



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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**PREPARED BY THE MARYLAND
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

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A Message from the Secretary ...

In my first year as Secretary of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, I have seen the skill and dedication of this department's team in action on a regular basis. This publication is a snapshot of what DNR staff accomplish for the people of Maryland every year.

This year has been one of transition in many ways. Governor Wes Moore was named chair of the Executive Council of Chesapeake Bay Program. During an Eastern Shore "Bay Day" tour in July, the governor announced a major policy shift in how Maryland will deploy state resources to improve water quality and restore the Chesapeake and our Atlantic Coastal Bays. Maryland will focus water quality improvement projects in specific areas with the most potential to improve wildlife habitat and populations and bolster shorelines from rising sea levels. This will help striped bass and blue crab populations recover.

Additionally, we put forth new regulations to protect spawning striped bass. These management actions will complement additional fishing cuts expected to be taken by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission next year in response to the coastwide population decline in recent years.

We saw some of our team's long-term efforts at oyster restoration yielding results. The annual Fall Oyster Survey recorded a spatfall intensity index, a measure of reproductive success and potential population growth for oysters, of 86.8 spat, or juvenile oysters, per bushel. We have not recorded this extent of oyster spat recruitment in the fall survey in a generation.

On land, our ongoing effort to plant 5 million new trees in Maryland during the next decade will add new streamside buffers along rural and suburban areas as well as increase tree canopy in our cities to prevent polluted runoff and cool temperatures.

Also we continued to meet the growing need for more public spaces and parks by purchasing and conserving properties through Program Open Space. For example, the addition of the Old South Mountain Inn property will add a historic gem to state lands near Boonsboro that already includes several popular parks in the South Mountain Recreation Area.

And in October, we introduced our first-ever Science Week, an effort to show the media and the public the work that our team does every day to meet DNR's mission - leading Maryland toward a resilient future by using data, partnerships, and an innovative spirit to improve ecological, social, and economic outcomes for all communities.

Josh Kurtz
Secretary, Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Maryland Park Service

Photo: Jenna Linhart

What is the Maryland Park Service?

The mission of the Maryland Park Service is to manage the natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources to provide for wise stewardship and enjoyment by people.

Total Visitors: 17,803,345

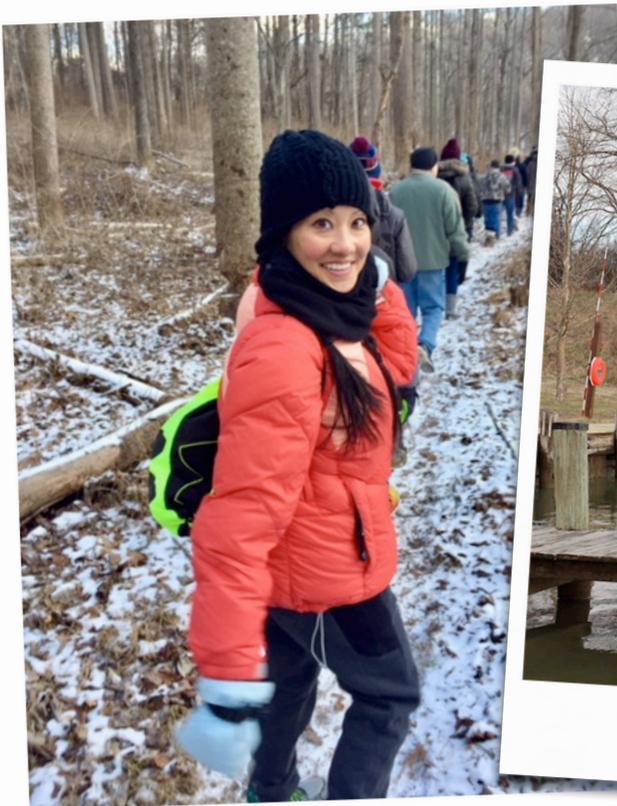
245 Full Time Staff

4,896 people hiked **9,780** miles during First Day Hikes in 41 state parks on New Year's weekend. Between Dec. 31, 2022 and Jan. 2, 2023, there were **37** scheduled ranger-led programs with an additional **23** self-guided opportunities available on state public lands across Maryland.

