



ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2026



patapsco.org



Patapsco Valley Heritage Area



@patapscovalleyheritage



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Year number 5 as president, and PHG has never been more vibrant and exciting to me. Many thanks to our wonderful board members and staff for all they do. Working with them is constantly rewarding and always fun.

While you will hear much about our Watershed Engagement Plan, Explore Patapsco Outdoor Recreation Series, 5 year anniversary of water quality monitoring, agroforestry initiatives, and much more in this annual report, I want to highlight the following additional examples of preserving, protecting, interpreting, and restoring the environment, history, and culture of the Patapsco River Valley:

- **Helping Expand and Strengthen the Reach of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA)** - Although we manage the newest Maryland heritage area, PHG is fully committed to maximizing MHAA benefits to our partners in the Patapsco Valley. In addition to our annual mini-grants to partners, we supported MHAA project grant funding to develop exhibits in the renovated Old Ellicott City Courthouse, now the Capitoline Center. MHAA also selected the Patapsco Valley Heritage Area to serve as the location for the upcoming 30th anniversary event of the heritage area program at the Howard County Conservancy.
- **Solidifying PHG's Future Through Diversified Funding** - Last fall we held our first of what we envision as annual *Evening in the Patapsco* fundraisers at Elkridge Furnace Inn. This September, our staff and a consultant are finalizing a 5-year fundraising and development plan funded by a Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT) Capacity Building Grant that will expand and prioritize our continued efforts to diversify funding for PHG.
- **Engaging with Historic Daniels and Gary Memorial Church** - Each year PHG expands its activities throughout

the Patapsco Valley where we can help the most. In the fall, we co-hosted a community forum with American Rivers about the future of Daniels Dam. In June, PHG board member Lisa Jensen, along with community member Michelle Carras, gave the 5th annual Charles L. Wagandt II Memorial Lecture entitled *Daniels: A Textile Mill Village Remembered* at Gary Memorial Church. PHG continues to support the preservation of Gary Memorial Church as it transitions to a different future.

- **Maryland Liberty Tree Project** - Tree planting and tree maintenance remain a core activity that our staff and volunteers perform every season of every year. While you will see the numbers later in this report, I wanted to highlight that we worked with Patapsco Valley State Park and the Maryland Forest Service to plant Liberty Trees (tulip poplars genetically identical to the original 1775 Annapolis Liberty Tree) at both the Pickall and Orange Grove locations to commemorate the 250th anniversary of American independence.
- **Vernal Pool Legislation Passes Maryland General Assembly** - On April 28, Governor Moore signed into law the Jack Cover Vernal Pools Act of 2026. PHG was an early proponent of vernal pool education and conservation; we annually conduct vernal pool walks in the spring and maintain a database of vernal pool records throughout the Patapsco Valley. I myself, and PHG staff, spearheaded the legislative effort to create a state list of vernal pools and hopefully increase their protection.

Please take time to read this annual report and find events and programs to enjoy and support as a volunteer or donor.

Mark Southerland
President, Patapsco Heritage Greenway

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Event Assistant

Leigh Tocher-Rovere

Event Assistant

*deceased

OUR MISSION

As the non-profit managing organization for the Patapsco Valley Heritage Area, Patapsco Heritage Greenway is dedicated to preserving, protecting, interpreting, and restoring the environment, history, and culture of Maryland's most dramatic river valley for all.

Cover Image: Biking the "Moab of the East" taken by Anita Lato. This photograph was selected as an Exhibit Honorable Mention for the 2025 PaSNAPsco Photo Contest.

