

Partnership conserves farmland in Nanticoke Rural Legacy Area

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An innovative public-private partnership permanently protected 233 acres located in the Nanticoke Rural Legacy Area, conserving forests, productive farmland, and wetlands.

This easement will also preserve a rural and open landscape under the airspace of the Atlantic Test Range where the U.S. Navy completes military aircraft drills. The area is also home to diverse wildlife where the Nanticoke River and associated wetland habitats are recognized for their national significance to the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and National Wetlands Priority Conservation Plan.

In December 2018, the U.S. Navy and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, with transactional support from The Nature Conservancy and The Conservation Fund, acquired a perpetual conservation easement on the 233-acre property. The land will remain in private ownership and will continue to be managed for farming and other resource-based activities, but the easement precludes future development or incompatible use of the property with conservation objectives of the Rural Legacy Area.

This conservation effort was made possible with funding from the Department of Defense's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program (REPI), the Maryland Rural Legacy Program, and through

private funds from the Chesapeake Conservancy through the support of Mt. Cuba Center.

Chesapeake Conservancy and partners advocate for state and private dollars to support conservation in the Nanticoke Rural Legacy Area as part of a broad scope of protection for the Nanticoke River and the communities it supports.

“For two decades the Rural Legacy Program has worked to conserve and maintain the rural character and countryside of our state, now and for future generations,” Maryland Department of Natural Resources Secretary Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio said. “With the strong support of Governor Larry Hogan, these thriving public-private partnerships allow local decision-makers to determine the best way to protect the landscapes that are critical to our economy, environment and quality of life.”

“It is always a privilege for The Nature Conservancy to work with the farm families in the Nanticoke Rural Legacy Area,” said Elizabeth Zucker, director of conservation for The Nature Conservancy on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. “It is truly impressive how dedicated the landowners are to preserving their farms and the rural landscape for their families, and for the greater agricultural community. Easements like these will help preserve the unique beauty, ecology, and farming culture of the Eastern Shore for generations to come.”

“It is an honor to partner with the Chesapeake Conservancy on a project that advances REPI’s mission to protect our land, promote the livelihoods of hardworking Americans, and safeguard our nation’s defense. Maintaining working lands in the Nanticoke Rural Legacy Area will not only bolster local economic productivity, but also ensure that the Navy can continue to develop, test, and evaluate safe and effective aircraft for our nation’s service men and women,” said Kristin Thomsgard, director of the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program

“This is a wonderful example of how a conservation solution can provide both economic and environmental benefits for wildlife and landowners, while helping to protect the mission of the U.S. Navy’s Atlantic Test Range,” said Bill Crouch, Maryland state director for The Conservation Fund. “We are especially grateful to the U.S. Congress for annually funding the REPI program which supports critical land protection efforts like this, and we thank U.S. Senators Ben Cardin and Chris Van Hollen and U.S. Representatives Steny Hoyer and Andy Harris for their continued support for the program.”

“Thanks to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the US Navy and conservation partners for helping to bring together this important project for the Nanticoke Rural Legacy Area,” said Chesapeake Conservancy Vice President and Director of Programs Susan Shingledecker. “The vision of programs like these help to preserve the rural character of this Chesapeake Bay tributary, and all of the benefits it provides to water quality, wildlife, and native plants. The commitment of landowners in the Nanticoke is an inspiring look to preserving these cultural and environmental qualities for future generations.”

“It is an honor to be a part of yet another conservation success story in the Nanticoke Rural Legacy Area. Every conserved acre makes a big impact on protecting Delmarva’s rich biodiversity,” Mt. Cuba Center President Ann Rose said.