20 new State Park Rangers graduated as the 13th class of the Maryland Park Service's modern ranger school program that was established in 2009.

35 members graduated from the Maryland Conservation Corps, having improved more than **3,500** acres of parks and public lands; planted more than 9,700 native trees, bay grasses and plants; treated more than **7,200** trees against harmful insects and diseases; and taught environmental education programs to more than **23,000** students, youth, and park visitors.

Ranger Angela Crenshaw was named the Director of the Maryland Park Service – becoming the first Black woman to hold the position in the department's history.





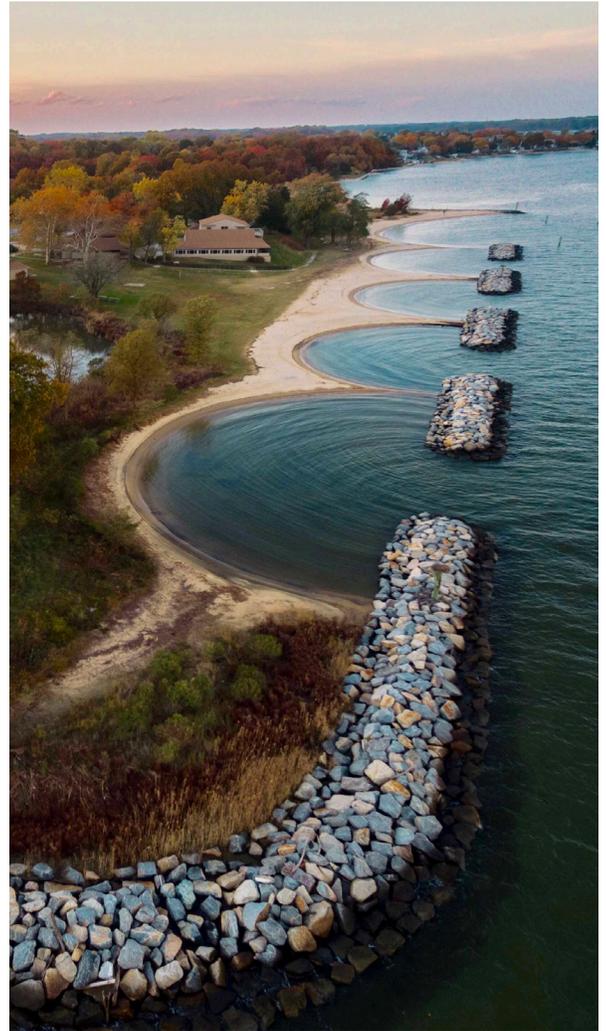
Chesapeake and Coastal Service

Photo: Addison Likins

What is the Chesapeake and Coastal Service?

Maryland's Chesapeake and Coastal Service (CCS), a unit of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, works to ensure that the state and its communities are equipped to better balance the often competing and occasionally conflicting demands and needs of Chesapeake and coastal resource use, economic development and conservation.

We do this through financial and technical assistance to state and local partners, rigorous use of science, strong public participation, education and effective intergovernmental coordination. CCS supports the department's mission through partnerships with federal, state, and local government agencies; regional and international institutions; universities; formal and non-formal k-12 and community-based educators; nongovernmental organizations and the private sector. With programs that have a foundation in science and enable its on-the-ground application, we are providing essential services for our communities' resilience to a changing climate and economic well-being.



Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Coastal Trust Fund supported projects to reduce

3,591,722

pounds of nitrogen reduced; **24,926** pounds of phosphorus; and **4,552** tons of suspended solids from reaching the mainstem of the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Coastal Bays.

63

applications requesting Waterway Improvement Funding were awarded grants for **19** dredging related projects, **37** public motorboat facility improvements, and acquisition of **7**

400

unique users created **MyCoast-MD** accounts (www.mycoast.org/md) to document nuisance and precipitation based flooding throughout Maryland.

364

site visits were performed to provide technical and financial assistance and engage in restoration and assessment activities.

30

projects supported to-date through the Resiliency through Restoration Initiative, of which **8** projects were completed.

4

new Maryland Clean Marina Certified and **25** Clean Marinas recertified, confirming they continue to voluntarily implement pollution practices and comply with all environmental regulations.



78 marinas enrolled in the Pumpout Operations and Maintenance Program to assist marinas in keeping pumpouts operational and available to the public.

