

PRESS RELEASE

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FY21 Budget Supports Preserving Maryland's Natural Resources

Program Open Space to Receive Full Funding and Repayments

ANNAPOLIS, MD [January 15, 2020] – Governor Larry Hogan released his Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 budget today which contains significant funding for programs that support land conservation and the Chesapeake Bay.

Notably, the budget would fully fund Program Open Space and other land preservation programs that are funded through the state's real estate transfer tax since 1969. The Governor's FY21 budget funds Program Open Space and its related land preservation programs at \$177.7 million. In addition, the budget includes \$43.9 million in repayments for budget cuts to Program Open Space that occurred in previous fiscal years.

Program Open Space and related programs (the Rural Legacy Program, the Maryland Heritage Areas Program, and the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation) conserve state and local parks, preserve agricultural and natural lands, protect historic sites, promote heritage tourism, and provide playgrounds, ball fields, and other recreational opportunities for the benefit of all Maryland residents and visitors. Collectively, these programs have helped to permanently protect more than 800,000 acres of land across the state. In addition, more than 6,000 individual grants for parks and recreation projects have been awarded to local governments.

Partners for Open Space, a coalition of agricultural, recreation, environmental and historic preservation organizations has issued the following statement in response to the FY 2021 budget:

"We applaud Governor Hogan for his continued, steadfast support for land conservation and public recreation in Maryland, as reflected in his proposed FY21 budget. For the third year in a row, Program Open Space and related programs funded through the real estate transfer tax will receive full funding. These programs enhance and protect quality of life for all Marylanders by conserving the state's natural places and landscapes, by supporting state and local parks, and by preserving our agricultural heritage and historic sites and structures. Full funding will make the difference for a new community park, for the preservation of a family farm, for the health of current and future generations, and for the health of our environment."

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Partners for Open Space is a statewide coalition of agricultural, recreation, environmental, and historic preservation organizations that advocate to secure, save, and protect Maryland's land conservation programs.

Visit our website at: partnersforopenspace.org