

# CALVERT NATURE SOCIETY



## STRATEGIC PLAN FY2020-2025



CALVERT NATURE SOCIETY  
PO Box 122, Port Republic, Maryland 20676  
[www.calvertparks.org](http://www.calvertparks.org)

# Mission

*Calvert Nature Society is dedicated to the protection and preservation of Calvert County's natural heritage and the creation of an environmentally literate and aware community.*

*The Society provides opportunities for appreciation and understanding of our natural world through our outreach initiatives and in support of the mission of the Calvert County Natural Resources Division.*

## **2018-2019 Board of Directors & Staff**

Joyce Baki , President  
Beverly Allyn Izzi, Vice President  
Martha Grahame, Treasurer  
Cassandra Okwumabua, Secretary  
Kevin Frere, Director  
John H. Jones, Director  
Greg Wells, Director  
Anne Sundermann, Executive Director



# Introduction

Calvert Nature Society is a not-for-profit organization that works to protect and promote Calvert County’s natural places, particularly the lands and waters around our county nature parks, and educate citizens about the natural resources in Calvert County.

Since the 1980s, the Society has worked to promote environmental education through programs designed and taught by the naturalists at Calvert County’s Division of Natural Resources (CCNRD) nature parks. The organization worked with county- and state-level partners to protect parklands and has taken the lead on several important projects, including fundraising for the Nature Education Center at Flag Ponds, the exhibits at the Cypress Swamp, acquisition of land, among others.



**DIVISION OF  
NATURAL  
RESOURCES**

The organization faces challenges to promote its mission and be a strong steward for a “natural” Calvert. For example, the health of Calvert’s lands and its waterways are plagued by incursions from development, including loss of habitat, infrastructure demands, stressors on our waterways from stormwater runoff, and a shrinking inventory of large tracts of land. New and better ways of controlling pollution and protecting water quality must be interpreted for county residents, and the Society should work with CCNRD to communicate changes and to be a strong voice for protections for our lands and waters.

In addition, CCNRD’s budget still contains shortfalls and staff remains under pressure to fulfill their mandate while expanding to meet the demands of a growing population. These strains will become more evident as CCNRD brings online new park properties, with little additional financial support from the county. Staffing restrictions hold back innovation and growth.

To meet the challenges and opportunities ahead, our work must continue and expand. This strategic plan contains a vision for the future of our organization and for our role in the communities of Calvert County.

## **Moving Forward**

In 2012, the Society moved from being volunteer led to having an executive director to lead operations and the organization’s activities. We have completed many of the tasks and goals of the FY2015 Strategic Plan and are on the cusp of hiring a second Executive Director. This is a good time to look at how the organization can expand to meet the needs of the community at large, and nurture our relationship with CCNRD. This plan is based on discussions with board members, park staff, members, community partners, and individuals in the County.



# Our Vision

*Calvert Nature Society envisions a Calvert County that has an abundance of high-quality natural spaces and protected lands and healthy waterways that attract both residents and visitors and improve the quality of life for all.*

Residents and visitors to Calvert County have many opportunities to engage in environmental education and compatible recreation.

People, from our youngest to senior citizens, have access to Calvert’s green spaces and waterways, and, through learning opportunities at our parks, have the knowledge and awareness to fully appreciate our natural world.