5,200 petroleum control kits provided to recreational boaters to capture small spills and leaks.

100,000+ gallons of marine sewage removed by 3 pumpout boat operators funded by DNR. .

116 stakeholders trained on “Planning for Sea Level Rise and using the 2022 MD Sea Level rise Guidance Document”

225 Federal Consistency Reviews issued to support review of federal projects in Maryland’s coastal zone.

64,225 people visited the Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. **13,914** visitors participated in onsite programs and **4,675** K-12 students were engaged. In addition, **11,963** volunteer hours were logged at the Estuarine Research Reserve sites.



Maryland Natural Resources Police

Who are the Maryland Natrual Resources Police?

They protect people, communities, and the natural resources of Maryland through safety, trust, and shared stewardship. Striving toward a future where the Natural Resources Police champions equity, innovation, and wellness, earning trust by protecting Maryland's natural resources and communities, and growing as a learning organization at every level.

The Maryland Natural Resources Police, a full-service statewide law enforcement agency, exists to **enforce** all laws and regulations statewide through proactive, fair, and professional policing to ensure public safety and resource protection.

Conserve Maryland's natural resources through effective law enforcement, stewardship, and educational outreach. **Protect** Maryland coastal and inland waters, ensuring safety and security as the State's maritime homeland security agency. **Provide** maritime and land-based search and rescue operations to assist in emergencies and safeguard lives.

Support and collaborate with public safety partners at the local, state, and federal levels by coordinating emergency response, disaster preparedness, and mutual aid efforts to protect lives, property, and resources. **Engage** multifaceted communities, especially those historically underrepresented, by fostering inclusion, transparency, and partnership through education and outreach. **Build** public trust by demonstrating our core values of character, stewardship, and valor in every aspect of service.



Fishing and Boating Services



What does Fishing and Boating Services do?

The mission of Maryland's Fishing and Boating Services is to sustainably manage and conserve the state's fisheries, providing equitable access to fishing opportunities for the public while supporting the ecological and economic health of the state's aquatic resources. This is achieved through scientific investigation, monitoring, and strategic management to ensure balanced ecological and economic benefits for current and future generations.



Photo: John Gallagher



Photo: Dave Taylor

The Black Bass Conservation Fund was created by the Maryland General Assembly. The revenue is used for stocking black bass, enhancing habitat, supporting conservation during black bass tournaments, and supporting scientific research related to conservation of the resource.

33,000 redear sunfish and bluegill were produced at the Joseph Manning Warmwater Hatchery to supplement populations in impoundments through the state. Some of the bluegill are provided to support the "Sunfish in Schools" program, in which **100** teachers participate.

Staff stocked **13** impoundments and 11 streams or rivers for fish population maintenance and rehabilitation. A total of **79,000** juvenile brown and rainbow trout were stocked as well as **1.2 million** warmwater fish representing nine species. The department stocked **266,150** rainbow and golden trout adults and **18,500** brown trout adults for put-and-take and special management areas. In total, Maryland hatcheries supported **53** youth fishing events - **33** events with **4,850** rainbow and golden trout, **13** events were stocked with **3,100** hybrid sunfish.

Hydrographic Operations placed more than **3,500** buoys, signs, and day-markers in over **320** rivers, creeks, and streams statewide. Crews deployed and maintained boating-season markers, oyster-season buoys, float-free channel markers, clam lines, SAV markers, speed-limit zones, danger markers, and other navigation aids across Maryland's waters.

The unit removed and/or destroyed **32** abandoned or derelict vessels—including sailboats, powerboats, houseboats, and personal watercraft

1,750 direct inquiries from the public related to fishing and boating within the state were processed.

248 emails were distributed to up to **170,230** subscribers to the unit's mailing lists. **32** unit-related press releases involving staff were put out by the department.

Licensing and Registration Service



What does the Licensing and Registration Service do?

The DNR licensing and registration service **manages the sale and issuance of various permits and licenses for recreational and commercial activities**, such as hunting, fishing, and boat or off-road vehicle registration. It provides services through a centralized online portal (like MD Outdoors in Maryland) and through in-person service centers for customers. The service handles the collection of related fees, excise taxes, and ensures compliance with state regulations.



