

# MIDDLE CHESAPEAKE SENTINEL LANDSCAPE

Maryland | est. 2015

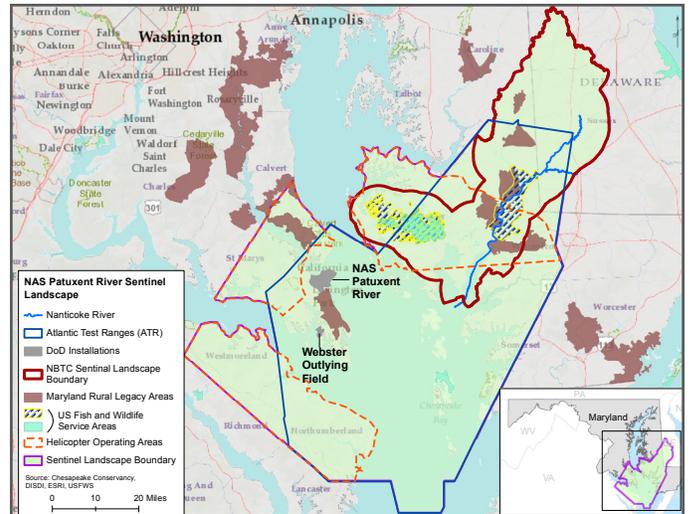


The Chesapeake Bay is one of America’s treasures, beloved for its natural beauty and valued for its economic productivity and ecological vitality. It is also home to one of the Navy’s premier aircraft testing locations. In 2015, a diverse group of stakeholders came together to form the Middle Chesapeake Sentinel Landscape to help protect the military mission, preserve the natural resources, and promote the economic vitality of the area.

This sentinel landscape is considered the most “urban” of the seven designated landscapes. Despite its historic agricultural and fishing traditions, it is less than two hours driving distance from Washington, D.C. and is a coveted location for weekend or summer homes. This dynamic presents a challenge for the partners within the sentinel landscape, whose individual missions can conflict with unfettered development. The primary goal of the Middle Chesapeake Sentinel Landscape is to protect critical land that serves wildlife, agricultural production, and the Navy’s mission.

The Navy conducts over 150,000 annual critical testing and research flights within its 1.5 million-acre special use airspace in the region. This averages out to more than 410 aircraft operations occurring per day out of Naval Air Station (NAS) Patuxent River. While residential and commercial development on land located underneath protected airspace is inherently

**Figure 1:** Middle Chesapeake Sentinel Landscape Boundary



**Table 2:** Middle Chesapeake Sentinel Landscape Footprint Details (acres)

<b>Total Protected Acres:<sup>12</sup></b>	12,686.4
<b>Total Enrolled Acres:<sup>13</sup></b>	130,326.0
<b>Active Base Area:</b>	6,687.9
<b>Total Sentinel Landscape Area:</b>	2,074,006.0

incompatible with NAS Patuxent River’s mission, wildlands and working lands are excellent neighbors for the installation.

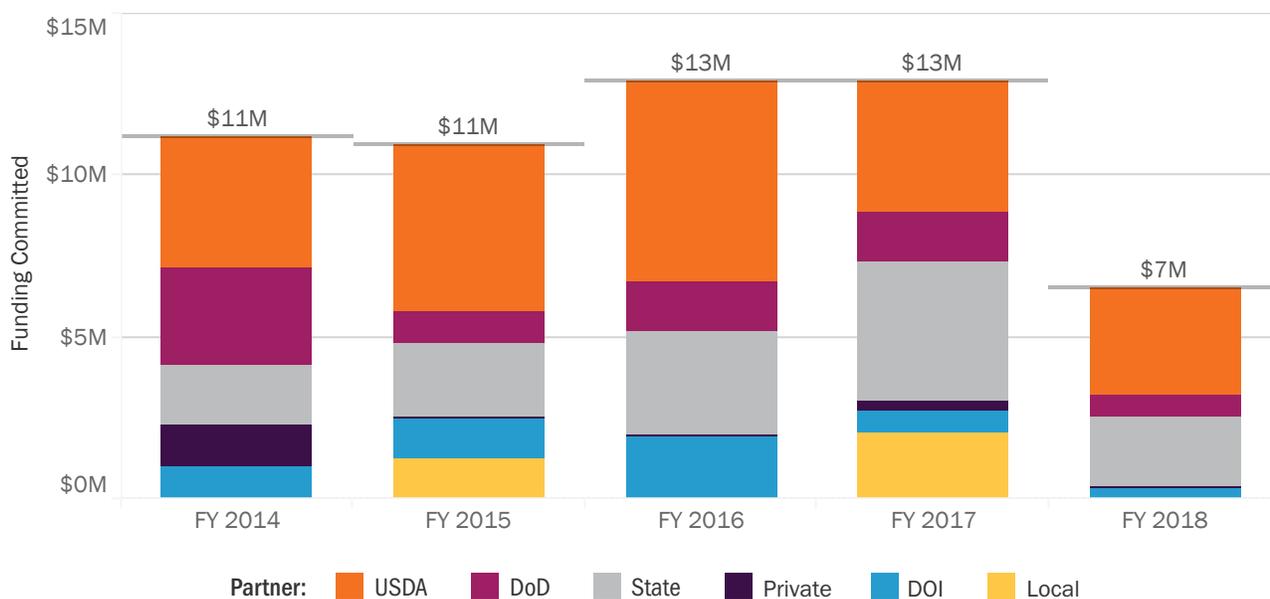
**Table 1:** Middle Chesapeake Sentinel Landscape Total Funding by Partner in Millions