PARTNERS

Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay	Centro de Apoyo Familiar	Girl Scouts of Central Maryland
American Rivers	Chesapeake Monitoring Cooperative/RiverTrends	Granite Historical Society
Atwater's	Chesapeake Science Point High School	Greater Arbutus Business Association
Backwater Books	Chinese American Parent Association of Howard County - CAPA Green	Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition
Baltimore Community ToolBank	Choose Clean Water Coalition	Greater Patapsco Community Association
Baltimore County Arts Guild	Church Lane Elementary and Technology School	Green Trust Alliance
Baltimore County Government: Commission on Arts and Sciences, Department of Recreation and Parks, Office of Tourism and Cultural Arts	Community College of Baltimore County	Gunpowder Valley Conservancy
Baltimore County Green Alliance	Community Ecology Institute	Halethorpe Civic League
Baltimore County Public Library, Catonsville Branch	Conveyor Handling Company, Inc.	Halethorpe Improvement Association
Baltimore County Public Schools	Defensores de la Cuenca	Hebbville Elementary School
Baltimore Gas and Electric	Diggs-Johnson Museum	Hillcrest Elementary School
Baltimore Gift Economy	Edmondson Heights Civic Association	Hispanic Access Foundation
Baltimore Highlands Community Association	Edmondson Heights Elementary School	Historic Ellicott City, Inc.
Baltimore Highlands Elementary School	Elkridge Assembly Rooms, Inc.	Historical Society of Baltimore County
Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum	Elkridge Community Alliance	Howard Community College Center for Civic & Community Engagement
Blue Water Baltimore	Elkridge Furnace Inn	Howard County Arts Council
Catonsville Arts District	Elkridge Heritage Society	Howard County Bird Club
Catonsville Chamber of Commerce	Elkridge Rotary Foundation	Howard County Center for African American Culture
Catonsville Cooperative Market	Ellicott City Partnership	Howard County Chamber of Commerce
Catonsville Middle School	Friends of Oella Cemetery	Howard County Conservancy
Catonsville Rails to Trails	Friends of Patapsco Valley State Park	Howard County Garden Club
Catonsville Tree Canopy Project	Friends of Whipps Cemetery and Memorial Gardens	Howard County Government: Office of Community Sustainability, Department of Recreation and Parks
	Gary Memorial United Methodist Church	



Howard County Historical Society
Howard County History Day
Howard County Library System, Miller Branch and Elkridge Branch
Howard County Public School System
Howard County Tourism Council (Visit Howard County)
Howard County Truth, Lynching and Reconciliation, Inc.
Howard Ecoworks
Indian Cultural Association of Howard County
Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake
Interfaith Power and Light
Irvine Nature Center
Izaak Walton League of America (Save Our Streams and Salt Watch)
Lansdowne Elementary School
Lansdowne High School
Lansdowne Improvement Association
Lansdowne Middle School
Lucky and Blessed Fishing
Lurman Woodland Theatre
Manor Hill Tavern
Maryland Civil Air Patrol, Nike Missile Site BA-79
Maryland Department of the Environment
Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Maryland International School
Maryland Latinos Unidos
Maryland State Parks
Maryland Water Monitoring Council (MWMC)
Milford Mill United Methodist Church

Music City Maryland Association
Muslim Family Center
Natural History Society of Maryland
Nature Forward
Nature Worx
Neighborspace of Baltimore County
Oella Historical Society
Owings Mills High School
Patapsco Valley State Park
Preservation Maryland
Rotary Club Columbia/Patuxent
St. John's Episcopal Church and Parish Day School
Serenity Ridge Nature Preserve and Arboretum
Southwest Visions Foundation
Stevenswood Improvement Association
T. Rowe Price
Tenable
Under Armour
University of Maryland: Center for Environmental Science, Integration and Application Network, Extension Master Gardeners Program, Department of Anthropology, Howard County Alumni Chapter
Watershed Public Charter School
Woodmoor Community Association
University of Maryland Baltimore County: Black Student Union, Environmental Task Force, Student Eco-Ambassadors, Office of Sustainability
Youth Climate Institute

PHG partners with other organizations and businesses on a variety of projects that support the Patapsco Valley. These projects include planting and maintaining trees with Under Armour at Patapsco Valley State Park (previous page) and with Baltimore County Public Schools (below) on school campuses.



FOCUS AREAS



HERITAGE



ENVIRONMENT



ARTS & CULTURE



RECREATION

MHAA GRANT FUNDS

The Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) awarded matching grants totaling **\$329,176 for Patapsco Valley Heritage Area (PVHA) non-profits**. These grant funds support heritage tourism projects and activities that draw visitors and expand economic development and tourism-related opportunities in the Patapsco Valley.

Funded projects in the PVHA include:

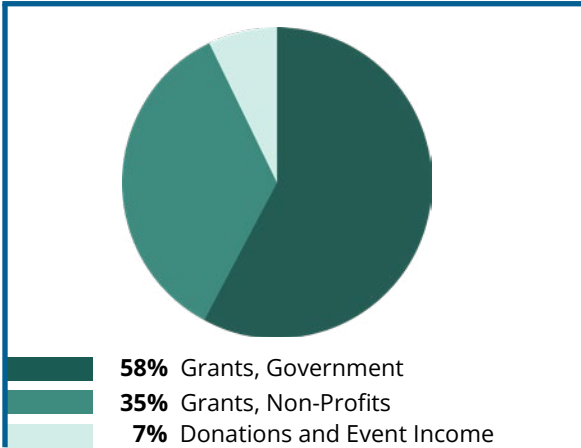
Maryland Wing, Civil Air Patrol <i>Paving the Way: Improving Visitor Safety and Access to the Historic Cold War BA-79 Nike Missile Base in Granite, Maryland</i>	\$6,783
Elkridge Assembly Rooms, Inc. <i>Elkridge Assembly Rooms Building Stabilization</i>	\$66,868
Friends of Patapsco Valley State Park <i>Restoration of Civilian Conservation Corps Shelter 10 in Patapsco Valley State Park</i>	\$35,000
Oella Historical Society <i>Historic Oella Cemetery Restoration and Improvement</i>	\$20,525

