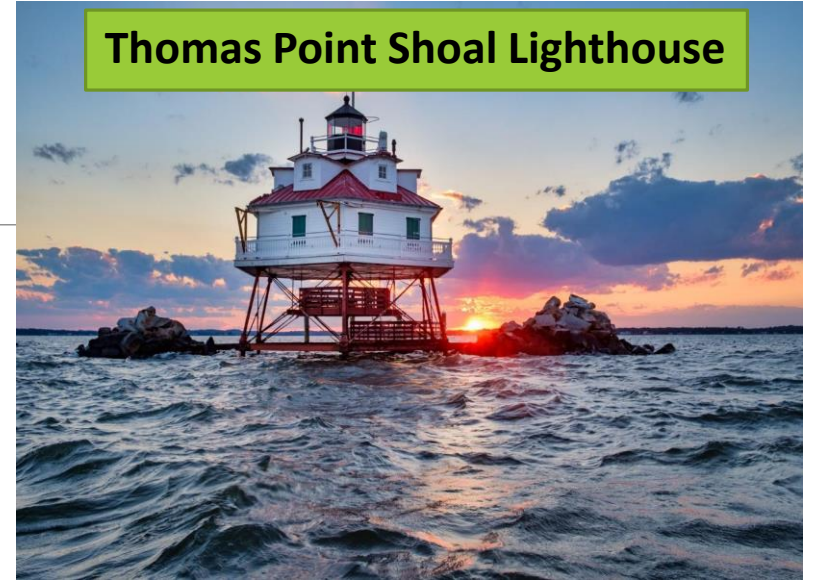
Fort Monroe – North Beach



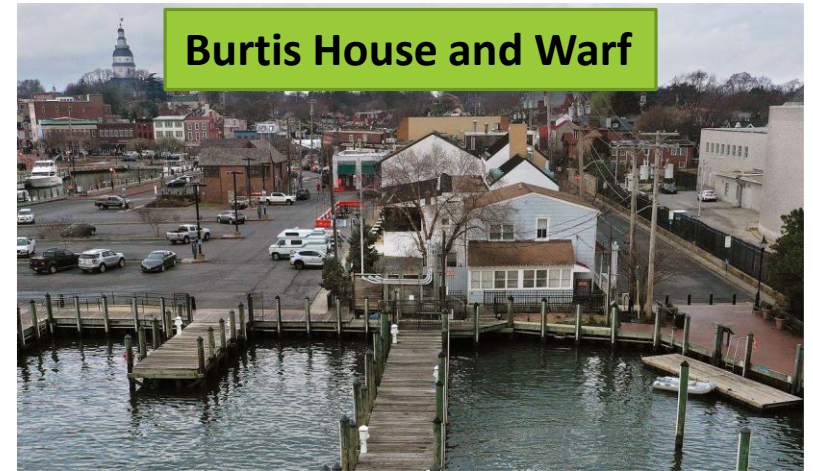
Whitehall



Thomas Point Shoal Lighthouse



Burtis House and Warf



The CNRA Act **WILL:**

- **Permit the NPS to acquire or partner with Burtis House, Whitehall, Thomas Point Shoal Lighthouse, and the North Beach of Fort Monroe** to serve as the first sites within the CNRA;
- **Establish a CNRA Advisory Commission** of local stakeholders who will advise NPS;
- **ONLY allow NPS to acquire additional lands or property through voluntary means** – donation, purchase from a willing seller, exchange, or transfer from another agency in consultation with the CNRA Advisory Commission;
- **Allow NPS to enter into voluntary “opt-in” partner site and cooperative management agreements** with and provide federal funding to eligible entities that wish to be included in the CNRA, in consultation with the CNRA Advisory Commission.
- **Direct NPS to collect community feedback and conduct transportation planning** on the initial CNRA sites, in accordance with the NPS planning process.

