

# MARYLAND OUTDOOR LEARNING PARTNERSHIP 2025 ANNUAL REPORT



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# Introduction

Governor Wes Moore established the Maryland Outdoor Learning Partnership (OLP or “the Partnership”) by Executive Order (EO) 01.01.2024.15 on April 22, 2024. OLP is charged with empowering all of Maryland's youth to grow as environmental stewards that access, conserve, and restore our natural resources to ensure a climate-ready Maryland. The Executive Order directs the Partnership to “Report to and advise the Governor on the status of the Partnership’s work and provide an annual report by January 30th on the prior year’s progress.”

The Outdoor Learning Partnership’s 2025 Annual Report, highlights the Partnership's work during 2025, including:

- Overview of the Partnership
- Working Groups
- Partnership Membership
- 2025 Partnership Recommendations and Actions and
- Looking forward to 2026

"We owe it to the people of Maryland to keep our drinking water clean, keep our air safe, and preserve our natural treasures – from the Western Mountains to the Chesapeake Bay," said Gov. Moore. “Together, we will continue our work to build a Maryland that is cleaner, greener, and thriving."



# Overview of the Partnership 2025

Co-chaired by Josh Kurtz, Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources, and Dr. Carey M. Wright, State Superintendent of Schools, OLP consists of members representing state and federal agencies, non-profit organizations, Local Education Agencies, Parent-Teacher and youth-based organizations, and other stakeholders.

The Department of Natural Resources and the Maryland State Department of Education provide staff support for the Partnership. OLP meetings are open to the public in accordance with Maryland's Open Meetings Act.



# Working Groups

In alignment with the Responsibilities outlined in Executive Order (EO) 01.01.2024.15, OLP is organized into five working groups, including:

- Environmental and Climate Literacy
- College and Green Careers
- Access to Nature
- School Sustainability
- Networks

Each of the five OLP working groups is a vital contributor to collaboratively fulfilling OLP's responsibility to support the implementation of actions, coordinate resources, make recommendations to decision makers, and monitor progress towards state initiatives.

The **Environmental and Climate Literacy** working group focuses on ensuring that every Maryland Student has access to environmental and climate education and that Maryland's teachers have the funds and training to support student achievement of Maryland State standards as they relate to environmental literacy.

The **College and Green Careers** working group focuses on the development of students' knowledge and skills needed for success in college, the growing green workforce, and supporting Maryland's teachers in these efforts.

The **Access to Nature** working group focuses on Maryland's youth spending time outdoors engaging with the natural world.

The **School Sustainability** working group focuses on ensuring that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) lessen the environmental impact of their school buildings and grounds.

The **Networks** working group focuses on maintaining effective communication and facilitating collaboration between OLP's members as well as the networks and groups vital to our work within and beyond Maryland.

# Membership 2025

## Co-Chairs:

- Josh Kurtz, Secretary, Maryland Department of Natural Resources
- Dr. Carey M. Wright, State Superintendent of Schools

## Members:

### Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

- Stephanie Tuckfield
- Olivia Wisner
- Coreen Weilminster
- Melissa Boyle
- Isabel Layton
- Emily Morrow
- Trystan Sill

### Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)

- Jillian Storms
- Maria Prawirodihardjo
- Jo Anne Murray
- Swapnil Joshi
- Will Forrester

### Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA)

- Karen Fedor

### Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC)

- Lyndsay Silva
- Alexis Merriman

### Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE)

- Lisa Jones

### Maryland Department of Planning (MDP)

- Deborah Herr Cornwell

### Maryland Department of Health (MDH)

- Susannah Beckerman

# Membership 2025

## Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT)

- Katrina Jones

## Maryland Energy Administration (MEA)

- Larissa Pasco

## Maryland Department of Civic Innovation (DSCI)

## Alice Ferguson Foundation

- Michelle Hickerson

## Chesapeake Audubon Society

- Mark Scallion

## Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT)

- Emily Stransky

## Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF)

