

EXECUTIVE ORDER
(01.01.2008.06)

Maryland Partnership for Children in Nature

- WHEREAS, The natural world is a successful model for many values that human communities seek: continuity, stability and sustenance, adaptation, sustained productivity, renewal without exhaustion of resources, and thriving in an environment of diversity;
- WHEREAS, To sustain the natural world in Maryland-including the Chesapeake Bay and hundreds of thousands of acres of diverse land and habitat-requires the stewardship of future generations and business leaders;
- WHEREAS, Stewardship is not possible without a strong sense of connection to the natural world;
- WHEREAS, Maryland's children are losing their connection with our natural world, an alienation that threatens the future of Maryland's great natural resources and the quality of life for future citizens, diminishes use of the senses, creates attention difficulties and causes higher rates of physical and emotional illness and obesity;
- WHEREAS, Spending frequent time outdoors in unstructured and structured experiences is the best way to develop a connection to nature and the foundation on which to build an environmental stewardship ethic;
- WHEREAS, There is a need to continue and expand outreach that will engage individuals and organizations in the minority community in partnerships with State government in promoting a high standard of life through the conservation, restoration and preservation of natural resources;
- WHEREAS, Environmental education increases student engagement in science, improves student achievement in core subject areas, and increases student awareness about individual actions they can take to restore the health of the natural environment; and
- WHEREAS, Maryland must renew its efforts to ensure that its children grow to become informed and responsible stewards of the environment and prepared for future environmental challenges and opportunities as individual citizens and as members of the workforce.

NOW, THEREFORE, I MARTIN O'MALLEY GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF MARYLAND BY VIRTUE OF THE AUTHORITY VESTED IN ME BY THE CONSTITUTION AND THE LAWS OF MARYLAND, HEREBY PROCLAIM THE FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE ORDER, EFFECTIVELY IMMEDIATELY:

A. Established. There is a Maryland Partnership for Children in Nature (The Partnership) to promote outdoor experiential activities and environmental education for Maryland's young people and to build a coalition of ongoing support for these endeavors.

B. Membership. The Partnership shall include the following members:

- (1) The Secretary of Natural Resources, or the Secretary's designee;
- (2) The Superintendent of the State Department of Education, or the Superintendent's designee;
- (3) One representative of the Chesapeake Bay Trust;
- (4) Two representatives of non-profit organizations dedicated to environmental education;
- (5) One representative of the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education;
- (6) One representative of a Parent Teacher Organization
- (7) Two representatives of local governments that have demonstrated leadership in sustainable development practices;
- (8) One representative (teacher or principal) from a Maryland Green School that has completed a Schoolyard Habitat project;
- (9) Two representatives of urban youth-based organizations;
- (10) One representative of the Maryland Recreation and Parks Association;
- (11) One representative of the pediatric medical field;
- (12) A former member of the Task Force on Minority Participation in the Environmental Community;
- (13) Two representatives of the business community with demonstrated leadership in supporting children in nature; and

(14) One representative of the National Wildlife Federation.

C. Appointment and Terms. The members identified in B(3) through B(14) of this Executive Order shall be appointed by the Governor, with the advice of the Secretary of Natural Resources and the Superintendent of Education. Such members shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor for 2-year terms.

D. Meetings. The Partnership shall meet at the call of the Chairs.

E. Procedures. A majority of the Partnership constitutes a quorum for the transaction of any business. The Partnership may adopt any other procedures and by-laws necessary to ensure the orderly transaction of business.

F. Expenses. Members of the Partnership shall serve without compensation for their services, but they may receive reimbursement for reasonable expenses incurred in the performance of their duties in accordance with the Standard State Travel Regulations and as provided in the State budget.

G. Consultation. The Partnership shall consult with and engage leadership and staff from all other Maryland Executive Departments and independent agencies, federal and local government representatives.

H. Chair. The Partnership shall be co-chaired by the Secretary of Natural Resources, or the Secretary's designee, and the Superintendent of Education, or the Superintendent's designee.

I. Staff Coordination. The Department of Natural Resources shall provide staff support for the Partnership in coordination with the State Department of Education and other State agencies and other partners as directed by the Chairs.

J. Working Groups. The Partnership shall be supported by working groups, to be established by the Chairs, to lead the major tasks identified under this Executive Order.

K. Responsibilities. The Partnership shall promote the well-being of youth by providing opportunities for increased time spent outdoors and environmental literacy through outdoor experiential activities and formal and non-formal environmental education. The Partnership shall:

(1) Develop and implement a plan to provide youth with structured and unstructured opportunities for play, outdoor recreation, learning and scientific study to include:

(a) Strategies that provide increased support for Schoolyard Habitat Programs, which support the conversion of schoolyards to natural habitats for play and outdoor classrooms;

(b) Creation of trails to connect communities, parks and schools via trail systems that encourage walking, biking and increased time outdoors by youth and families;

(c) Greening initiatives that create nature play areas within communities to provide outdoor experiences for children close to home;

(d) A statewide Civic Justice Corps to provide at-risk youth with opportunities to serve in conservation crews in State Parks and other public lands in partnership with the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services and community non-profit organizations;

(e) An outdoor classroom program that provides voluntary curriculum-aligned programming and service learning opportunities on public lands in cooperation with local county school systems, local parks and non-profit organizations;

(f) Increased access to naturalists on State Parks and public lands to provide interpretive activities for children and families to enhance their discovery and enjoyment of Maryland's natural resources; and

(g) Increased opportunities for under-served communities to access Maryland State Parks and public lands through partnerships with organizations that serve minority students;

(2) Develop and implement a State Environmental Literacy Plan to include:

(a) A review of current environmental education efforts in Maryland schools, including the environmental education bylaw, the Chesapeake 2000 commitments, and student environmental literacy levels;

(b) Identification of curriculum necessary to develop environmentally literate students;

(c) Identification of model outdoor field and service learning experiences that can be integrated into the regular school curriculum;

(d) Professional development opportunities for in-service teachers, pre-service teachers, and non-formal environmental educators;

(e) Methods to annually measure and report at the State and local level, progress of public school students toward becoming environmentally literate graduates; and

(f) A process for revising or updating the environmental literacy plan every five years, or as needed;

(3) Devise a method of measuring baseline data and increased time spent in nature by children;

(4) Identify opportunities and barriers to support implementation of programs in local school systems and on public lands; and

(5) Present these plans and a status report on their implementation to the Governor by January 1, 2009.

GIVEN Under My Hand and the Great Seal of the State of Maryland, in the City of Annapolis, this 21st Day of April 2008.

Martin O'Malley
Governor

ATTEST:

Dennis Schnepfe
Interim Secretary of State