In addition, Patapsco Heritage Greenway (PHG) received a management grant for \$200,000, which includes a block grant of \$30,000 to be distributed to PVHA partners and stakeholders through our competitive mini-grant program. PHG's management grant supports organizational operations and staffing and will help promote and highlight heritage tourism opportunities for visitors to the PVHA.

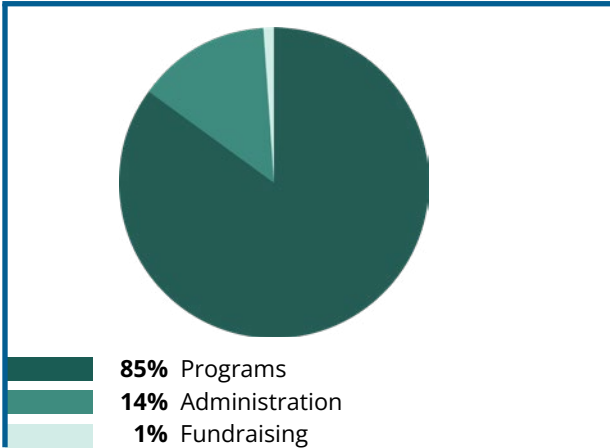
FUNDING

GHHI Thriving Communities Grant (multiyear)	\$236,200
Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) Management Grant	\$100,000
Howard County Government Community Service Partnership Grant	\$80,000
Baltimore County Government Arts and Sciences Operating Grant	\$70,000
Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability (DEPS) WARPIG Grant	\$70,000
Chesapeake Bay Trust Urban Trees Grant via Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay	\$59,300
Donations and Event Income	\$52,735
MHAA Marketing Grant (multiyear)	\$45,000
Chesapeake Bay Trust Capacity Building Grant	\$35,558
Howard County Office of Community Sustainability PREP Grant	\$35,000
MHAA Block Grant (distributed as competitive mini-grants)	\$25,000
National Park Service Chesapeake Gateways Grant	\$18,745
American Rivers Daniels Dam Community Engagement Contract	\$6,300
MD250 Fellows Internship Grant	\$5,000
Preservation Maryland Heritage Fund Grant	\$5,000
Chesapeake Bay Trust Keep Maryland Beautiful Grant	\$5,000

REVENUE*



EXPENDITURE*



* Unaudited

PARTNERSHIPS

PHG provided \$46,107 to partners in the Patapsco Valley Heritage Area through our mini-grant, EC250 Legacy Fund, Kit Valentine Fund and sponsorship programs.

MINI-GRANT PROGRAM

Patapsco Heritage Greenway's (PHG) Mini-Grant Program is designed to assist heritage-related sites, organizations and municipalities to develop new and innovative programs, partnerships, exhibits, tours, events, and other initiatives consistent with the regional goals and objectives stated within our state and county approved management plan. The program encourages proposals that include collaborative partnerships, enhance preservation, encourage stewardship of natural resources, and promote heritage tourism. This year, PHG received nearly \$50,000 in requests, funded by a \$25,000 grant from the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority. This year's awardees were chosen through a competitive process and PHG was able to award \$25,000 in funding.

FY 2026 Patapsco Valley Heritage Area Mini-Grant Awardees:

Baltimore County Arts Guild <i>Voices and Visions: An Accessible Digital Art Tour of Catonsville's Historic Markers</i>	\$3,292
Catonsville Middle School <i>Patapsco Watershed Experience-Equitable Access to Environmental Stewardship</i>	\$1,665
Catonsville Tree Canopy Project <i>Catonsville Street Tree Planting</i>	\$2,500
Elkridge Assembly Rooms, Inc. <i>Elkridge Assembly Rooms Concert Series</i>	\$2,500
Elkridge Heritage Society <i>Elkridge Heritage Museum Part 2 and HoCo 250 Contribution</i>	\$4,000
Friends of Patapsco Valley State Park <i>GreenMind Series</i>	\$2,500
Greater Patapsco Community Association-Small Watershed Community Committee <i>Supporting Habitat and Stream Health of Patapsco River Tributaries</i>	\$3,392
Howard County Conservancy <i>Visitor Metrics</i>	\$2,651
Howard County Historical Society <i>History on the Hill: Interpreting the Howard County Courthouse</i>	\$2,500

All PVHA mini-grants require a 1:1 match, with any mix of cash or in-kind match. We look forward to continuing our efforts to make our grants accessible to a wide range of partners doing work in the Patapsco Valley Heritage Area.