Partner	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
USDA	\$4.0	\$5.1	\$6.2	\$4.1	\$3.4
DoD	\$3.0	\$1.0	\$1.5	\$1.5	\$0.7
State	\$1.9	\$2.3	\$3.2	\$4.3	\$2.2
Private	\$1.2	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.3	\$0.0
DOI	\$1.0	\$1.3	\$1.9	\$0.7	\$0.4
Local	\$0.0	\$1.3	\$0.0	\$2.0	\$0.0

<sup>12</sup> Represents total acres protected through projects administered by sentinel landscape partners since FY 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Represents total acres enrolled in state and federal conservation programs since FY 2014.

**Figure 2:** Middle Chesapeake Sentinel Landscape Total Funding by Partner



Through the sentinel landscape framework, NRCS, USFWS, and Delaware’s Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation have protected 5,336 acres of working lands within the landscape’s footprint, including 1,592 acres that partners recognized as having a high development potential.

The Middle Chesapeake Sentinel Landscape also encompasses the Nanticoke River, a historically significant waterway that extends 65 miles. The natural amenities that surround the river form the Nanticoke River Conservation Corridor, an 8,500-acre tract that lies beneath the Navy’s Atlantic Test Range airspace. Through an extended series of public-private partnerships, the Navy, Maryland Department of Natural Resources and Department of Agriculture, St. Mary’s County, and several private organizations have conserved 7,356 acres of land within the Nanticoke River Conservation Corridor, including 1,710 acres of imperiled species habitat and 293 acres of grassland habitat. By protecting large swaths of land with prime agricultural soil and forest cover, these partnerships have enhanced an ecosystem that supports over 120 rare, threatened, and endangered species and improved the region’s water quality. Furthermore, projects within the Nanticoke River Conservation Corridor have strengthened military readiness by reducing noise and safety concerns for the Navy’s premier Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation facility.

Adjacent to the Nanticoke River lies the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, a 28,000-acre unit of the Chesapeake Marshlands National Wildlife Refuge Complex, which constitutes



*Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1933 as a waterfowl sanctuary for birds migrating along the Atlantic Flyway. (Photo provided by: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)*

the nation’s largest estuary. Building on the success of the Nanticoke River Conservation Corridor, in 2018, the USFWS collaborated with the Chesapeake Conservancy and the Land and Water Conservation Fund to permanently protect 155 acres as part of the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge. The protected land will deter development within critical wetlands and improve the pristine character of the Nanticoke River watershed.

**Table 3:** Middle Chesapeake Sentinel Landscape Goals and Progress

Goal	Progress
<p><b>Goal #1</b> Protect more than 150,000 annual aviation Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation operations from NAS Patuxent River by ensuring continued use of 1,505,687 acres of Special Use Airspace and 743,194 acres of Helicopter Operating Areas.</p>	<p>Sentinel landscape partners have permanently protected 6,811 acres using funding acquired through the DoD REPI Program that will protect the Navy's Special Use Airspace within the sentinel landscape.</p>
<p><b>Goal #2</b> Prevent the conversion of working lands to non-agricultural uses and improve water quality, supporting local fisheries by preserving working lands in perpetuity and providing technical assistance to farmers. Create connected corridors of working lands with prime agricultural soil and existing forest cover.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Sentinel Landscape partners have permanently protected 5,336 acres of working land, including 1,592 acres with a high probability of development.</li> <li>★ NRCS has administered conservation measures on an additional 130,326 acres of working lands within the sentinel landscape.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal #3</b> Conserve and protect land in the Chesapeake Bay watershed (in accordance with EO 13508), including the pristine character of the Nanticoke River and St. Mary's River watersheds. Improve habitat and increase natural defenses against the effects of sea-level rise.</p>	<p>Sentinel landscape partners have conserved 7,356.99 acres of wildlife habitat in the Nanticoke River Conservation Corridor, including 1,710 acres of imperiled species habitat and 293 acres of grassland.</p>



*Wetland area in the Chesapeake Bay. On May 12, 2009, President Barack Obama signed Executive Order 13508, which recognizes the Chesapeake Bay as a national treasure and calls on the federal government to restore and protect the nation's largest estuary and its watershed. EO 13508 established a Federal Leadership Committee to oversee the development and coordination of programs and activities to protect and restore the bay. It also set goals for water quality, protection, storm water management, climate change, public access, scientific support, and habitat research. The committee is chaired by the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and includes senior representatives from the departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Homeland Security, Interior, Transportation and others. (Photo by: Eric Vance)*