

MIDDLE CHESAPEAKE SENTINEL LANDSCAPE

Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia | est. 2015



The Chesapeake Bay is America’s largest estuary spanning over 2.8 million acres. The ecosystem is valued for its natural beauty, economic productivity, and ecological vitality. It is also home to one of the U.S. Navy’s premier aircraft testing locations, Naval Air Station (NAS) Patuxent River-Atlantic Test Ranges (ATR). The U.S. Navy conducts over 150,000 annual 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. In 2015, a diverse group of stakeholders came together to form the Middle Chesapeake Sentinel Landscape. Despite the landscape’s 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 land that supports wildlife, agricultural productivity, and the U.S. Navy’s mission.

PROJECTS PROTECTS MILITARY READINESS WHILE SUPPORTING FOREST HABITAT

The U.S. Navy, Ducks Unlimited, the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) partnered to preserve a 414-acre parcel beneath the ATR restricted airspace. Completed in 2019, this project marked one of the first jointly funded easements between the Department of Defense’s (DOD) Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program and USFWS’s North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). Located on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, the parcel supports hardwood and pine forests that provide habitat for the Delmarva fox

Figure 1: Middle Chesapeake Sentinel Landscape Map

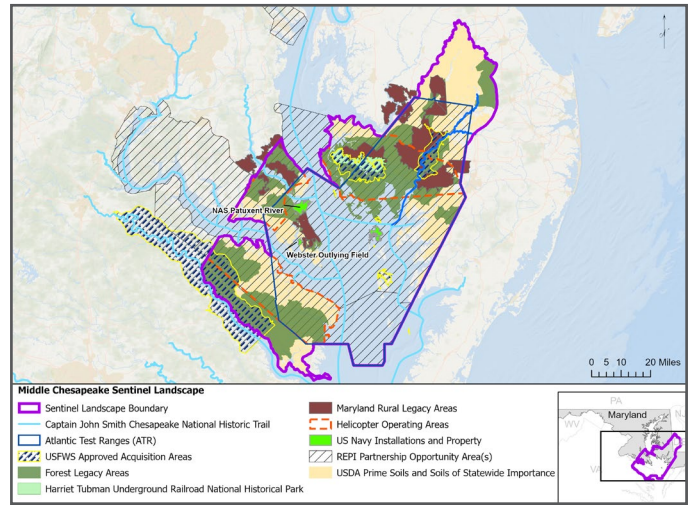


Table 1: Middle Chesapeake Sentinel Landscape Footprint Details (from year established through fiscal year 2021)

Total Protected Acres ¹	55,379
Total Enrolled Acres ²	203,589
Active Base Area	7,640
Total Sentinel Landscape Area	2,232,563

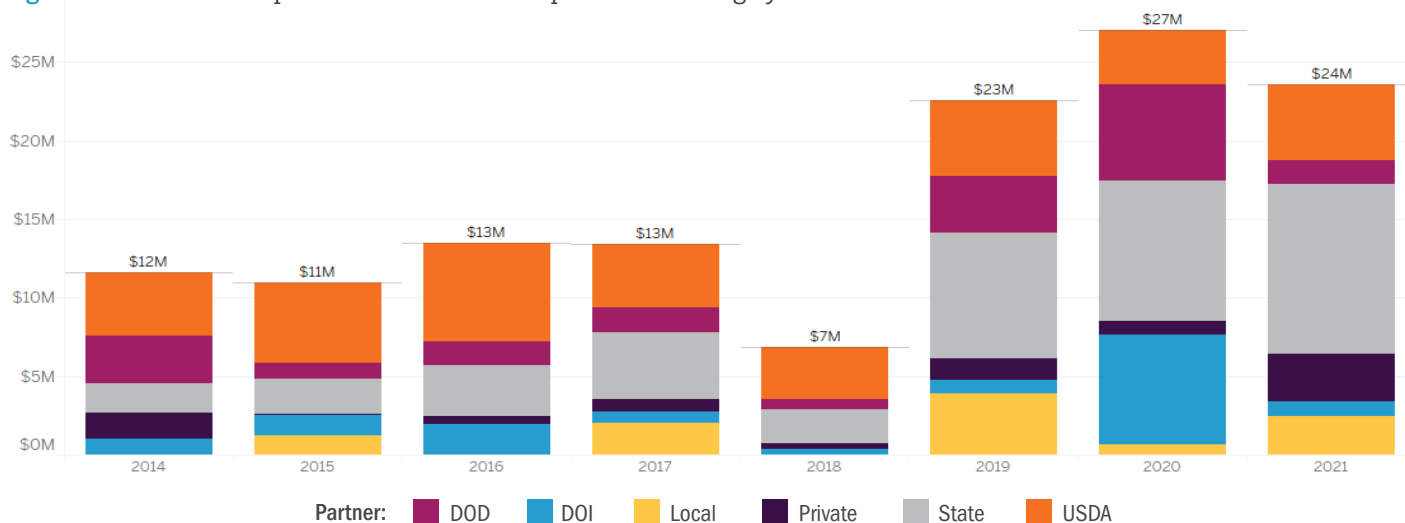
squirrel. The large, grey squirrel was delisted from the federal list of endangered species in 2015 after being one of the first species protected under the Endangered Species Act in 1967. The property connects with existing protected parcels, creating a 2,700-acre contiguous wildlife corridor for the squirrel that will contribute to its long-term sustainability.