EC250 LEGACY FUND AWARDS

The fund is used solely to support projects that benefit Ellicott City and take place within the Ellicott City Historic District plus properties immediately abutting Frederick Road from Toll House Road to River Road in Baltimore County. The purpose of the fund, as stipulated by EC250's Board of Directors with the gift, is to help non-profit, partner organizations fund projects that:

- Provide educational and informative programs, events, and learning experiences that raise the visibility of the history of Ellicott City; and/or
- Beautify and enhance the appearance of Ellicott City and its gateways through the maintenance and restoration of interpretive signage, gardens, benches, and visitor amenities.

In addition, EC250 specified a portion of the fund to be set aside to help maintain the Ellicott City/Oella entrance garden along the Patapsco River.

PHG provided the following awards totaling \$12,000 to local non-profits along with organizing events and providing \$925 in materials to support maintenance and upkeep of the Ellicott City/Oella entrance garden.

Howard County Historical Society <i>Courthouse Exhibit</i>	\$2,500
Ellicott City Partnership <i>OEC Clock</i>	\$3,750
Ellicott City Partnership <i>Light Up OEC</i>	\$3,750
Historic Ellicott City, Inc. <i>Ellicott City Scavenger Hunt Booklets (2nd printing)</i>	\$2,000

KIT VALENTINE MEMORIAL FUND

PHG established the Kit Valentine Memorial Fund to encourage the next generation of trail “blazers and builders.” Through this fund, we offer grants to support Eagle and Gold Award projects.

No awards during FY26

SPONSORSHIPS

PHG provided the following sponsorships totaling \$9,700 to local non-profits.

Black Girls Hike , <i>Amphibian Hour</i>	\$500
Chesapeake Arts Center , <i>Annual Arts in the Park Festival</i>	\$500
Community Ecology Institute , <i>Harvest Gala</i>	\$500
Diggs-Johnson Museum , <i>Bus Tour to Hampton Mansion and Tour Historic Towson</i>	\$432
Elkridge Heritage Society, Inc. , <i>Elkridge: Crossroads of Revolution</i>	\$750
Ellicott City Partnership , <i>OEC Farmers Market</i>	\$200
Friends of Patapsco Valley State Park , <i>Cocktails for Trails</i>	\$500
Howard County Arts Council , <i>Paint It! Ellicott City</i>	\$500
Howard County Public School System , <i>Howard County History Day</i>	\$318
Indian Cultural Association of Howard County , <i>Festival of India</i>	\$500
Lurman Woodland Theater , <i>Summer Concert Series</i>	\$500
Maryland Humanities , <i>Humanities Conference at UMBC: Centering Community Voices</i>	\$1,000
Music City Maryland Association , <i>Music City Maryland Festival</i>	\$1,500
Resurrection St. Paul School , <i>Pollinator Garden Display</i>	\$1,500
Stingers Rugby Club , <i>Fall 2025 Season and Community Cleanups</i>	\$500



HERITAGE

University of Maryland students took part in the Hockley Field School to gain experience and learn about archaeological field and lab methods. ▲

The Heritage Program's primary accomplishments in FY26 fall into three different categories including event planning and facilitation, program building, and professional development.

We accomplished several tasks in FY26. For example, we planned and hosted a variety of in-person events, including: multiple Patapsco Days lectures, the Architecture of School Buildings lecture with Preservation Maryland, and the Nike Missile Site BA-79 open house. We also helped coordinate our Fifth Annual Charles L. Wagandt Memorial Lecture. The Heritage Program also helped to host various cemetery cleanups at the Oella Cemetery with the Environmental Program Manager and Community Programs Coordinator.

Regarding program building, we saw progress solidifying new programs while maintaining and expanding existing programs. We intend to continue program building in both these capacities in FY27. For example, we were able to acquire funding from Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) and commitments for collaborative assistance from the University of Maryland (UMD) to establish the Hockley Archaeology Project. This first year in the field saw marked success, bringing five UMD students to the field to teach them archaeological field and lab methods, and engaging a variety of community organizations including (but not limited to) local stakeholders such as the ElkrIDGE Heritage Society, the ElkrIDGE Assembly Rooms, the ElkrIDGE Furnace Inn, and the Howard County Historical Society. We also had sixteen community members come out to the site to

volunteer. Ultimately we identified intact archaeological deposits on the site, including finding the foundation of a building dating to the late 1700s/early 1800s that was buried roughly 5 feet below ground level. Staff at both MHT and the Department of Natural Resources have expressed interest in PHG continuing excavations in future years.