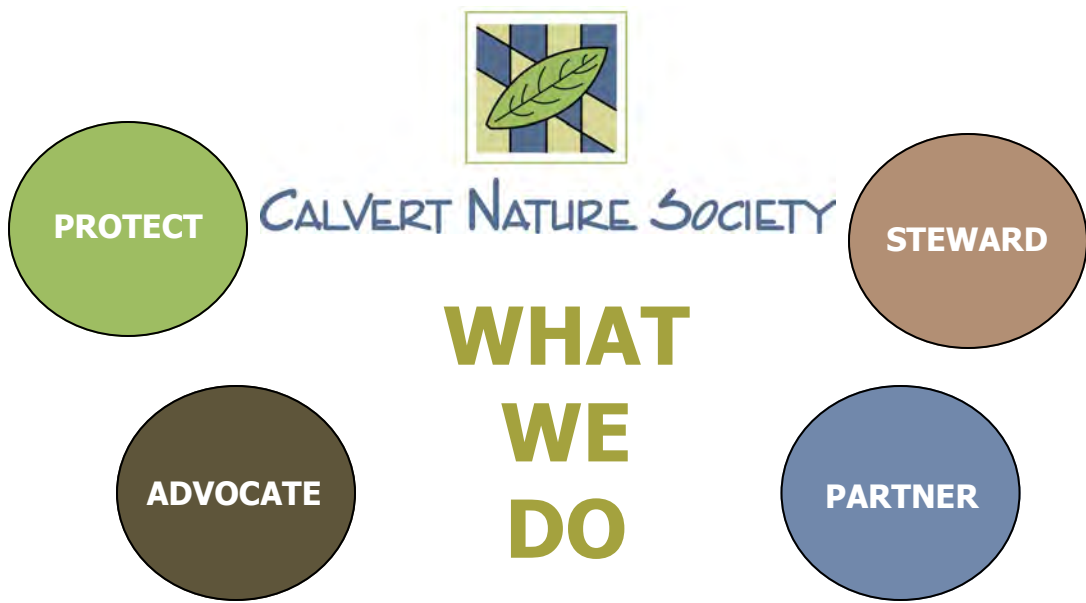
People are informed and realize the importance of a two-way connection to nature: Just as they reap the benefits and enjoyment of nature, so must they be responsible stewards of their natural resources, both now and for the future.

The connection between good health and being in nature is strong. The nature parks are seen as a public health amenity, and offer and promote healthy programs to visitors.

The Society speaks for the natural resources in our community. It is an active leader and environmental steward in a community that holds a strong environmental ethic and that is an important advocate for the preservation and protection of our natural heritage and our natural resources.

Our organization is robust, able to lead and act as a strong partner to sustain its goal of a green, healthy, and natural Calvert.

Through our Land program, the Society will help protect natural spaces and local streams from stressors from development, climate change and invasive species. The Society owns several properties and manages conservation easements for others. We will work with partners to support land conservation and work to influence outcomes and set the stage for successful land protection initiatives.



# Goal 1

## Protect, Preserve, and Promote Calvert's Lands and Waters



### **Strengthen land preservation and conservation in Calvert County**

There is an opportunity for the Society to widen its scope and be an organization that speaks for land protection in all of Calvert County.

One important tool is the conservation easement. Our goal is to work with county and state partners to place conservation easements on natural lands and protect waterways in the county. Easements protect conservation values including water resources, forestland, wildlife habitat and prime farm soils by limiting development and similar land uses.

We will be guided by our land protection criteria (appendix), which determine the Society's role in local and regional land protection and targets specific lands for conservation in accordance with that role. Possible roles include purchaser/broker, easement holder or co-holder, property information resource, easement management, and monitor.

#### ***To accomplish this, we will:***

- Within Calvert County, identify high-priority lands for protection by the Society and local groups and partners.
- Build resources, including a variety of conservation tools to promote land protection.
- Create a list of potential partners and their geographic coverage and current properties.
- Update land protection criteria every two years.
- Contract with a land manager to lead this program area.
- Build relationship with priority landowners.

- Maintain membership in the Land Trust Alliance and explore accreditation process.
- Sponsor or cosponsor events to promote land conservation and protection

### **Engage an active volunteer corps**

The Society provides opportunities for the community to embrace stewardship of the county's public parklands that will benefit private lands as well. It is important to foster the environmental stewardship ethic in Calvert County. Our goal is to build a pipeline of volunteers for the parks, via Calvert Stewards and youth programs.

#### ***To accomplish this, we will:***

- Reach out to local organizations, businesses and schools.
- Engage business, senior and youth groups and other community organizations to volunteer in our parks.
- Prioritize needs with CCNRD (e.g., trail maintenance and other projects).
- Engage and train Calvert Stewards in long-term research projects such as nest box monitoring, water quality monitoring and existing programs like MD DNR's Stream Waders.

