New sanctuary in Chesapeake Bay watershed will protect the “Ghost Fleet” of more than 200 shipwrecks

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Silver Spring, MD – July 9, 2019 – Local community partners, national conservation and preservation groups, and recreation and education advocates celebrated the designation of a new national marine sanctuary at Mallows Bay in the Potomac River. The sanctuary will take effect by the end of 2019 and will be the first designated in 19 years.

For more information on the new sanctuary, visit: https://www.noaa.gov/media-release/noaa-designates-new-national-marine-sanctuary-in-maryland

“Mallows Bay contains the greatest, richest and most vibrant maritime artifacts of America’s ascendancy on the international stage,” said historian Donald G. Shomette, author of Ghost Fleet of Mallows Bay. “It is a virtual calendar of over 250 years of history, including the very ships that made America the greatest shipbuilding nation on the planet. It is truly a national treasure.”

“Mallows Bay is a unique place where we can immerse ourselves in our natural and cultural heritage by getting up close to history,” said Kim DeMarr, owner of Atlantic Kayak Company. “As someone who takes people out on the water every day, the national recognition and attention that comes from having a national marine sanctuary creates new opportunities to connect our community and visitors alike to the Chesapeake Bay watershed through fun, educational experiences while growing our outdoor recreation economy.”

Steve Bunker, chair of the Friends of Mallows Bay said, “Local advocates for the designation of Mallows Bay have been anticipating this day for quite some time. It validates the importance of this site to Charles County as well as our national maritime history.”

“The decision to designate Mallows Bay as a national marine sanctuary underscores the important value of this place and will help to highlight and promote the unique history to travelers and visitors from around the globe. The story of Maryland is one that began at the water’s edge and this designation guarantees that Mallows Bay’s part of that story will be preserved for generations to come,” said Nicholas Redding, executive director of Preservation Maryland.

“Marine sanctuaries are our nation’s underwater living laboratories and outdoor classrooms,” said Diving With a Purpose Director Jay Haigler. “In partnership with students from Ocean Guardian schools in the area, we are already seeing young leaders empowered to become environmental stewards, to educate and engage people throughout their communities, and to inspire action and appreciation for our shared maritime heritage. That’s the true power of sanctuaries.”

“This is a great day for the Chesapeake Bay. The first National Marine Sanctuary in the Chesapeake means there will be a spotlight on one of the hardest fought restoration efforts of our time. All eyes will now be on our challenges and our achievements as we work to restore the health of the Chesapeake Bay. We hope that the designation will encourage more people to come out and kayak through the shipwrecks to experience the wonder of Mallows Bay firsthand,” said Joel Dunn, Chesapeake Conservancy president and CEO.

“As one of our nation’s most historically significant marine resources, it is only fitting that the Ghost Fleet of Mallows Bay should gain this distinction,” said Paul Edmondson, president and CEO of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. “Marine sanctuary designation will increase public access to the site and spur greater appreciation of this special place, while preserving what makes it unlike any other place in the country. We commend NOAA for its leadership in recognizing and protecting the centuries of history represented in the waters of Mallows Bay.”

“Strong community support and partnerships are at the heart of Mallows Bay’s designation as a national marine sanctuary,” said Kris Sarri, president and CEO of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation. “We owe a big ‘thank you’ to the residents of Charles County and local community partners for nominating Mallows Bay and advocating for its recognition as a national treasure to preserve for current and future generations to discover, explore and connect with our history.”

About Mallows Bay

The Mallows Bay-Potomac River National Marine Sanctuary encompasses 18 square miles containing a unique and rich legacy that spans American history, from Native American culture to Revolutionary and Civil War era activity to industrial era steamboat transports and historic commercial fishing operations. Its most prominent feature is the “Ghost Fleet,” or the remains of more than 200 shipwrecks, including more than 100 wooden steamships built as part of America’s engagement in World War I that are oftentimes emergent above the waterline. It will be the first national marine sanctuary within the Chesapeake Bay watershed and will be jointly administered by NOAA, the State of Maryland, and Charles County.

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