In terms of professional development, we have engaged with a variety of opportunities to further staff professional development including attending a variety of workshops (both virtual and in-person) hosted by groups such as MHT and the Mid-Atlantic Archaeological Conference. Participating in these events allowed Heritage Program Manager Kyla Cools to learn about relevant work being done by other groups in Maryland and the broader Mid-Atlantic region, and think deeply about how the Heritage Program can engage with best practices in the interpretation of/education about the history and culture of the Patapsco Valley. Additionally, she has continued to participate in county-run committees/boards as a preservation and archaeology expert, such as the Howard County Cemetery Preservation Advisory Board and the Howard County Heritage and Historic Sites Advisory Board. Kyla will continue engaging in professional development opportunities offered by local, state, and regional groups in FY27. Part of doing this will entail continuing her participation in regional conferences and acquiring certifications relevant to PHG projects she has run and/or created.



ENVIRONMENT

PHG hosts cleanup events each fall and spring where volunteers of all ages help make a positive environmental impact in the Patapsco watershed. ▲

As we look to the future, PHG is excited to continue growing our volunteer community and creating even more opportunities to make a difference throughout the Patapsco Valley. In the coming year, we'll continue removing litter and invasive species, planting trees, restoring natural areas, and working alongside local partners to protect the health of the Patapsco River Valley. But stewardship isn't just about the work—it's also about getting outside, meeting new people, and building a stronger connection to the places we all share. We look forward to deepening our community roots, expanding partnerships throughout the Patapsco Watershed, and creating engaging, hands-on experiences for community members of all ages. We invite you to join us, get involved, and be part of the fun! Learn more about PHG's Environmental Program in our [2025 Environmental Portfolio](#).

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

1,272
volunteers

2,902
volunteer hours

4,789
engaged education participants

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

33,037
pounds of trash removed

334,206
sq ft of invasive plants removed

190
trees planted

754
trees maintained

BECOME A VOLUNTEER!

patapsco.org/connect-with-us/volunteer



WATER QUALITY MONITORING

In March 2026, we finalized the fourth Patapsco River Report Card, issuing a B grade for the non-tidal portion of the river. This is the highest grade we've documented since monitoring began in 2021. The grade was based on five parameters measured from May 2024 to April 2025 including biology, conductivity, clarity, E. coli bacteria counts and phosphorus. We held our first Report Card Release event in April 2026 and celebrated both the release of the Report Card and five years of monitoring.

We continue to monitor 12 sites in the Patapsco Watershed monthly. Since the inception of the program we have monitored temperature, pH, conductivity, nitrite, phosphorus, dissolved oxygen, water clarity and E. coli bacteria counts. During FY26, we purchased a dissolved oxygen probe to streamline our dissolved oxygen data collection. Instead of cumbersome chemical checks and titrations, we now have a meter that allows us to calibrate and collect data quickly. Since 2024 we've provided multiple Salt Watch trainings each year using Salt Watch Kits from Izaak Walton League. Overuse of winter road salt is a widespread problem and these kits help document and understand the extent of the chloride issue.

After serving on the Community Science Committee of the Maryland Water Monitoring Council (MWMC), our Water Quality Program Manager was asked to be on the Board of Directors for the MWMC. She has served in this role since January 2026. It is a 3 year term. Our Water Quality Program Assistant is now fully certified to collect water quality and biological data and now regularly leads monitoring teams. Additionally, all of our Event Assistants are certified Save Our

Volunteer water quality monitors collect biological data by identifying and documenting the macroinvertebrates present in the stream. ▲

Streams monitors, so they are confident and qualified to act as biological interpreters of the benthic stream environment at all relevant PHG events.

We adhere to Chesapeake Monitoring Cooperative's (CMC) protocols and quality assurance procedures, which allows our data to be compared across the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and stored in the CMC's Data Explorer database. The data are accessible for public and agency use. Our data are used by the Maryland Department of the Environment in their biennial Integrated Report (IR) of Surface Water Quality in Maryland.

We completed two seasons (Fall and Spring) of macroinvertebrate biological monitoring using Virginia Save Our Streams protocols. We collected data at twelve sites, using a combination of rocky bottom and muddy bottom protocols. We certified seventeen new community scientists in biological data collection procedures as well as providing scores of other educational macroinvertebrate discovery opportunities. Additionally, we led multiple industry exposure events for new professionals to the monitoring field.

