

## Using Forest Legacy to Protect and Enhance the Chesapeake Bay

## Protecting Forests in Maryland's Chesapeake Bay Watershed

## The Challenge

Large forested tracts around the Chesapeake Bay are prime prospects for housing sites owing to the desirability of waterfront property and the expanding populations of the Washington, DC, Wilmington, Philadelphia, and Baltimore areas. If lost to development, these forested tracts will no longer offer undisturbed habitat for wildlife, a place for recreation, or protection of the Chesapeake Bay. Maryland is losing over 7,000 acres annually to land use conversion.

## The Solution

Many of the Forest Legacy Areas identified by the State of Maryland's Forest Legacy Program are adjacent to the Chesapeake Bay. The State used Federal Forest Legacy funds to purchase a conservation easement on 186 acres along Muddy Creek, a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay. Adjacent to the 3,000-acre Elk Neck State Forest, the Muddy Creek tracts add protected forests to the Elk Neck peninsula, the most densely forested area in Cecil County.

## Resulting Benefits

The Muddy Creek Forest Legacy conservation easement protected the forest connection between Elk Neck State Forest and the Elk River. The protected properties provide natural water filtration into the Chesapeake Bay system. In addition to watershed protection, the Muddy Creek tracts also provide fish and terrestrial wildlife habitat for game and for threatened and endangered species, scenic vistas, timber, and other forest resources.

The landowners of the Muddy Creek tracts, the Dilks Family, are descendants of the family who originally settled the property in 1635. The Forest Legacy conservation easement removed development pressure, making it easier for the family to keep and continue to steward the property into the future.



The forests of the Muddy Creek Forest Legacy tract provide forested wildlife habitat and will continue the natural process of filtering water that drains into the Chesapeake Bay. (Photo by Don VanHassent)

## Highlights of Maryland's Forest Legacy Program

- Conservation easements on seven tracts totaling 1,247 acres have been protected through the Forest Legacy Program.
- Maryland is currently working on protecting the 1,900-acre Broad Creek Forest Legacy Project with a conservation easement.
- The landowners of the largest remaining unprotected forest in the Elk Neck Forest Legacy Area, the 620-acre Wapiti tract, have applied for Forest Legacy funding.
- Maryland Forest Legacy conservation easements valued at \$3,033,000 have used only \$1,358,000 in Federal funds, well below the required program cost share.

## Sharing Success

- The Forest Legacy Program was the inspiration for the Maryland Rural Legacy Program, which has been successfully protecting farm and forest properties in the State from development.
- The success of the Forest Legacy Program around the Chesapeake Bay has sparked interest in western Maryland to update the State Assessment of Need to include Forest Legacy Areas in that part of the State.

*The Forest Legacy Program helps protect and enhance the Chesapeake Bay by protecting surrounding forest lands from future development.*



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