Our Vision

CLA’s goal is to achieve a clean, healthy Chesapeake Bay that can be enjoyed safely by humans, sustain viable fishing harvests, and support thriving and diverse aquatic and wildlife populations. By empowering citizens and environmental organizations with “legal muscle” and expertise crucial to successful advocacy, CLA provides a missing resource in the efforts to save the Bay and its watershed. *Pro bono* legal representation levels the playing field in participation in government decision making processes and the enforcement of laws and regulations. We believe that our efforts can achieve systemic change in the attention paid by government and elected officials to proper implementation of and adherence to laws and regulations and compliance by the regulated community.

About Us

The Chesapeake Legal Alliance, Inc. (CLA) is the only organization dedicated exclusively to *pro bono* legal action on behalf of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. CLA, a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization founded in 2009, leverages the legal talents of active and retired attorneys who care about the health of the Bay on behalf of those who cannot afford legal representation.
2013 Growth and Accomplishments

As of the end of 2013, CLA has secured legal assistance for 119 clients (individuals and organizations) on 148 matters. 72 of those matters were placed with volunteer attorneys in 2013. This represents a 64 percent increase in matter placement from 2012 and a 300 percent increase from 2011. CLA has met its goal of working on matters important to all six states of the Bay watershed and Washington, D.C.

CLA’s growing network of volunteer attorneys is at the core of our ability to connect those in need of legal aid with high quality legal representation. We currently work with 140 individual attorneys and law firms. 70 of these attorneys/law firms joined our volunteer network in 2013. Collectively, the efforts of these attorneys in 2013 yielded 3,161.2 hours of work, valued at $1,535,619.70, on behalf of CLA referred clients.

In addition to providing traditional legal services, CLA attorneys also provided training and education to Bay watershed stakeholders. A seminar, Opposing Environmentally Unsound Practices and Permits, was presented during the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay’s Watershed Forum, training was provided on Internal Revenue Service rules on lobbying by

Pro Bono Assistance

Hours = 3161.2
Value = $1,535,619.70
nonprofits in preparation for Chesapeake Bay Day on Capitol Hill, information on the Bay Total Maximum Daily Load or “Chesapeake Bay Clean Water Blueprint” was presented at the Choose Clean Water Coalition conference, and opportunities for citizen involvement in government decision making were explained during the first Susquehanna River Summit, which was organized by the National Wildlife Federation and sponsored by CLA. CLA also hosted its third class of summer legal interns. These law students worked directly with clients and experienced firsthand the challenges facing the Bay’s recovery.

CLA summer interns and CLA Executive Director with the South Riverkeeper.

Matters Placed

“American Chestnut Land Trust is extremely grateful for the assistance provided by the Chesapeake Legal Alliance. We applaud their efforts to contribute to important cases impacting the Chesapeake Bay. It is so important that small land conservation organizations like ACLT and environmental organizations throughout the watershed have a place that they can turn to for legal assistance. The need is great and their contribution is significant.”

—Karen H. Edgecombe, Executive Director, American Chestnut Land Trust
Our Work

CLA’s network of volunteer attorneys fills the gap where individuals and organizations lack the legal expertise and/or resources to address Bay recovery issues and projects. This work includes providing advice on applicable statutes and navigating county hearing processes to multi-year litigation battles and development of laws and regulations. CLA volunteers also provide their expertise on matters of regional importance including nutrient trading to achieve water quality standards, best management practices for farmers, and mitigation offsets to preserve wetlands and forests.

Nature of Matters

CLA’s clients range from individuals, home owner associations and local groups to regional coalitions and national organizations. The specific interests of these groups include water quality, land conservation, smart growth, air emissions and climate change, wildlife protection, public health, stream restoration, and agricultural practices. Collectively, their efforts improve the overall health of the Bay as well as the Bay’s subwatersheds, with benefits to human and wildlife inhabitants.

Matters Addressing Major Sources of Bay Pollution
2013 Wins for the Bay Watershed

Chesapeake Bay Clean Water Blueprint Upheld: The most effective means to restore the Bay and its tidal rivers, the Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) or “Chesapeake Bay Clean Water Blueprint” was upheld by a federal judge after being challenged by the American Farm Bureau and other special interest groups. CLA volunteer attorneys were active in providing comments on the draft Bay TMDL proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency and submitted an amicus brief on behalf of the City of Annapolis during the legal challenge to the final Bay TMDL. CLA volunteers have provided expertise during state efforts to develop implementation plans and in developing policies and regulations to address the requirements of the Bay TMDL.