We provided 185 hands-on, in-depth volunteer opportunities to learn about water quality, stream monitoring and potential threats to water quality. We engaged hundreds more in less formal opportunities to learn about water quality, land use and residential yard management through educational experiences at schools, streamside community events, and workshops.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND GROUP PROGRAMS

PHG's impact on the Patapsco Valley is predicated on the continued dedication and stewardship of its community and group partners. A small staff depends on the generous hands of others to clean up thousands of pounds of trash, plant hundreds of trees, and engage with diverse communities across the watershed. In FY26, PHG's environmental team reunited with familiar faces from the teams of Under Armour, Tenable, Catonsville Rails to Trails, PVSP's Senior Rangers, and more. We also fostered new community partnerships, such as local scout troops, Bob Lucido team, Pepco, and Synergist Computing—all dedicated to supporting PHG's mission.

Community leadership and management of projects cultivates care for our natural environment and encourages repeated stewardship. Under Armour's Green Team was among the original groups involved in planting PHG's agroforestry plot and other trees in the Avalon area of Patapsco Valley State Park, and has returned every fall and spring for maintenance since Fall 2024. They were also the first participants in our Groups Program social, available to any group interested in a post-stewardship event gathering. In FY26, we teamed up for two maintenance events and caught up together at the PHG Volunteer Ice Cream Social. Over two years, the efforts of the

Under Armour Green Team demonstrate how sustainable and reliable partnerships can turn initial volunteer engagement into long-term stewardship and lasting commitment to natural spaces.

Our relationship with Catonsville Rails to Trails (CRTT) has also strengthened throughout FY26. Together, we completed seven tree maintenance and invasive removal events and planted 100 trees to build the understory layer along the Short Line Trail. We also were excited to collaborate with CRTT on new wayside exhibits coming soon. In FY27, we look forward to planting a fourth section of understory trees on the Short Line Trail and working closely together again.

We are deeply grateful for the support and care from these groups and our many other impactful partnerships. Whether the PHG team is getting outside with a school, a scout troop, a corporate team, or a group of people simply dedicating their Saturday morning to a good cause, we are all unified by the goal of a healthier and more beautiful outdoor world.

Left: PHG, along with community volunteers, worked in collaboration with Catonsville Rails to Trails to plant 100 trees along the Short Line Trail in Catonsville. **Right:** As part of PHG's Group Programs, community groups, including scout troops, take part in stewardship in the Patapsco watershed.





Amelia English, PHG's Watershed Engagement Plan Coordinator, ▲ has focused on building relationships with the community to inform the development of the plan.

WATERSHED ENGAGEMENT PLAN

In FY26, PHG's new Watershed Engagement Plan (WEP) Coordinator began developing a watershed-wide engagement plan for the non-tidal portion of the Patapsco River watershed in Baltimore County and Howard County. With FY26 being the first year of this initiative, the WEP Coordinator's work so far has focused on building community relationships and the data-driven foundation needed to create a plan that is feasible and location-specific.

As part of this effort, the WEP Coordinator has conducted more than 70 interviews with a diverse range of stakeholders across the watershed, including residents, community associations, schools, local nonprofits, environmental organizations, academic institutions, and other local partners. Through these conversations, relevant themes related to community priorities, barriers to participating in stewardship, engagement format preferences, opportunities for greater coordination among organizations, and challenges with working at the watershed scale across jurisdictions emerged. Interviewees also helped identify concerns on topics such as flooding, litter and illegal dumping, access to and quality of parks and greenspace, and community and organizational experiences working with local government. Transcripts of these stakeholder interviews are being coded and analyzed to systematically identify themes that will inform the development of the Watershed Engagement Plan, laying the groundwork for assessing current conditions and developing the plan's goals, objectives, and recommended action items.

In addition to conducting stakeholder interviews, the WEP Coordinator attended roughly sixteen community meetings across eight different communities in the watershed, leading to PHG building relationships with residents and local leaders, learning about community issues, gathering feedback on environmental programs, and introducing the plan and the organization's role working in the watershed. The WEP Coordinator also attended several community events and

piloted an in-person survey activity to test a more accessible approach to gathering community input that can be replicated at future events. To identify specific areas within the watershed where targeted outreach, engagement, and environmental stewardship might be especially beneficial or necessary for PHG to undertake, the WEP Coordinator also conducted spatial research and analysis using U.S. Census demographic data, CDC PLACES health data, EPA environmental justice indicators, flood risk data, and tree canopy cover data. Due to the wide geographic scope of the non-tidal portion of the Patapsco River watershed, communities that had scores associated with increased risk of environmental hazards and inequities were identified as priority areas for the watershed engagement plan.

