

History-Making 215 Mile Bay Paddle Returns as Team Relay

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Photo Credit: Katie Sheridan

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Today, Chris Hopkinson, who last summer captured the attention of thousands of people nationwide when he became the first person to traverse the entire Chesapeake Bay by standup paddleboard, announced plans to expand [Bay Paddle](#) for summer 2021 as a multi-team paddle race benefiting both the [Oyster Recovery Partnership](#) and [Chesapeake Conservancy](#). Bay Paddle 2021 sponsors to date include [Chesapeake Bay Magazine](#) and [WRNR Radio](#).

The 215-mile, 8-day, staged paddle race from August 27-September 3, 2021, will begin in Havre de Grace, MD and finish in Virginia Beach, VA, where the mouth of the Bay meets the Atlantic Ocean. Relay teams and solo paddlers will face wind, current and tides, using standup paddleboards, kayaks or other paddlecraft to cover the distance.

In 2020, Hopkinson averaged 25 miles a day over nine days in his effort that raised more than \$180,000 for Oyster Recovery Partnership and helped put 18 million oysters back in the Bay. Local filmmaker Katie Sheridan produced a documentary on his journey, *Power of the Paddle*, which recently aired on Maryland Public Television's Chesapeake Bay Week.

"Seeing the Bay the way I did last year gave me even more appreciation for its beauty and motivation to do more," said Chris Hopkinson. "In addition to benefiting the Oyster Recovery Partnership's important work to restore the health of the Chesapeake, this year's paddle will also help support Chesapeake Conservancy in their coalition efforts to create official and permanent National Park Service presence in the Chesapeake Bay."

"Chris's journey inspired a movement. Nearly 50 local paddlers have already registered for the chance to repeat the watercourse he chartered – one stroke at a time – across more than 200 miles," said Oyster Recovery Partnership Executive Director Ward Slacum. "We are so grateful for Chris' passion and enthusiasm. He's brought so much attention to our important work and has already made possible 18 million new oysters in the Chesapeake."

"Chesapeake Conservancy is so excited to join Oyster Recovery Partnership as a beneficiary of this epic race, and I can't wait to get out there and be a part of it myself," said Chesapeake Conservancy President and CEO Joel Dunn. "The funding will help support our work alongside a coalition of regional and national advocates to establish the Chesapeake National Recreation Area, which would bring long overdue National Park Service status to the nation's largest estuary."

Slacum and Dunn have created teams and will be paddling along with members of their respective staffs. Other relay teams include a group of local teachers, veterans from the [Valhalla Sailing Project](#) and a group of local [Riverkeepers](#).

"I want a clean and healthy Bay for my kids to swim in and enjoy. I also want to show my kids that there is hope for a cleaner future for our Bay and its rivers, that people can come together to make changes for a better tomorrow, and that it is possible to achieve your goals when you put in the work and commitment," said local paddler Beth Paquette.

To become a sponsor, donate, join a team or create a team and learn more visit www.baypaddle.org. Participants should register by July 1, 2021.

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