Ecological and Health Protection: The work of a CLA volunteer attorney, on behalf of the South River Federation (SRF), prompted a state enforcement action against a former dump and landfill operator in Crownsville, MD. Subsequently, SRF became a party to the lawsuit which resulted in an order to remove over 100,000 scrap tires, restore wetlands and other compromised natural areas, and an agreement to place the bulk of the land into conservation. The site posed a fire hazard with associated health and environmental risks.

Crownsville, MD dump site
Conservation Area, Oyster Bars, and Migratory Bird Habitat Saved:
Instead of a major residential and commercial project being constructed on the Bay, hundreds of acres of conservation area in Northumberland County, VA will be placed in preservation and land was donated to James Madison University for a biological observatory. The proposed project would have destroyed migratory bird habitat, oyster bars and other wildlife habitat and degraded inland waterways. Victory comes after a protracted series of hearings, meetings, and negotiations on behalf of the Citizens to Protect Bluff Point. CLA volunteer attorneys were pivotal in providing assistance to the citizens group in achieving a much greater victory than anticipated.

Forest and Wetland Protections: Application of the Maryland Forest Conservation Act and requiring the City of Annapolis, MD to promulgate criteria as required by the Act have resulted in the denial of a permit to build one large scale development and significant alterations to a proposal to eradicate the bulk of a second forested site. A cadre of CLA volunteer attorneys brought to bear ignored laws and developed the legal theories that resulted in establishing precedent useful to other efforts to protect large forest stands in Maryland and other states.
Zoning Applications: One of the last pristine, waterfront areas of Anne Arundel County, MD was saved due to the perseverance of a CLA volunteer on behalf of South Arundel Citizens for Responsible Development. County government refused to transfer zoning densities to waterfront lots and disallowed variances for decreased setbacks in sensitive waterfront areas. In other Maryland litigation, challenges by residents to comprehensive zoning amendments have withstood procedural objections; these lawsuits have the potential to establish useful precedent limiting the ability of elected officials to deviate from zoning plans.

“Thanks so much for your efforts at securing us pro bono legal aid with such powerful attorneys. You gave us added determination to fight for Bluff Point and protect such a sensitive environmental property and the Bay. The Citizens to Protect Bluff Point thank you for all that you are doing and have done to enable citizens groups to have a better chance in being taken seriously and be successful in our fight to protect properties like Bluff Point. Thank you so much for your help. We wish your organization continued success in getting pro bono legal aid for citizens. It does make a difference.”

—Ida Hall, Citizens to Protect Bluff Point
Mountaintop, Creek and Town Saved: A team of CLA volunteer attorneys assisted the Potomac and Shenandoah Riverkeepers and Gerrardstown, WV in preventing the mountaintop clear cutting for operation of a surface mine, required forest replanting, protection of streams, and reduction of trucking through Gerrardstown, as well as implementation of other noise and air emission controls.

Paving of Bay Front Baltimore County Avoided: A proposal to develop the Fort Howard site on the North Point Peninsula, fronting on the Bay, was brought to a halt once a CLA volunteer attorney assisted the Millers Island Community Association and others in organizing for public meetings and demanding adherence to environmental assessment requirements and closer scrutiny by Baltimore County of the commercial development that would eradicate nearly all green space on the site. In responding to stormwater and other concerns, the County’s subsequent requirements forestalled any further action on the site.
**Agricultural Certainty:** Maryland legislation was passed that seeks to encourage farmers to implement a high level of best management practices (cover crops, stream buffers, no-till) on their farmland in order to accelerate improvements in water quality in exchange for protection for a 10 year period from additional environmental regulation. A CLA volunteer worked towards strengthening the requirements of the agricultural certainty law and testified before the Maryland General Assembly. This same volunteer was subsequently appointed by the Maryland Secretary of Agriculture to an Agricultural Oversight Certainty Committee to develop implementing regulations and conduct ongoing evaluation of the program established under the law. This type of legislation has the potential to speed up the Bay’s recovery by addressing the largest source of pollution to the Bay.
Finances

Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2013

Support and Revenue
Foundation Contributions $187,850
Individual Contributions $43,181
Law Firm Contributions $10,100
Other Income $7,150

TOTAL $248,281

Expenses
Management and General $36,417
Program Services $166,815
Fundraising $32,653

TOTAL $235,885

Change in Net Assets $12,396
Net Assets, January 1, 2013 $149,774
Net Assets, December 31, 2013 $162,170