The engagement in FY26 has not only resulted in new and strengthened partnerships, but it is also beginning to translate into stewardship on the ground. In FY27, PHG expects to advance these emerging partnerships through tangible projects. These include student campus cleanups and tree plantings at Milbrook Elementary School in Pikesville, tree maintenance and tree education with ElkrIDGE Landing Middle School students, park revitalization with the Lansdowne Improvement Association and broader community at Hillcrest Park, and stream cleanups along Ben's Run in Milford Mill with the Stevenswood Improvement Association.

The work completed as part of this new initiative in FY26 has established a strong foundation for the Watershed Engagement Plan and deepened PHG's understanding of the communities that live, work, and play in the Patapsco River watershed. In FY27, the WEP Coordinator will move from a focus of establishing relationships and collecting information towards forming a data-driven, community-informed approach to watershed engagement.

Learn more at patapsco.org/stewardship/environmental-programs



ARTS & CULTURE

Patapsco Heritage Greenway is passionate about the important role arts and cultural activities play in enhancing the heritage area experience. Whether it is live musical performances, art competitions, or local festivals, PHG is committed to enhancing the Valley's appeal to a diverse audience through art and cultural experiences. We are always excited to find new ways to support, promote, and develop new opportunities and partnerships with local artists and the heritage area's cultural arts scene.

PASNAPSCO

Patapsco Heritage Greenway's eighth annual PaSNAPsco photo contest invited amateur, professional, and student photographers to capture the region's history, landmarks, and natural beauty. In 2025, we saw a record number of submissions with eighty-four photos from thirty-four photographers. A panel of judges selected winners in each of the six categories, including Best of Patapsco, while social media voting determined the People's Choice Award. Winning and honorable mention photos were featured in PHG's 2026 calendar to showcase local photographers and the unique character of the Patapsco Valley. Additionally, a selection of contest photos will make up the PaSNAPsco Photography Exhibit displayed at the Baltimore County Arts Guild's Catonsville Clubhouse from August through September 2026.

PAINT IT! ELLICOTT CITY

Howard County Arts Council's annual Paint it! Ellicott City brings artists and spectators to the Ellicott City historic district and the Patapsco Valley Heritage Area. For the past ten years,

"Stream Sonata" by Greg Johannesen – Winner of Best Depiction of the Patapsco, Paint It! Ellicott City 2026

"Raindrops" taken by Andrew Gosden – People's Choice Winner, PaSNAPsco 2025



Patapsco Heritage Greenway has sponsored a prize for Best Depiction of the Patapsco. This year Greg Johannesen took the prize for *Stream Sonata*. Our judges selected this painting for its up-close examination of the water, capturing its natural colors, algae, rocks and movement. It reminds us to slow down and notice the small elements that make up the Patapsco River watershed. *Stream Sonata* serves as important reminder not only to look, but also to listen.



Learn more at patapsco.org/plan-your-visit/arts-culture



RECREATION

As part of the Explore Patapsco 2026 Recreation and Stewardship series, PHG co-hosted a hiking event, Beyond the Trail, with Friends of Patapsco Valley State Park. ▲

As one of PHG's five strategic goals, recreation serves as an avenue for people to explore the Patapsco Valley Heritage Area, learn about the heritage area, and appreciate the natural beauty of the Patapsco watershed. In FY26, PHG staff and board members increased efforts to host and participate in more recreation-focused events to engage with people invested in local outdoor communities, such as hiking and mountain biking. The Explore Patapsco 2026 series, funded by the National Park Service Chesapeake Gateways program, was created in order to provide opportunities for residents and visitors to explore the land and water trails while connecting with our organization's four program focus areas—nature, arts and culture, history/heritage, and outdoor recreation—that help define our work and public engagement across the Patapsco Valley.

The series kicked off in January with a winter hike combined with our annual Salt Watch Snapshot event, bringing together people in a season often spent indoors. Explore Patapsco continued into the spring with a refreshed iteration of the "Family Fun Run" and a new "Beyond the Trail" variety hiking program, both co-hosted with Friends of Patapsco Valley

State Park. September will see Family Field Night, a relaxed evening in the Pickall area with yard games and an Eco-Adventures reptile presentation. The series will conclude with the third annual Festival del Río Patapsco, offering environmental education in both English and Spanish with various Spanish-language partners across the Chesapeake watershed. We worked with a volunteer Leadership Essentials team from the Leadership Howard County program to produce a strategic communications and engagement plan that PHG utilized as part of the series while also implementing other recommendations supporting community engagement, storytelling, visitation, and awareness across the PVHA.