The Maryland Department of Natural Resources manages over 250 sport license agents statewide. These agents allow individuals to purchase hunting and fishing licenses locally, often with extended and weekend hours.

2,499,605 COMPASS Customers

561,963 Unique transactions

1,466,097 Products sold

168 Products available

Total Revenue \$51,878,760.35

Maryland Forest Service



Photo: Phillip B. Grove

What does the Maryland Forest Service do?

The Maryland Forest Service restores, manages, and protects Maryland's trees, forests, and forested ecosystems to sustain our natural resources and connect people to the land.

180,000 trees were planted

5 Million Trees initiative: More than 180,000 trees were planted in Maryland in 2023 as part of the initiative, bringing the **total number to 471,890** trees by year's end.

The Backyard Buffer program distributed **40,525** seedlings to Maryland landowners to protect waterways.

Bare root tree and shrub seedlings grown/shipped from the John S. Ayton State Tree Nursery: **2.3 million**

Trees planted under Tree-Mendous Maryland program: **3,255**



Photo: Stephen Badger

More than **300** people responded to the Forest Service's request to collect tree seeds and nuts for the next planting season at the John S. Ayton State Tree Nursery. nursery staff received **60** pounds of dogwood berries, more than 1,000 pounds of black walnuts, and more than **2,000** pounds of white oak and chestnut oak acorns.

- Forest Stewardship Plans and acres MBF of state forests in Western Maryland: **511 on 22,047** acres
- Forest Product Operators licensed: 538
- Consecutive years of Chesapeake Forest Lands maintaining dual certification for sustainable forest management by Sustainable Forestry Initiative and Forest Stewardship Council: **20**



Wildland firefighters responded to **199** fires on **448** acres in Maryland. Interstate Wildfire Response: **52** personnel, **22** assignments, **16** incidents, **9** states, **87** fires on **8,201** acres

Wildlife and Heritage Service



What is the Wildlife and Heritage Service?

The Wildlife and Heritage Service is responsible for managing and conserving Maryland's wildlife, including protecting endangered species, regulating hunting and fishing, and managing habitats. It conducts population monitoring, establishes hunting seasons, protects rare, threatened, and endangered species through the Natural Heritage Program, and provides programs and resources for public education and outdoor recreation.



2,585

Staff banded a total of 2,565 migratory game birds in support of flyway management and monitoring programs. Banding totals included 221 black ducks, 462 mallards, 462 wood ducks, 429 mourning doves, and 949 Canada geese. In addition, 12 Canada geese, 14 Lesser Scaup, 19 wood ducks, 27 black ducks, and 32 mallards

400

More than 400 individuals participated in the Maryland Mentored Hunt Program, with hunts designed to reach youth, new and lapsed hunters, and retain hunters who regularly purchase a Maryland hunting license. Some of these programs include mentored hunts for deer, waterfowl, and turkey.



3,919

Offshore blind and shoreline licenses were issued to landowners and waterfowl hunters, and **2,116** special wildlife permits were issued.

1,263

Specially trained and equipped Wildlife and Heritage staff responded to 1,263 wildlife events (**183 after hours**) with assigned firearms and/or chemical immobilization equipment

More than **50** women participated in the first annual Women in the Outdoors event, a full day of hunting, shooting, and angling-focused stations in partnership with the Maryland State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation.

Maryland Black Bear Management Program tagged **28** cubs from **10** sows in western Maryland. The largest litter was 5 cubs. Since the survey began in 1988, **511** cubs have been born to **177** sows for a long-term average of 2.9 cubs per sow.



Photo: Stephen Badger

617 acres were acquired and added to our statewide system of **64** Wildlife Management Areas, bringing the combined land area to **127,734** acres in total.



Staff tested 1,080 deer from 9 counties in the annual chronic wasting (CWD) disease and epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) surveillance programs – 52 tested positive, and the disease was detected in two new counties, Baltimore and Montgomery, bringing the state to six CWD-positive counties - Allegany, Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, Montgomery, and Washington counties. Of the 14,626 deer tested since 2002, 223 deer have tested positive for CWD.

128 wild turkeys were leg-banded and **50** GPS radio-transmitters were deployed as part of a multi-state research effort investigating turkey ecology in the Mid-Atlantic region.