

Joel Dunn: Let's celebrate the expansion of Quiet Waters Park

By CAPITAL GAZETTE LETTERS
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Of the many visitors to Quiet Waters Park, how many know about Mary Parker, the last owner of the park's original farmland?

Now age 107, Ms. Parker spent most of her life on a 19-acre parcel adjacent to the park. On Oct. 12, this parcel was sold to Anne Arundel County. The land will be integrated into the rest of Quiet Waters Park allowing visitors to forever enjoy the beautiful views, majestic wildlife, water access, and outdoor adventure along the South River shoreline. This is very good news about a special place for our community.

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Though it may be surprising to some, conservation of the original property in 1987 and the establishment of Quiet Waters Park was neither a foregone conclusion nor a walk in the park. The entire landscape was nearly developed as a neighborhood of 250 homes.



Joel Dunn is president and CEO of Chesapeake Conservancy, an Annapolis based non-profit that works to protect Chesapeake Bay landscapes from development. (Courtesy photo/HANDOUT)

Thanks to the vision and dedicated efforts of former Anne Arundel County Executive James Lighthizer, the property has become one of the County's most popular parks and a key place where the public can connect with nature. Lighthizer has said that it was the toughest political fight in his 16 years of politics, but I think it proved to be one of the most rewarding.

Lighthizer's admirable vision for the park included the entire 359 acres, but a waterfront portion of the farm remained private for Parker's residence. With the county's recent purchase of this land, our current County Executive Stuart Pittman

and the County Council have completed the original vision.

The purchase was made possible through their leadership of a remarkable public-private partnership that included federal funding from the Navy's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program, state funding from Program Open Space, county funding, and a large private donation from the Chesapeake Conservancy given to them by local philanthropists James and Sylvia Earl.

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This remarkable achievement is worthy of celebration. Instead of a 19-acre property covered with new luxury homes looming over the park, residents and military families stationed here will have expanded recreation and open space opportunities at the park. This will also protect natural habitat for osprey, box turtles, and foxes that live here in one of the last mostly undeveloped sections of South River shoreline. While the property does include several structures, such as a boathouse on Loden Pond, they offer various potential benefits too, such as new public water access to Loden Pond and the South River.

The Earl family not only helped fund the land acquisition, but also expects to provide additional funds for the Chesapeake Conservancy to work with Anne Arundel County Recreation and Parks to explore public recreation options at the site as well as repurposing the structures to house local conservation nonprofits, including Chesapeake Conservancy.

By bringing several organizations together in one location, the Earls hope that these conservation organizations can pool resources, enhance their effectiveness and accomplish more for our community, by improving water quality, protecting wildlife habitat and preserving our way of life on the shores of the Chesapeake.

On behalf of Chesapeake Conservancy, I would like to thank Pittman and the County Council for stepping up to conserve this treasure on the South River, the Earl family for their vision and commitment to bettering the community, and Parker who served as a steward of this land for so many decades.

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