The CNRA Act WILL NOT:

- Authorize NPS to impose any additional regulations on recreational or commercial business activities in the Chesapeake Bay waters, including existing water navigation and fishing activities;
 - The legislative text explicitly states *“nothing in this Act impacts or otherwise affects statutory or regulatory authority with respect to navigation or regulation of commercial or recreational fishing activities or shellfish aquaculture in the Chesapeake Bay or tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay.”*
- Authorize NPS to supersede state authority in fish and wildlife management efforts;
- Authorize NPS to acquire property from unwilling landowners; nor
- Authorize NPS to impose any additional regulations governing non-participating private or public landowners.



Legislative Progress

- A Discussion Draft released in November 2022.
 - Public Comment Period was open for nearly six months.
 - Listening and informational sessions are ongoing.
- Following stakeholder input and revisions, the **CNRA Act** was introduced in July 2023.
- Once passed, the CNRA Advisory Commission will start developing criteria and a multi-year public engagement effort will begin to create NPS planning documents.

NPS Planning and Management

- A NPS unit's planning portfolio extends from the foundation document to site-specific resource and visitor use management plans, creating a logical, trackable guide for future park management actions.
- A Management Plan takes 1-3 years to develop – the CNRA Act text directs consultation with the **Chesapeake Executive Council** and Advisory Commission.



**Park Planning Includes Purposeful
Civic Engagement and Public Review**

Existing National Recreation Areas



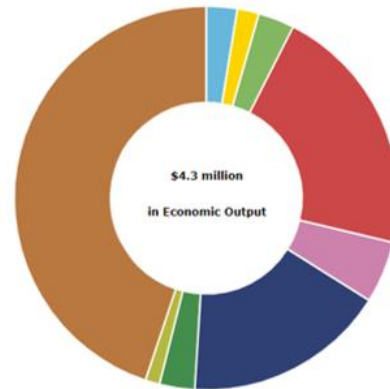
Local Economic Impact of NRAs

SAMPLE NRAs ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS TO COMMUNITIES (2021)

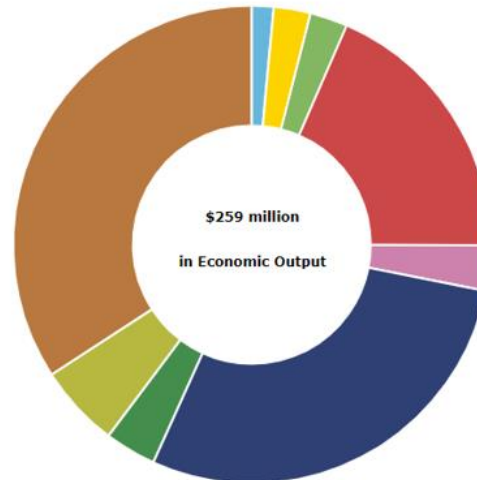
Directly Affected Sectors



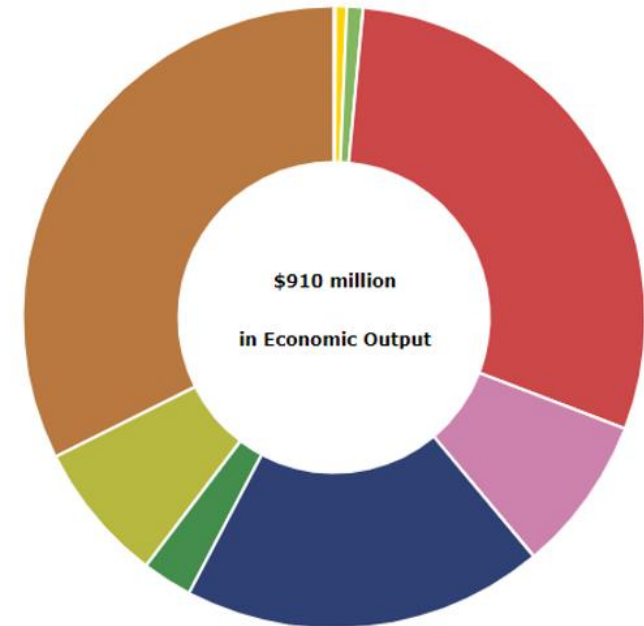
Secondary Effects



Boston Harbor Islands



Gateways (NY/NJ)



Golden Gate

Questions and Comments?

www.vanhollen.senate.gov/cnra

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