- Karen Mullin
- Tom Ackerman

## Living Classrooms Foundation

- Christine Truett
- Lorraine Andrews Warnick

## Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF)

- Susanne Richards
- Victoria Stone

## Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE)

- Laura Johnson Collard
- Jemima Clark
- Diane Lill
- Lee Derby

## Maryland Recreation and Parks Association

- Stephen Allen

# Membership 2025

## National Aquarium

- Andrew Walker

## National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

- Shannon Sprague
- Bart Merrick

## National Wildlife Federation (NWF)

- Lindsey Walker

## Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC)

- Anna Davis, Ph.D.
- Karen McDonald

## Sultana Education Foundation

- Chris Cerino
- Jackie Doer

## United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

- Genevieve LaRouche

## Three representatives of non-profit organizations dedicated to environmental education

- Joshua Emery, The Community Ecology Institute
- Rick Garber, NorthBay Education
- Kristen Komlosy, Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School

## One representative of a Parent Teacher Organization

- Amy Sawyer, Mt. Rainier Elementary School

## Two representatives of local governments that have demonstrated leadership in sustainable development practices

- Victoria Howard, Interagency Commission on School Construction
- Vacant

## One district environmental literacy supervisor or coordinator

- Melanie Parker, Ed.D., Anne Arundel County Public Schools

# Membership 2025

One district sustainability supervisor or coordinator

- Joanna Pi-Suyner, Baltimore City Public Schools

One School Superintendent

- Vacant

One environmental education teacher

- Katie Dell, Baltimore County Public Schools

Two representatives of youth-based organizations

- LaShawn Tucker, Dream Big Academy
- Meg Boyd, Youth Climate Institute

Two representatives of the business community with demonstrated leadership in supporting the green or sustainable workforce.

- Chris Wheedleton, Partnership for Learning
- Christina Gladmon, Straughn Environmental

University System of Maryland

- J. Adam Frederick, Maryland Sea Grant
- Chelsea McClure, Towson University
- Sarah Haines, Towson University

Association for Nature-Based Education

- Monica Wiedel-Lubinski

# Recommendations and Actions

In 2025, OLP Working Groups developed four recommendations and six actions intended to empower all of Maryland's youth to grow as environmental stewards that access, conserve, and restore our natural resources to ensure a climate-ready Maryland.

The recommendations and actions developed by the Outdoor Learning Partnership represent the collective technical expertise of the Partnership. As a product of OLP's consensus driven decision-making process, the recommendations and actions reflect the Partnership's shared commitment to advancing environmental and climate literacy rather than a singular priority of any individual member organization. Below are summaries of the endorsed Recommendations and Actions. See Appendix A for full text.

- Recommendations are advisory statements, endorsed by the Partnership, that identify priority opportunities to advance environmental and climate literacy through coordinated action, policy alignment, and strategic investment consistent with the Responsibilities of the OLP Executive Order.
- Actions are specific, time-bound steps, endorsed by the Partnership, that can be taken by OLP or its members to implement progress towards the Responsibilities of the Executive Order through coordination, information sharing, and practical efforts.



# Recommendations and Actions Overview

## Recommendations:

- Revise Maryland’s teacher preparation policies and program requirements to ensure that all pre-service teachers receive training in environmental literacy across content disciplines
- Recognize and Promote Sustainable Schools in Maryland
- Develop a Career and Technology Education (CTE) in “Environmental Management, Sustainability and Technology” pathway
- Hire an Environmental Literacy Specialist at Maryland State Department of Education

## Actions:

- Revise Maryland’s teacher preparation policies and program requirements to ensure that all pre-service teachers receive training in environmental literacy across content disciplines
- Elevate Climate Literacy by establishing guidelines for a Climate Literate Maryland Graduate
- Support gatherings of LEA facilities and operations staff around sustainability
- Maintain and Align State Networks Supporting Environmental Literacy
- Revise the Conservation Careers Guide
- Work to create equitable access to Outdoor Learning for All Maryland Students through the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on Data