### **Land, river and bay:**

#### **Support creation of more public nature parks and water access areas**

As the pace of development increases, it is critical that natural resources are set aside for future use. Calvert Nature Society is positioned to be an advocate for public access to natural lands and waterways in the county.

Our goal is to support and enhance these efforts in general and specifically by advocating for the creation of more water access points and the creation of three Bay-to-River Green Corridors in the county. Promote the use of society lands by the public to enhance the appreciation of our natural resources and awareness of the health benefits of an active outdoor lifestyle.

#### ***To accomplish this, we will:***

- Apply for a Rural legacy area adjacent to "Northern Calvert" area to include at least the Ward Farm Recreation & Nature Park, the King-Calvert property, King property, Nesbit, etc. Possibly connect with Fishing Creek lands and Railway Trail.
- Work with County staff to promote new boundaries for Rural Legacy program that coincide with Priority Preservation Areas.
- Work with the Navy's Readiness & Environmental Protection (REPI) program on the Randall Cliff site.
- Work with Patuxent Water trail committee to identify new launch sites on Patuxent and promote Lower Marlboro, Kings Landing Park, Gatewood Preserve, and Nan's Cove launch sites.
- Develop and provide access to Society lands to the public for activities such as hiking, nature walks, outdoor training, and group camping.
- Communicate importance of connected landscapes to the community.

- Work as an active partner with other local and state agencies and groups.
- Outreach to HOAs to support a Healthy Parks Calvert through an effective use of greenways within communities.
- Develop Master Plans, that include strategies to use and get a return on the investments on Society-owned properties
- Promote the Grays Road Greenway corridor plans and goals

### **Advocate for the protection of Calvert's green and blue spaces**

There are so many entities that have an interest in land use in our county: government, businesses, home owners, and farmers. Our goal is to ensure that decision makers and other stakeholders are aware of the impact of their decisions on land use and water quality. Topics of concern would include Green Infrastructure; stormwater best management practices; land use practices; Water quality, septic, loss of forested and farmland, climate change; etc.

#### ***To accomplish this, we will:***

- Advocate for land preservation strategies and funding; build strong membership support.
- Build relationships and partnerships with elected officials, government agencies and key stakeholders to call for action to protect and restore Calvert's natural resources.
- Write letters of support, comments to support partners.
- Work to increase the priority areas in the county to include all Agricultural Preservation Districts
- Create a communications strategy that speaks to the issues of importance to Calvert's natural heritage.
- Hold meetings in the community, and identify ways to share information (e.g., the land preservation committee, the Sustainable Calvert Network and others; also through our lecture series, with support from Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust).





# Goal 2

## Foster an Environmentally Literate and Aware Calvert



As a leader in the community, we will raise awareness of important environmental issues in the county and region and promote environmental ethic of Calvert County residents and visitors. We will do this both as a partner to the county nature parks and as a stand-alone organization.

### **Support and promote environmental research and nature programs**

Historically, the Society has supported CCNRD activities. Our nature parks and the programs that are provided through them, are second to none. We encourage residents and visitors to the county to enjoy these park and activities to the fullest. Over the next five years we will continue to support CCNRD through the use of volunteers and interns.

#### ***To accomplish this, we will:***

- Promote “passive” recreation at the nature parks
- Strengthen the intern program, including getting future donations to expand this program.
- Increase Calvert Stewards volunteer coordination and participation, particularly for our Research Projects (nesting boxes, animal care, other field activities).
- Targeting new audiences for volunteers and program participants.
- Evaluation and assessment of Chandler Robbins property as a bird sanctuary, and the Indian Rest property as an outdoor skills center (hunting, archery, tracking, trapping, orienteering, etc.).



- Open Society properties to scientific research
- Work with CCNRD to collaborate with area universities and academic institutions for projects at the nature parks and Society-owned properties.

