



News Release

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Masonville Cove Designated as Nation's First Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today designated [Masonville Cove](#) in Baltimore as the nation's first Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership. With 80 percent of Americans living in cities, the Service's new Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative will forge connections between the National Wildlife Refuge System, natural resource conservation, and people living in urban areas.

"National wildlife refuges are the best of America's wild places, but many are not near major metropolitan areas. Most Americans have grown up without a real connection to the outdoors and wildlife, and the Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative gives us a chance to change that," said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe.

The [U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#), [National Fish and Wildlife Foundation](#) and [The Chesapeake Bay Trust](#) will dedicate a total of \$55,000 in support of the Masonville Cove partnership.

Masonville Cove Nature Area was opened in 2012 on a restored site owned by the Maryland Port Administration on the Patapsco River, allowing public access to the cove for the first time in over 70 years. The nature area offers opportunities within the city limits for walking, fishing, bird watching and other recreational activities. Currently 11 acres of the nature area are open to the public and after further restoration 52 acres will be open to the public.

An energy-efficient, "green" environmental education center opened in 2009 at Masonville Cove. Living Classrooms Foundation, the National Aquarium, and the Brooklyn and Curtis Bay Coalition run programs at the center that have reached thousands of community members, local schoolchildren and their teachers.

The Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative grows out of the Service's *Conserving the Future* vision, which sets a strategic path for the National Wildlife Refuge System for the next decade and beyond. For more information, visit <http://americaswildlife.org/>.

In 2007, the Maryland Port Administration selected Masonville Cove as a future site to store material dredged from the harbor to maintain shipping channels and began the massive clean up of the site. During restoration, 27 abandoned vessels and 61,000 tons of trash have been removed, including debris believed to date back to the Great Baltimore Fire of 1904.

The Service manages more than 560 national wildlife refuges and 150 million acres across America. Many of the wildlife refuges are in urban areas, including Denver, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Detroit and Boston, among other cities. More than 47 million people annually visit national wildlife refuges.

Follow the conversation on Twitter: #UrbanPartnership

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, <http://www.fws.gov/>





Quotes

Dedication of Masonville Cove Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership Dedication, September 26, 2013

Dan Ashe, Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

National wildlife refuges are the best of America's wild places, but many are not near major metropolitan areas. Most Americans have grown up without a real connection to the outdoors and wildlife, and the Urban Wildlife Refuge Initiative gives us a chance to change that. We believe these unique urban partnerships can inspire the imagination and create a connected conservation constituency of people who are aware, understand and support fish and wildlife conservation."

U.S. Representative John Sarbanes (Md.)

"Masonville Cove is one of Baltimore's great success stories and with its designation as the nation's first Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership it has become an American success story. Its transformation from one of the city's most contaminated sites to an outdoor attraction for students and their families is remarkable."

James T. Smith, Jr., Transportation Secretary, State of Maryland

"On behalf of Governor O'Malley and Lt. Governor Brown, we thank the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for this very special recognition of Masonville Cove. It is not every day you can improve the environment, provide a great resource for entertainment and education for the community, and make key investments to spur more business for the Port of Baltimore. But that is exactly what Masonville does. This project represents the best of what can happen when private industry, government, non-profit organizations, and local communities work together for a common goal. We look forward to many more years of learning and hands-on environmental lessons at Masonville."

James Piper Bond, President and CEO of Living Classrooms

"Our experience has shown that one of the most effective ways of engaging urban communities is by reaching the children in local schools. This Urban Refuge partnership will enhance Living Classrooms' efforts to connect urban youth with their natural surroundings and encourage a sense of stewardship for the natural world."

Eric Schwaab, Senior Vice President and Chief Conservation Officer, National Aquarium

"The National Aquarium is working to engage students and other local citizens in the process of habitat restoration and we are thrilled to be a part of this unique project – one that highlights the importance of creating and supporting a home for wildlife within an urban center, one that helps bring opportunities to connect with wildlife to urban populations, and one that supports all of the communities that share this space."

David O'Neill, Vice President for Conservation Programs, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

"The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is very pleased to provide financial support through our Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Program with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to aid the Masonville Cove partnership. Masonville Cove represents the best in urban conservation – combining education, restoration, and economic benefits that contribute to the health of the Middle Branch and to the local community."

Jana Davis, Executive Director, Chesapeake Bay Trust

"The Chesapeake Bay Trust is pleased to support the Masonville Cove Partnership to bring Maryland's treasured natural resources to its urban communities. One of our main goals is to fund education and restoration projects that connect individuals with their waterways and local communities and this Masonville Cove project is an outstanding model for other urban areas to exemplify."

Joel Dunn, Executive Director, The Chesapeake Conservancy

"Opening a door to nature for city residents and opening our cities to wildlife, is a powerful way to get more of us to tune into the joys of being outdoors. These places help us understand our rivers and the bay. From Masonville Cove people will be able to fish, bird watch, and set out on expeditions to explore the harbor and connect to bigger adventures on the Capt. John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, which flows right past the refuge."