



February Newsletter

A Note from the Director

The Whispering Giant at the Inlet



I'm sure many of you are so familiar with the totem pole at the inlet in Ocean City that you may not even notice it anymore. I'm embarrassed to admit that I'm guilty and, quite frankly, not proud to admit that fact.

Sculpted from 100-year-old oak by a gentleman named Peter Toth, the totem of an Assateague Indian stands 20-feet tall and has stood since 1976 when it was installed at the inlet. Mr. Toth emigrated from his home in Hungary to Akron, Ohio in 1956 to escape the growing Soviet incursion.

Enamored with native American history, Mr. Toth went on to create and install one of his sculptures in every state in the U.S. (and a number in Canada as well) calling his installations the **Trail of the Whispering Giants**.

Some may see the sculpture as a bit cartoonish or garish. Maybe it is. That's a decision folks can make for themselves. For me, it serves one very important function, and that is to remind us that before there were Ferris wheels and boardwalks, before there was an inlet, before Europeans set foot on this continent, there were people who lived and thrived on this land and in the waters that surround that land. People that fed from these waters, hunted on these lands and raised families in these forests.

The Assateagues (also known as the Kickotanks) were a tribe of the Algonquin Nation. They were members of the Powhatan Confederacy which stretched from the Carolinas to Maryland. The Powhatan Confederacy was a large and powerful alliance of tribes throughout the mid-Atlantic who established political bodies and formed allegiances to provide for protection and

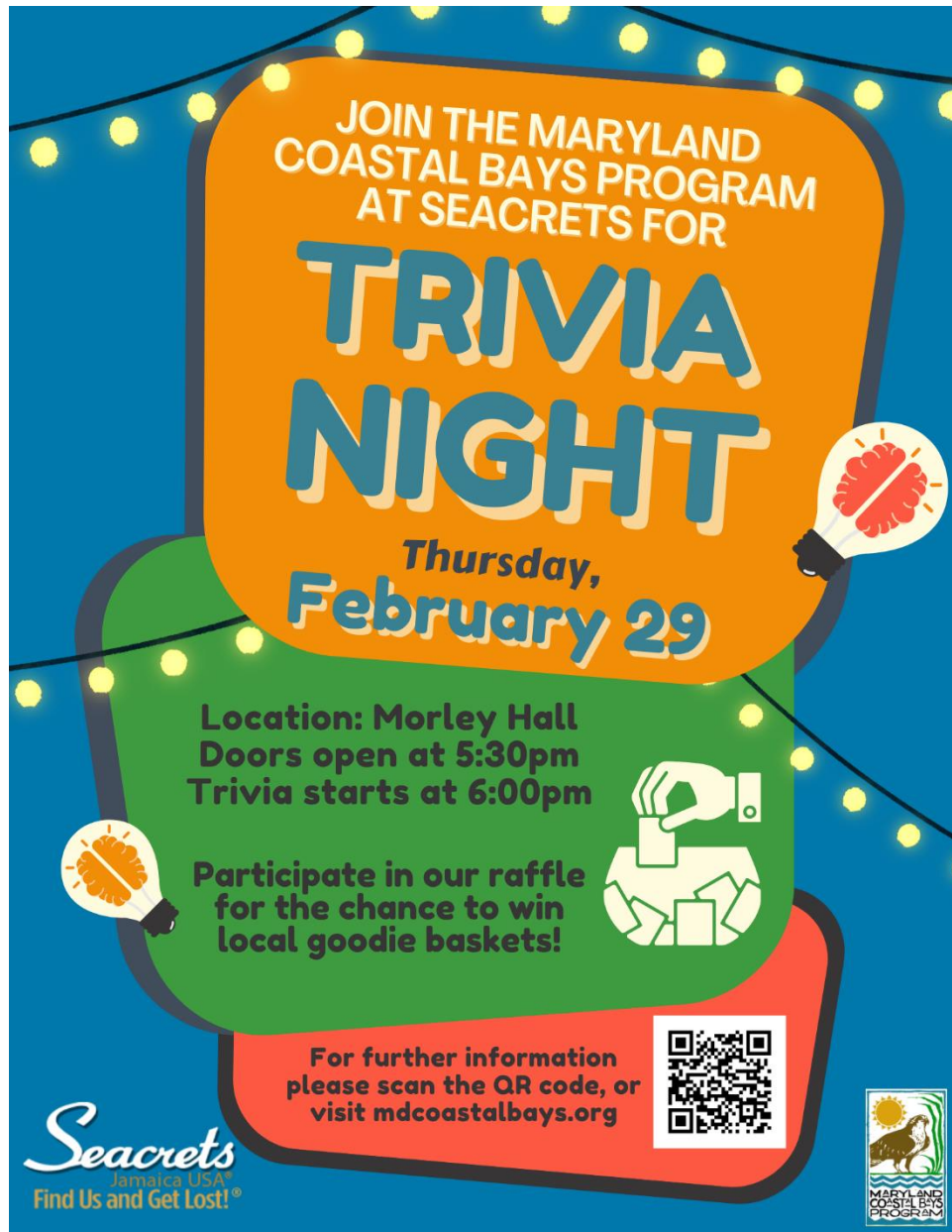
trade. These were learned people with a sophisticated system of governance and the know-how to live and thrive on the, oftentimes scarce, resources that nature provided. Not an easy task by any means and they were able to pull this off for thousands of years.

