Dear Administrator Jackson:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the *Draft Strategy for Protecting and Restoring the Chesapeake Bay*. We also commend you for your leadership as the chair of the Federal Leadership Committee and for coordinating the Federal agency efforts to implement President Obama’s Chesapeake Executive Order 13508.

We, the undersigned organizations and agencies, collectively work for the interests of millions of citizens, the health of the Chesapeake, and effective governance. On December 18 we met to discuss the conservation strategies outlined in the Chesapeake Executive Order. This collaboration resulted in the following recommendations, representing our collective and individual commitment to implement and support a robust Treasured Landscapes strategy. We firmly believe that a strong federal commitment to, and funding for, conserving the Chesapeake’s Treasured Landscapes, enhancing public access and education, promoting citizen stewardship and restoring critical fish and wildlife habitats, are essential components of an effective strategy to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay.

We strongly support the creation of a *Chesapeake Bay Treasured Landscape Initiative* to protect lands of significant ecological, cultural and historic significance. We urge the Federal Leadership Committee to take swift action to begin implementing such a program. In this regard, we ask the Secretary of the Interior and other members of the Committee, to:

- Provide sufficient funding to establish and advance a *Chesapeake Bay Treasured Landscape Initiative* that includes targeted land conservation actions including acquisitions and conservation easements, creation of new units of the National Park and Wildlife Refuge system, and significant expansion of public access and interpretation opportunities throughout the Chesapeake;
- Set an ambitious goal for conserving and sustaining Chesapeake Treasured Landscapes consistent with the spirit of the initiative; and,
- Fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and that the Secretary of the Interior use his allowable 10 percent set aside of the LWCF to initiate a Chesapeake Treasured Landscape program and to support the conservation of other national treasures.

The *Chesapeake Bay Treasured Landscape Initiative* is a necessary complement to your efforts to protect water quality. The Chesapeake’s water quality is inextricably linked to the land; the watershed demonstrates one of the largest land to water ratios of any enclosed coastal sea on earth. Intact forests, marshes and sweeping shorelines along the Bay and its rivers have immense filtering capacities that are needed for clean water.
The Chesapeake’s lifelines are the great rivers flowing towards it—the Susquehanna, Potomac, Nanticoke, Rappahannock, James and others, which are each nationally prominent in their own right. The lands that rest along the Bay and its rivers are many of its most treasured landscapes—places we revere as individuals and as communities for their ecological, historical, cultural and recreational values and for their role in maintaining and renewing our identity and spirit.

Most of these treasured landscapes are large and iconic; they are the settings or surroundings in which life in the Chesapeake region plays out and where the history of America was born. Some are protected or formally recognized as parks and wildlife refuges, but many others are not; they are working forests and farms, culturally important lands, and natural areas that are linked to the Bay, its tributaries, and its great rivers.

We urge you to take bold steps to build a new Treasured Landscapes program for which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, drawing on the sophisticated understanding of public agencies and conservation partners in the region for its implementation. Our desire is that this initiative expands the conservation of our most treasured lands and stimulates citizen involvement in land protection and public access for the health of the Bay and its rivers and for the benefit and enjoyment of the 17 million citizens who live in its watershed and millions of visitors.

Thank you again for your leadership and for that of all of the members of the Federal Leadership Committee. We are committed to working with the Committee to advance the initiative in the coming months and years.

Sincerely,

Gil Grosvenor  
Chairman  
National Geographic Society

Patrick Noonan  
Chairman Emeritus  
The Conservation Fund

Mike Slattery  
Director  
National Fish & Wildlife Foundation

Charles A. Stek  
President & CEO  
Environmental Stewardship Strategies

David J. O’Neill  
President  
Friends of the John Smith Chesapeake Trail

John Griffin  
Secretary  
Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources

John Quigley  
Acting Secretary  
Pennsylvania Dept. of Conservation & Natural Resources

Joe Maroon  
Director  
Virginia Dept. of Conservation & Recreation
CC: Federal Leadership Committee and Designees

The Honorable Ken Salazar, Secretary, Department of the Interior (DOI)
The Honorable Robert Gates, Secretary, Department of Defense (DOD)
The Honorable Ray LaHood, Secretary, Department of Transportation (DOT)
The Honorable Gary Locke, Secretary, Department of Commerce (DOC)
The Honorable Janet Napolitano, Secretary, Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary, Department of Agriculture (USDA)
Mr. Peter Silva, Assistant Administrator for Water, Environmental Protection Agency
Mr. Tom Strickland, Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife & Parks, DOI
Mr. Will Shafroth, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife & Parks, DOI
Mr. Donald Bathurst, Chief Administrative Officer, DHS
Dr. Jane Lubchenco, Under Secretary for Oceans & Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator, DOC
Mr. Richard Mach, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Environment), DOD
Ms. Ann Mills, Deputy Under Secretary, Natural Resources & Environment, USDA
Ms. Kathryn Thomson, Counselor to the Secretary, DOT