Across these events, we've visited four different areas of Patapsco Valley State Park and seen all kinds of new faces. The Explore Patapsco series has expanded PHG's role in the recreation realm of the Patapsco Valley and created new opportunities for a crossover between physical activity, nature exploration, and education. In FY27, after the completion of our grant term with Chesapeake Gateways, we look forward to repeating and further developing these events to strengthen our recreation pillar in promoting PHG's vision.

Learn more at patapsco.org/plan-your-visit/outdoor-activities/



GRACE KUBOFCIK FRIEND OF PATAPSCO AWARD

The Grace Kubofcik Friend of the Patapsco Award honors the service and legacy of former PHG board President Grace Kubofcik. The award is given to individuals and organizations for exceptional stewardship, interpretation and/or preservation of the environment, history, and culture of the Patapsco River Valley.

The inaugural Grace Kubofcik Friend of the Patapsco Award was presented to Fred Dorsey at our September *Evening in the Patapsco Valley* event at ElkrIDGE Furnace Inn and we look forward to announcing the winner of the 2026 award at our October 7 *Evening in the Patapsco Valley* event.

Since retiring in 1998, Fred has been an incredible advocate for preservation and heritage in Howard County demonstrating ongoing dedication to research and sharing knowledge with the public. He has led or contributed to a range of activities that far exceed the award criteria and has been an exemplary and highly active community member in advocating for preservation.

To list just a few examples from those who nominated Fred:

- Fred urged the rewriting of Howard County's preservation enabling legislation on multiple topics, such as updating and expanding Historic District Commission (now HPC) purview, creating single-site historic districts, and envisioning and forming a Preservation Master Plan for the County, working directly with the DPZ Director in creating a Howard County Preservation Plan which was formally adopted by the Council in 2014 with many of the Plan's goals implemented over the last decade.
- Through coordinated efforts, Fred and Grace drafted, lobbied and enabled legislation at the state and local level to increase the 10% historic tax credit to a 25% credit, a preservation tool that several other counties since have emulated. This effort incentivized historic rehabilitation for qualifying properties. Howard County saw an increase in historic homeowners restoring their homes, as well as outbuildings, such as historic barns and smokehouses, that are typically ignored or destroyed due to lack of outbuilding maintenance funding.
- He was instrumental in founding, building and leading Preservation Howard County, serving as long-time president of the organization.
- He played a pivotal role helping PHG achieve Maryland state heritage area certification. Fred not only enthusiastically endorsed PHG's application but also provided invaluable advice and strategic guidance throughout the entire process.

- He has worked to ensure that the public and aspiring elected officials discussed preservation in advance of elections through organizing multiple candidate forums.

- With Fred's perseverance and under his leadership, Howard County's Cemetery Preservation Board was reconstituted in 2013, and he remained on the board for two five-year terms. Fred's initiatives continue with efforts resulting in completed inventories of the majority of the county's historic cemeteries. The Board advises on projects and impacts to historic cemeteries, oversees the County cemetery restoration grant, and partners with the Genealogical Society. Through his interest and efforts many long-neglected burial places have been restored and beautified.

- In setting a high standard for appropriate interpretation for historic sites that can be modeled throughout the PVHA, at Belmont Manor and Historic Park in Elkridge, once owned by the Dorsey family, Fred shared genealogy and history of this iconic property, guided visitors and docents in training, and assisted in evaluating life on the estate through archeology. He worked hand-in-hand with Howard County Conservancy staff to develop field experiences for students and helped train volunteer hike leaders on the history of Belmont and Elkridge. In 2015 Fred initiated the use of ground penetrating radar to identify unmarked graves on the Belmont estate, discovering some located outside the Dorsey cemetery fencing, contributing to additional research.

Fred always speaks with wisdom full of dignity and kindness, entertaining questions patiently and with good humor. He has lent his photographic skills to numerous projects. He represents what one person, in retirement, can accomplish by dedicating themselves to preserving history and working tirelessly in service of the broader public. Few will exceed Fred Dorsey's contribution to the heritage of the Patapsco Valley. He has led efforts in Howard County historic preservation through legislation and action. He has taught us about the history of our iconic properties. He has transformed local cemeteries into gardens of remembrance. And he does this all with grace, humility, and reverence for the Valley he loves. He is a preservationist, a leader, and a teacher.

THANK YOU

A big THANK YOU to all of our members, donors, sponsors and volunteers for your support during the past year. We are grateful to all of you who contributed your time to help us improve the Patapsco Valley Heritage Area as a place to live, work and play. **Thank you for helping to steward the environmental, historical, recreational and cultural resources of the Patapsco Valley for all.**



THE BALTIMORE COUNTY
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Green Grant