CLA wins challenge grant through Anne Arundel Cares Campaign
CL4 Clients

1000 Friends of Maryland
Smarter Growth Alliance for Charles County •
Agricultural Certainty Work Group •
Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay •
Alliance to Restore Northwest Creek
Alliance to Save the Rappahannock
American Chestnut Land Trust
AMP Creeks Council •
Anacostia Riverkeeper •
Anacostia Watershed Citizens Advisory Committee •
Anacostia Watershed Society •
Annapolis Environmental Commission
Annapolis Green •
Annapolis Neck Peninsula Federation •
Assateague Coastal Trust
Assateague Coastkeeper •
Audobon Maryland-DC •
Audobon Naturalist Society •
Berrywood Community Association •
Blue Water Baltimore/Baltimore Harbor Waterkeeper •
BMAT Restoration Work Group
Breton Beach Road Residents
Campaign to Reinvest in Oxen Hill, MD •
Caroline County Conservation Alliance •
Chapman Forest Foundation •
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Chesapeake Climate Action Network •
Chesapeake Legal Alliance •
Chester River Association
Choose Clean Water Coalition •
Citizens for a Better Charles County •
Citizens to Protect Bluff Point •
Citizens to Save Little Pimmit Run
Citizens to Save Valley Park & Whetstone Run •
City of Annapolis
Clean Water Action •
Clean the Creeks District 2
Coalition for Smarter Growth •
Conservancy for Charles County •
DC Bar Association
Dividing Road Property Owners
Eyes of Paint Branch •
Federal Hill Residents •
Frederick County Citizens Group
Friends of Cabin John Creek Watershed •
Friends of Hillmead Park •
Friends of Jug Bay
Friends of Oxon Hill
Friends of Rock Creek's Environment •
Friends of Sligo Creek •
Friends of the Earth •
Future Harvest—CASA
Greater Goshen Civic Association •
Group of Waterkeepers of Waterkeepers Alliance Chesapeake
Grove Park Neighborhood Association •
Gunpowder Riverkeeper •
HasNa, Inc.

• = New 2013 Client • = New 2013 Matter with Existing Client
HOPE Impacts
Little Falls Watershed Alliance
Lothian Civic Association
Lower Susquehanna Riverkeeper
Magogy River Association
Maryland Bass Nation
Maryland Coastal Bays Program
Maryland Conservation Council
Maryland Native Plant Society
Maryland Pesticide Network
Mason Springs Conservancy
Mattawoman Watershed Society
MD Nutrient Management Trading Work Group
Midshore Riverkeeper
Millers Island Community Federation
Montgomery County Civic Association
Nanjemoy-Potomac Environmental Coalition
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
Neighbors of Northwest Branch
Northwood-Four Corners Civic Association
Patuxent Riverkeeper
Pines on the Severn Community
Port Tobacco River Conservancy
Potomac Conservancy
Potomac River Association
Potomac Riverkeeper
Queen Anne Conservation Association
Residents of Easton, MD
Riva Woods Homeowners Association
SACReD
Sassafras Riverkeeper
Save Your Annapolis Neck
Scenic Rivers and Bay Land Trust
Scenic Rivers Land Trust
Seven Oaks-Evanswood Community Assoc.
Severn River Association
Severn Riverkeeper
Severn School Area Residents
Sierra Club (Maryland Chapter)
Sierra Club (Southern Maryland Group)
Shenandoah Riverkeeper
Smart Growth America
South County Citizens
South Hampton HOA
Southern Maryland Audubon Society
South River Federation
Steve Bristow Dairy Farm
St. Mary’s River Watershed Association
String of Pearls
TAME Coalition
Town Creek Federation
University of Maryland School of Law
Upper James Riverkeeper
Waterkeepers Chesapeake
Watershed Stewards Academy
West Montgomery County Citizens Association
West/Rhode Riverkeeper
Westport Residents (Baltimore, MD)
William Chandler/Sherwood Forest

* = New 2013 Client  • = New 2013 Matter with Existing Client
Distribution of CLA Client Matters in Chesapeake Bay Watershed

Number of Clients per Sub-watershed:
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11 - 14
- 15 - 29
- 30 - 40

CLA Client
State Boundary

14 Matters of importance to entire Bay Watershed are not depicted on map.

Chesapeake Legal Alliance
“[CLA] has assisted the Anacostia Watershed Society and other local watershed groups with outstanding pro bono legal support. Many of our issues require detailed legal review and interpretation. We are so very appreciative of this incredible organization for their efforts to restore the Chesapeake Bay by working with watershed groups to help them resolve environmental permitting, regulatory, and land use issues.”

—James R. Foster, President, Anacostia Watershed Society
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