# Recommendation

## Revise Maryland’s teacher preparation policies and program requirements to ensure that all pre-service teachers receive training in environmental literacy across content disciplines

The Governor’s Office, Institutes of Higher Education, state leaders, and teacher education stakeholders should prioritize, mandate, and fully integrate environmental and climate literacy across teacher education programs so that every preservice teacher receives robust, cross-disciplinary preparation in environmental literacy. The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.04.17.01 requires that environmental literacy be integrated into Maryland PreK-12 classrooms through the Maryland Environmental Literacy Standards, yet most pre-service teachers are not exposed to practices, pedagogy, and skills in coursework or internships regarding the integration of environmental literacy in the multi-disciplinary classroom. According to the [2024 Environmental Literacy Indicator Tool \(ELIT\) survey results](#), Maryland local education agencies identified high-quality professional development and curriculum planning as necessary to support environmental literacy implementation. This recommendation aligns to the [Blueprint for Maryland’s Future Comprehensive Implementation Plan](#) by revising teacher preparation programs to meet new requirements. Strengthening teacher preparation programs and will help ensure that teachers have the knowledge and skills needed to interpret and effectively teach the Maryland curriculum frameworks.



# Recommendation

## Recognize and Promote Sustainable Schools in Maryland

The Governor should establish a Maryland Sustainable Schools Week in coordination with OLP to promote sustainable schools through communication efforts and to highlight the achievements of PreK-12 Maryland Green Schools. According to the Maryland Green Schools Act of 2019, Green Schools support the State’s efforts to address climate change and meet Maryland’s Environmental Literacy Standards established under [COMAR 13A.04.17.01 Environmental Literacy Instructional Programs for Grades Prekindergarten – 12](#). This recommendation supports Maryland’s commitments to the revised Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement School District Environmental Literacy Planning Outcome, which aims to “Increase the number of school districts that have policies and practices in place that support environmental education and sustainable schools.” Green Schools support school district efforts to reduce energy, waste, and water costs and increase environmental efficiencies in schools and are in line with Maryland’s Comprehensive Climate Action Plan and school decarbonization efforts. According to the [2024-2025 Maryland Green Schools Program Annual Evaluation](#), 38% of all schools in Maryland were Green Schools, showing a 2.5% increase in schools from the previous academic year. Support of state leadership will encourage school and community participation supporting students’ achievement, mental health, nurturing exploration and curiosity, student stewardship, and equitable access to programs.



# Recommendation

## Develop a Career and Technical Education (CTE) in “Environmental Management, Sustainability and Technology” pathway

The Maryland State Department of Education should develop a new Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathway in Environmental Management, Sustainability and Technology (EMST) to prepare Maryland students for a rapidly growing climate-ready workforce. This new CTE pathway should be developed in consultation with higher education faculty and staff and industry partners related to the Green and Blue Economy, Carbon Circular Economy in Maryland. This recommendation supports Pillar 3: College and Career Readiness of the [Blueprint for Maryland’s Future Comprehensive Implementation Plan](#). Maryland already has promising local models, such as Baltimore County’s Western School of Technology and Environmental Science, which demonstrates the feasibility of interdisciplinary environmental CTE pathways and industry-recognized certifications. Courses that make up the composition of the new EMST CTE pathway could be constructed from the course offerings that already exist within various school systems in Maryland. Success will be measured by increased CTE completers, industry certifications, workforce entry in green and blue economy careers, and enrollment in environmental and sustainability programs at two- and four-year colleges.