### **Develop community outreach programs to promote awareness of conservation issues**

We have been very successful with our nature programs but we should do more to encourage active adult participation. Our goal is to have a series of programs that inform and connect the community to its natural heritage and create a passion for the environment.

#### ***To accomplish this, we will:***

- Promote the idea of “Healthy Calvert” as a public health benefit of the nature parks and as a part of the Society’s and CCNRD’s on-going mission. Raise the public’s awareness that the county’s connected nature parks and natural spaces are integral to the public’s health and emotional well-being. These green spaces are locales where anyone can relax both mind and body while enjoying nature.
- Strengthen and maintain our adult programs, including working with other community service organizations
- Forge better ties with the business community, for support of our issues (via roundtable, business breakfasts, direct appeals, etc.)
- Continue to communicate with local media, update promotional materials, and make better use of social media to promote Society and CCNRD events
- Join with local partners such as the Sustainable Calvert Network
- Increase awareness of the need for volunteers to promote stewardship of Society and county land holdings.
- Sponsor occasional open forums for discussion of issues such as climate change, land preservation etc., collaborating with local partners.



# Goal 3

## Build a Sustainable Organization that Can Support Our Mission and Goals



### Organizational growth

Our goal is to ensure institutional continuity as well as provide for future growth.

#### *To accomplish this, we will*

- Continue to build a strong base of members, volunteers and interns
- Couple with other stakeholders in the community, with groups and individuals
- Work to strengthen the public-private partnership, with agencies such as Calvert County Parks & Recreation, Division of Natural Resources, Calvert County Health Department, and other community groups such as homeowner associations and partner groups.
- Recruit and appropriately prepare new board members for active services
- Keep Calvert Nature Society in the public eye by increasing our online presence, preparing updated materials, attending community events, and engaging in appropriate social media platforms.
- Align strategic plan with other organizational goals and plans.
- Explore use of contractors to leverage Society staffing and increase capacity.

Significantly, we seek to garner greater public support for our endeavors by distinguishing the Society from other nature preservation groups.

***To accomplish this, we will:***

- Rebrand Calvert Nature Society as an organization that cares about public health via the health benefits of being outdoors
- Showcase and promote the nature parks and Society properties as a place where the public can renew mind and body.
- Enjoyment of passive recreation activities (e.g., hiking, birding, walking tours etc)
- Promoting ecologically sustainable lifestyles
- Extolling the benefits of volunteering for the individual and the community

To truly be a voice for promoting a strong environmental ethic, protecting our natural heritage and being a strong partner for CCNRD, we should have the structure in place to grow. We can accomplish this plan by building a strong financial foundation and enhancing outreach to current and new audiences. Our goal is to ensure institutional continuity as well as provide for future expansion.



***To accomplish this, we will:***

- Keep up to date with staffing and board development, undertake succession planning, further develop and apply on-boarding and recruitment protocols.
- Building a strong base of administrative volunteers and interns
- Educating staff about easements, using resources from the Land Trust Alliance and other sources.
- Find permanent office space for storage of records, intern space, with internet and phone.
- Prepare for upcoming opportunities financially.

**Explore new income streams**

Fundraising is a critical part of the nonprofit business model. Grants, membership and donations to lessen the reliance on restricted funds, we must consider new income sources.

***To accomplish this, we will:***

- Continue to evaluate all Society properties for income potential, including rental income.
- Hold an annual fundraiser, such as 2018's Cypress Swamp Romp.
- Encourage donations from future easement owners to create and build a land stewardship endowment
- Encourage gifts for a variety of endowments (including hiring a fundraiser/grant writer/endowment or major gifts coordinator).





## CALVERT NATURE SOCIETY

P.O. Box 322 • Port Republic, MD 20676 • 410.535.5327 • www.calvertparks.org

### LAND PROTECTION CRITERIA

**Goal:** Determine Calvert Nature Society's role in local and regional land protection and identify criteria for targeting specific lands for conservation in accordance with that role.