I honestly don't know if the native Americans of the Delmarva wore feathers in their hair like the sculpture at the inlet. I do not know if the sculpture is an accurate depiction of the Assateague tribe that inhabited this area not so many years ago. But I do know that it is a culture that needs to be remembered, honored and appreciated. Their ability to sustain themselves, and the resources within it, is a testament to ingenuity and intellect. There's a lot to learn there and much that could benefit our current culture.

I don't know that the Native Americans created a "perfect" society. After all, they are human. But they did live an amazing existence here on the shore for a long, long time. That's something worth thinking about when you see the totem at the inlet. It's a history worth exploring and it's a history full of lessons that would serve us well today.

Kevin Smith

Executive Director



[More information here](#)

MCBP Seeking Volunteers for our Harmful Algal
Bloom Team



Are you someone who loves the Coastal Bays? Do you care about the health of our water quality and want to be hands on in citizen science initiatives?

Well, look no further! MCBP is currently recruiting volunteers for our Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) team run under NOAA's Phytoplankton Monitoring Network. MCBP is working with several partners in the Coastal Bays area to gain a better understanding of the presence/absence of algal species that have the potential to become HABs. As of now, we have more flexibility with where sampling

locations can exist but are hoping to target areas in Chincoteague Bay. Samples are collected every two weeks and are analyzed using a microscope. Volunteers will be trained in how to collect the sample, use a microscope, ID target species, and how to report their data to the NOAA PMN database. All materials will be supplied for this program as well. This citizen science initiative is more time consuming; volunteers can expect that some samples may take several hours to analyze.

If you are interested in volunteering for this program, please contact Environmental Scientist, Carly Toulan at ctoulan@mdcoastalbays.

Funding Opportunities

The Maryland Coastal Bays Program (MCBP) is now accepting community stewardship mini-grant proposals and scientific research funding proposals for environmental projects benefiting the Coastal Bays watershed.

The community stewardship mini-grants are available to any individual, group, school, organization, service youth and civic groups for projects that will raise awareness about the challenges and solutions to restore our coastal bays, engage citizens in community-based restoration and protection projects, or educate students about the Coastal Bays.

The MCBP Mini Grant Program seeks to support watershed-based community, science, and educational initiatives that align with CCMP action items. Through this funding opportunity, MCBP is seeking to engage new applicants and organizations from diverse communities in small-scale projects that enhance communities, engage residents, and, ultimately, improve natural resources.

The Implementation Grant Program is available to MCBP's partners to assist in responding to research needs identified in the Maryland Coastal Bays Program. Opportunities include reachable scientific goals and the most effective means for



implementing them. Existing and on-going projects that seek to augment or add an additional element to an existing scope of work may also be considered for funding. Both funding opportunities must align with the Maryland Coastal Bays Management Plan, the CCMP. This plan can be found on the MCBP website at www.mdcoastalbays.org.

These funding opportunities are provided by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding. With BIL funding, the EPA will be making significant investments in the health, equity, and resilience of American communities and taking significant strides to tackle the climate crisis.

Applicants for the community stewardship mini-grants may request up to \$5,000 for their project. Applicants for the scientific research grants may request up to \$25,000. Funding details and contact information can be found on the Maryland Coastal Bays website at <https://mdcoastalbays.org/funding-opportunities/>.

The proposed deadline for both funding opportunities is March 15.

Worcester County Trail & Greenways Master Plan



Learn more about the plan to connect people in Worcester County to favorite destinations and scenic landscapes through trails and bikeways.

