

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State's Purchase of Ecosystem Services Has Implications for Maryland TMDL

Annapolis, MD – February 10, 2011 - More than 170 acres of woodlands, wetlands and riparian buffers have been preserved in the Upper Chester River watershed at Mudford Farm, located just outside Sudlersville, Maryland. The State of Maryland, through the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Queen Anne's County, has purchased a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) easement on the farm property. The \$676,938 purchase price includes approximately 35 acres of restored wetlands, 45 acres of warm season grass buffers and 85 acres of mature woodland. In addition to buffering the remaining cropland in the interests of enhancing the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay, the stream buffers and wetlands will also provide critically needed wildlife habitat.

The property is an on-the-ground demonstration and research project owned by the Biophilia Foundation and actively managed by Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage (CWH). The purpose of the project is to demonstrate how farm operators and landowners can participate in restoring their local watershed and the Chesapeake Bay by continuing to farm the best soils while diversifying their farm revenue through the ongoing management and sale of other "crops", such as cleaner water and wildlife habitat. In this regard, this transaction represents the sale and purchase of ecosystem services by the State of Maryland from a private landowner. This project has also been chosen by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as one of its featured "Farms of the Future", soon to be published by USDA and EcoAgriculture Partners.

One significant difference in this transaction compared to other land conservation transactions made by the State is that the farm owner is able to annually approximate the reduction of pollutants achieved by the management practices prescribed in the purchased conservation easement. This "Payment for Ecosystem Services" (PES) has the potential to help jurisdictions quantify reductions in the amount of pollutants harming the Chesapeake Bay, as required by the recently established Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) regulations.

In this case, the Biophilia Foundation engaged CWH to design and implement the buffer and wetland restoration practices. These practices were then studied by Water Stewardship Inc. (WSI) to approximate the resulting annual reduction in nutrients. This scientifically valid analysis verified the removal of over 1,800 pounds of nitrogen and almost 100 pounds of phosphorus. In addition, the conserved habitats provide additional benefits for ducks, geese, shorebirds, dragonflies, sparrows, amphibians, and other wildlife. Although these "co-benefits" have not been quantified in this case, they are nonetheless tangible public benefits.

The Biophilia Foundation has used this research in the creation of a "nutrient credit" as a unit of nutrient reduction with other unmeasured but tangible co-benefits such as wildlife habitat to support Bay biodiversity. The Biophilia Foundation and its partners believe that measured outcomes, such as the nutrient credits generated at Mudford Farm and subsequently purchased by the State, represent the

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most direct and accountable method for public and private entities to engage in PES. Such a system of PES could substantially help the State and local jurisdictions satisfy the requirements of the Chesapeake Bay TMDL.

The Biophilia Foundation supports efforts that protect, restore, enhance, and preserve wildlife habitat for all species of native plants and animals. The Foundation is currently involved in similar projects on Maryland's Eastern Shore and in the American Southwest.

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