# Recommendation

## Hire an Environmental Literacy Specialist at the Maryland State Department of Education

The Maryland State Department of Education should reinstate and hire the Environmental Literacy Specialist position. This position is essential for statewide coordination of environmental literacy efforts fulfilling Maryland's statutory and strategic commitments to environmental literacy, including the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.04.17.01 Environmental Literacy Instructional Programs for Grades Prekindergarten – 12 and the implementation and tracking of relevant Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement Outcomes. This position is critical for advancing the mission of the Outdoor Learning Partnership, including fostering collaboration between the formal and nonformal environmental education communities, coordinating resources and programming, and communicating OLP recommendations and action items to state and local decision makers to equitably ensure that: “Maryland’s teachers have the funds, training, and support necessary to implement curriculum to support student achievement as they relate to environmental literacy.” This position is also important for managing the deliverables of a grant that MSDE holds with NOAA, including coordinating Learning Labs. Given the unique expertise and statewide coordination that this role provides, MSDE should follow the appropriate processes to ensure this position is not eliminated and seek an exemption from the state hiring freeze.



# Actions

## **Revise Maryland’s teacher preparation policies and program requirements to ensure that all pre-service teachers receive training in environmental literacy across content disciplines**

The Climate and Environmental Literacy Working Group will create a sub-committee to facilitate a landscape assessment of environmental literacy in teacher preparation programs throughout the State of Maryland. Resulting data will be used to develop suggested guidance on the integration of environmental literacy in pre-service teacher education courses and internships. The suggested guidance will be submitted to Institutes of Higher Education highlighting the academic, and social-emotional benefits of including environmental literacy and climate literacy in teacher education programming. Ideally, Institutes of Higher Education will implement the guidance so that graduating teachers are prepared to implement the Maryland Environmental Literacy Standards (COMAR 13A.04.17.01). This action aligns with Pillar Two: High Quality and Diverse Teachers and School Learners of the Blueprint For Maryland’s Future Comprehensive Plan by revising and increasing the rigor of teacher preparation programs to meet new requirements.

## **Elevate Climate Literacy by establishing guidelines for a Climate-Literate Maryland Graduate**

The Environmental and Climate Literacy Working Group will elevate climate literacy statewide by establishing clear, forward-looking guidelines that define the knowledge, skills, and capacities of a Climate Ready, Career and College Ready Maryland Graduate. By engaging with community partners, the Working Group will review existing climate literacy definitions and national frameworks, draft and then refine guidelines by December 2026. The process will map how climate literacy is currently addressed across Environmental Literacy Plans, academic standards, Career and Technical Education programs, and college and career pathways, identifying gaps, opportunities, and examples of local excellence. The guidelines will emphasize equity, systems thinking, solutions-oriented learning, and social-emotional skills preparing students for resilience, civic engagement, and a climate-ready workforce. The resulting guideline document should inform future standards revisions, workforce development, and state initiatives, aligning with Maryland’s climate commitments, the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future, and national research. This work will position schools as hubs for community resilience, encourage school district climate action planning while ensuring all graduates are prepared for a changing world.

# Actions

## Support gatherings of LEA facilities and operations staff around sustainability

The Sustainable Schools Working Group will support gatherings of facilities and operations staff from local education agencies to further K-12 school decarbonization. Materials will be designed to help public school district leaders, maintenance teams, and operations staff exchange strategies, share challenges, and access resources to accelerate decarbonization of school facilities. The OLP Sustainable Schools Working Group will provide strategic guidance on content development, outreach support, and accessing available funding from the [Maryland Energy Administration's Strategic Energy Investment Fund](#), to support energy efficiency, solar, and decarbonization initiatives.

## Maintain and Align State Networks Supporting Environmental Literacy

In order to strengthen and align Maryland's formal and nonformal education networks more effectively and advance environmental literacy statewide, the Networks Working Group will identify and describe existing state and sub-state networks, documenting key information including purpose, audience, priorities, structure, data collection efforts, and opportunities for collaboration. Building on this inventory, a state-level network strategy will be developed to clarify how networks can draw on shared expertise, resources, and operating practices to better support school districts and their partners while meeting the priorities of their network. The strategy will establish processes for ongoing communication and coordination across networks, intentionally bridging formal & nonformal education networks. Aligning these networks will improve efficiency, strengthen data-informed decision-making, support local problem solving, and elevate local lessons learned to the state level, creating and reinforcing a strong, intentional system to ensure all Maryland students are supported in achieving environmental literacy.