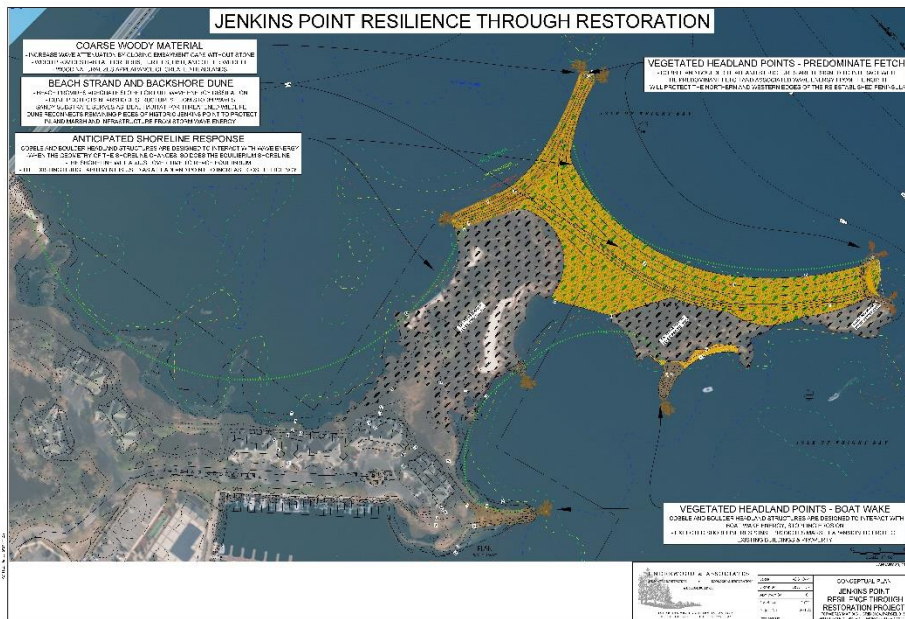
Click [here](#) to learn more about the program.

There will be a public meeting February 24 at the Berlin Library beginning 4 pm. The meeting is available by zoom. Click [here](#) for the zoom meeting attendance.

And here's a questionnaire you can participate in to let Worcester County know what you think and to help them plan an prioritize greenway trail improvements.

[Questionnaire](#)

Jenkins Point Meeting



Maryland Coastal Bays Program hosted a second public meeting on the Jenkins Point Restoration Project on Monday, January 29th in the Clubhouse Meeting Room in Ocean Pines.

Video of the meeting is available online at <https://youtu.be/n1ADNocqxls>. Representatives from MCBP briefly went over the project and then answered questions from the audience for roughly an hour. MCBP Executive Director Kevin Smith spoke on the project's background and next steps, and Chris Becraft from Underwood & Associates discussed the design approach and objectives.

Jenkins Point is on the Isle of Wight Bay, just offshore of the Ocean Pines Yacht Club. The area has seen significant erosion, reducing the resilience of the fragmented peninsula and the adjacent mainland community infrastructure, including the Yacht Club, the Osprey Point condominium community and the Pines Point residential community and marina to the increasing effects of climate change.

MCBP received a grant in 2022 from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to fund the design and permitting phase of the restoration project. Construction of the project will require additional funding.

Bay Day!

Bay Day is back! Come out to White Horse Park in Ocean Pines Sunday, May 19th, to learn how you can make a difference in your own backyard and see the amazing organizations working to protect our Coastal Bays watershed. This fun-filled educational day is hosted by the Maryland Coastal Bays Program and the Ocean Pines Association.

Festivities will be happening from 10:00am to 2:00pm, so come for an hour or stay all day. We will have something for everyone, hands-on educational activities at every booth, live music, food trucks, free boat rides on the St. Martin, and more! And the Exploration Station is back for another year so you can explore what projects MCBP and our partners are currently working on! We will also have live-music (to be announced) all day, bay boat tours on the OC Bay Hopper, and food from The Street Kitchen, OP Kiwanis, and Kona Ice.

[Link](#) to social media



Discover Your Watershed

Join MCBP on Tuesday, March 12th from 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm for the first Discover Your Watershed of the 2024 season!

Come take advantage of the extra daylight hours as we develop and define an existing trail that meanders through mature mixed forest at our 90 acre Showell Property.

We'll also spend the afternoon working to remove an area of wisteria on the south part of the property. Registration is required. Please bring sturdy shoes, weather appropriate clothing, and gloves if you prefer to use your own. We will have additional gloves, and all necessary trail equipment and wisteria removal tools. Directions to the Showell Property will be provided at registration.



[Registration Link](#)

Backyard Bird Count



Each year people from around the world come together to watch, learn about, count, and celebrate birds. Check out The Great Backyard Bird Count.

<https://www.birdcount.org/>

Plastic Free Parks TrashBlitz

Hundreds of volunteers participated in 199 data collection and clean-up hauls across the country in over 30 National park locations including our beloved Assateague Island, Click [here](#) to read about the project.

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