USFWS NAWCA grant funds were also used by Ducks Unlimited, Lower Shore Land Trust, U.S. Navy, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and Wicomico County, Maryland, to protect a 171-acre forested parcel that will contribute to an existing

¹ Protected acres are recognized as land acquisitions—fee simple or easement—that have completed the due diligence and closing actions necessary to obtain a real estate interest.

² Land is considered enrolled if the property owner voluntarily participates in a federal or state land-management program that provides financial or technical assistance to promote sustainable agricultural practices, restore imperiled species and their habitat, or preserve critical natural resources; or if a landowner or an organization receives a federal or state grant to conduct a conservation project on said property.

Figure 2: Middle Chesapeake Sentinel Landscape Total Funding by Partner



1,000-acres of land within the Quantico Creek Rural Legacy Area and the Middle Chesapeake Sentinel Landscape. This land will provide ideal forest habitat for wildlife, including the American black duck, which is a protected species under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

“By aligning and focusing our collective priorities through the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership, both the [U.S.] Navy and [U.S. Fish and Wildlife] Service have been able to accelerate the conservation gains made around the Chesapeake Bay. This type of collaborative effort is allowing us to...complete projects beyond our individual capacities.”

— Christina Ryder, Biologist for USFWS

ENHANCING CLIMATE AND ENERGY RESILIENCE ALONG THE CHESAPEAKE BAY

Communities along the shores of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries have been subject to an increase in climate-related threats including sea-level rise and extreme storms which can create public safety threats, infrastructure damage, and energy instability. A partnership between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Defense’s Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration program, U.S. Navy, The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, Chesapeake Conservancy, and Maryland Department of Natural Resources is working to preserve 4,000 acres of land beneath NAS Patuxent River-ATR’s special use airspace. This effort will protect currently vulnerable, ecologically significant areas within the Middle Chesapeake Sentinel Landscape to create a continuous marsh migration corridor that will improve the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay and provide coastal communities

with a defense against sea-level rise, storm surge, erosion, and recurrent flooding.

Key Partners

- ★ Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Atlantic Test Ranges
- ★ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
- ★ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service
- ★ U.S. Department of Defense, Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration
- ★ U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Chesapeake Bay Field Office
- ★ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service
- ★ Commonwealth of Virginia, Office the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources
- ★ Delaware Department of Agriculture
- ★ Delaware Department of Natural Resource and Environmental Control
- ★ Maryland Department of Agriculture
- ★ Maryland Department of Natural Resources
- ★ Maryland Environmental Trust
- ★ St. Mary’s County, Maryland
- ★ Chesapeake Conservancy
- ★ Ducks Unlimited
- ★ Eastern Shore Land Conservancy
- ★ Environmental Finance Center, University of Maryland
- ★ Lower Shore Land Trust
- ★ Nanticoke River Watershed Conservancy
- ★ Nanticoke Watershed Alliance
- ★ Northern Neck Land Conservancy
- ★ Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust
- ★ Southern Maryland Resource Conservation and Development Board, Inc.
- ★ Sussex County Land Trust
- ★ The Conservation Fund
- ★ The Nature Conservancy
- ★ Trust for Public Land
- ★ Virginia Outdoor Foundation