# Actions

## Revise the Conservation Careers Guide

The College and Green Careers Working Group will update the 2020 Maryland Conservation Careers Guide to reflect the rapidly evolving environmental workforce. Originally developed as a resource for youth, educators, career counselors, and career changers, the existing guide includes foundational chapters on career exploration, skill-building, and job readiness. The updates will capture several growing industries and new workforce models and will expand content to include fields such as climate policy, renewable energy, carbon reduction, and the blue and green economy, which are critical sectors for Maryland's sustainable future. A new chapter will highlight Maryland Youth Apprenticeships and Industry Recognized Credentials, providing clear guidance for students, educators, and employers on accessing and supporting these opportunities. Additionally refreshed career spotlights will showcase diverse pathways and lived experiences. To increase accessibility, supplemental outreach materials such as infographics and brief summaries will be developed to support educators, employers, and career event engagement.

## Work to create equitable access to Outdoor Learning for All Maryland Students through the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on Data

OLP requires a comprehensive state-wide understanding of the gaps in opportunities, and utilization of resources that impact equitable implementation of outdoor learning for Maryland students. To address this, the Access to Nature Working Group will establish an ad hoc Committee on Data. The committee will collaborate and conduct interviews with stakeholders to identify where data exists and data is needed; compile and analyze existing data from local education agencies, schools, teachers, environmental education providers, and established databases. The work will document where programs occur, who is served, associated costs, partners involved, and barriers to opportunities. The committee will also examine approaches from other states where data application has resulted in greater equity in outdoor learning. Findings will be synthesized into a statewide summary report with recommendations for future acquisition and management of data. Success for implementing this action is defined by a more accurate understanding of current opportunities and barriers in order to better align resources, inform legislative action, and drive continuous improvement in equitable opportunities for outdoor learning for students statewide.

# Closing

The conclusion of 2025 serves as a significant milestone for the Maryland Outdoor Learning Partnership, marking the successful mobilization of working groups and the first set of shared recommendations and actions that represent the collective expertise of OLP members. While the Partnership serves as a catalyst for strategic alignment and statewide coordination, achieving the Mission of OLP extends beyond the scope of the Partnership. The true implementation of environmental and climate literacy occurs through the dedicated work of Maryland's educators, local education agencies, and nonformal environmental education providers. As the Partnership moves into its next phase, working groups will focus on the implementation of endorsed 2025 actions and may identify emerging needs through the development of new recommendations and actions. OLP looks forward to expanding on Maryland's strong history of partnership to advance environmental and climate literacy in our state's young people.



# Attachments

## **Appendix A: 2025 OLP Recommendations and Actions**

This attachment provides a full scope of the 2025 Endorsed Recommendations and Actions

**[Appendix A is available here](#)**

## **Appendix B: Chesapeake Bay Watershed 2024 Environmental Literacy (ELIT) Report**

This attachment provides data regarding the implementation of Environmental Literacy in Maryland

**[Appendix B is available here](#)**

# Photo Credits

**Cover:** DNR Education and Outreach Events- (Photos: DNR Staff)

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**Page 4:** Outdoor Learning Partnership Executive Order Signing- (Photo: DNR Staff)

**Page 10:** Wetlands and Wildlife Field Day- (Photo: Coreen Weilminster)

**Page 12:** Green Eggs and Sand Workshop- (Photo: Stephanie Tuckfield)

**Page 13:** Stormwater Retrofit at Anita C. Leight- (Photo: DNR Staff)

**Page 14:** PGCPs Climate Education Training- (Photo: Coreen Weilminster)

**Page 15:** Teachers on the Estuary 2025- (Photo: Coreen Weilminster)

**Page 19:** Wetlands and Wildlife Field Day 30th Anniversary- (Photo: DNR Staff)