#### Objectives:

- identify and prioritize lands to protect within Calvert County,
- identify high-priority lands for protection for the Society and other local groups,
- identify a variety of conservation tools to promote land protection,
- create a list of potential partners and their geographic coverage, current properties.

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#### Priorities

- Properties listed in parks' master plans
- Properties that protect waters leading into parks
- Properties that are adjacent to park lands
- Properties with the potential to be new parks.

#### Other

- Non park natural resources
- Cultural and historical sites
- Public access points
- Connectivity—green infrastructure
- Connection with other protected land; creation of green hubs
- Impact on climate change, sea level rise
- Restoration/ preservation work

**Significance:** Any status conferred? ESA, heritage area, historic/cultural resource; Specific Habitat types  
- wetlands, field

#### Calvert Nature Society Roles

Purchaser/Broker  
Easement holder or co-holder  
Property Information

Easements Management  
Monitor

#### Tools

Partnerships  
TDRs

POS funds  
Endowment

#### Partners

Partnerships- Cove Point, Patuxent Natural Lands Trust, Calvert Farmland Trust, American Chestnut Land Trust, MET, TNC, etc.

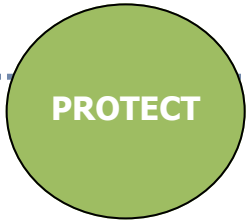
#### Funding availability

Potential sale of TDR and sale of parcel/lots  
Private donations



# WHAT WE DO

**Protect Natural Lands & Waterways and Preserve Cultural Resources**  
**Promote Stewardship and Volunteerism in County Nature Parks**  
**Raise Awareness of and Advocate for Natural and Cultural Resources**  
**Work in Partnership with the Division of Natural Resources**



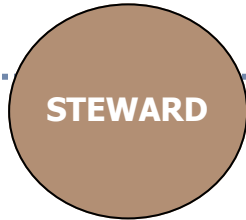
Calvert Nature Society works to protect and preserve the natural and cultural heritage of Calvert County, particularly the lands and waters of our county nature park system.

**Connecting Landscapes:**  
**Keim Forest:** Grays Road Greenway links Society – owned forests and fields to County nature parks.

**The Beach: Flag Ponds Nature Park.** 500 acres area on the Chesapeake Bay; from beach to upland.

**The Swamp: Battle Creek Cypress Swamp Nature Sanctuary.** 100 acres of bald cypress trees .

**The River: Kings Landing Park** 265 acres on the Patuxent River.



The Calvert Stewards volunteer program provides an opportunity for public service in education, research, and stewardship that support the overall missions of the Calvert County Division of Natural Resources and Calvert Nature Society.

Calvert Stewards assist the naturalists with our nature programs and research projects. They use and develop their skills to become the environmental stewards of Calvert County.

Our intern program gives a behind the scenes experiences and creates a pipeline of engaged citizens that will continue their involvement in the parks into adulthood.

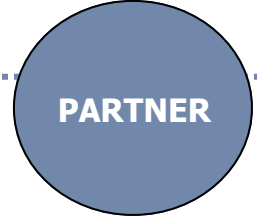


Through our outreach efforts, the Society hopes to raise awareness of local and regional issues.

**Land Preservation.** We work to ensure that the habitats highlighted in Calvert nature parks are protected.

**Connecting People to Nature.** There are many health advantages to being outdoors. The preservation and expansion of the publicly accessible natural places are an antidote to our pressure cooker world.

**Preserving our Cultural Heritage.** Many park properties include cultural amenities such as tobacco barns, archeological artifacts, and more. The Society works to preserve these traces of the past.



Calvert Nature Society supports the Calvert County Division of Natural Resources efforts to provide environmental education and recreation opportunities in Calvert County.



DIVISION OF  
NATURAL  
RESOURCES

Whether it's summer camp or an evening kayak trip, these programs create life-long memories and instill a strong sense of stewardship for our natural lands.

Just as the park programs support the residents and visitors to our parks, Calvert Nature Society supports the county's nature parks. **Please donate today at [calvertparks.org/donate.html](http://calvertparks.org/donate.html)**