

Calvert Marine Museum to open new aquarium exhibit

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It's Simply Extraordinary! We can't wait for you to see our new exhibit on October 11 at the grand opening of River to Bay: Reflections and Connections at the Calvert Marine Museum. The new aquarium exhibit will be an immersive experience - introducing guests to the amazing diversity of animal life found in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

The exhibit highlights three unique bay habitats: the deep open waters, the brackish coastal shallows, and freshwater tidal tributaries. In each habitat, guests can explore the interconnections between animals, their habitats, and humans. Dave Moyer, Curator of Estuarine Biology and part of the project team puts it this way, "River to Bay offers exciting and engaging ways for our guests to appreciate the unknown world that lurks beneath the surface of the Chesapeake Bay." In order to convey this message, guests will find themselves standing below the waterline, making them part of the underwater environment. The underlying message is that all living things exist in one dynamic, interconnected system – a system under pressure and in need of help.

The Calvert Marine Museum received a FY2013 Museums for America grant for \$142,500 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), a federal granting agency, to renovate the Estuarine Biology Gallery. This award is being matched with a \$25,000 grant from the Maryland Heritage Area Authority, \$35,000 in proceeds from the 2014 Bugeye Ball, a \$50,000 donation from a longtime supporter, and over \$250,000 in labor. "It is significant", notes Jim Langley, Curator of Exhibits, "that we are doing almost everything in-house, both on the exhibit side that guests see, and behind-the-scenes in the back-up areas. Most museums can't do that."

The new exhibit introduces many interactive elements, inviting guests not only to engage their senses, but also their minds with hands-on experiences. Several new touch screen computers invite visitors to hear fish sounds, learn about Bernie Fowler and his legendary wade-ins, and play learning animal adaptation games. Complementing the gallery's new look are six new aquariums housing new species such as chain dogfish (a small shark), octopus, smallmouth bass, crappie, painted turtle, tessellated darter, and many more. In the Eco-Invaders gallery, we are adding a new tank to house the beautiful, but highly invasive lionfish.

"Celebrating Chesapeake Bay diversity is integrated into every facet of the new exhibit," states Sherrod Sturrock, deputy director and part of the project team. "The more people know about the bay, the more they value it, and we believe that will result in a desire to do more to preserve it." The exhibit includes a new website called Team Chesapeake that anyone can join to learn more about the exhibit, give feedback, and discover ways to get involved. The grand opening of the new River to Bay: Reflections and Connections will coincide with the celebration of Patuxent River Appreciation Days on October 11 and 12.

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