

As many of you may know, I serve as a member of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission alongside the Secretaries of the Interior Ken Salazar and Agriculture Tom Vilsack, Senators Thad Cochran (R-MS) and Blanche Lincoln (D-AK) and Congressman John Dingell (D-MI). The Commission was created to consider and approve any areas of land and/or water recommended by the Secretary of the Interior for purchase or rental by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

This past week we approved the purchase of easements along Cat Point Creek in the Northern Neck. \$3.5 million in grants and matching donations will enable 1,246 acres of the watershed to become part of the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge. I have long been an advocate for the preservation of portions of the Cat Point Creek, starting as a co-founder of the Cat Point Creek Watershed Committee which in the past has endorsed efforts to preserve wildlife habitats along the creek. While the land will remain in private hands with the landowners, it will be preserved in its current form, and will not be available for development.

Next, I joined with other House members from across the aisle to pass H.R. 965, the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network Continuing Authorization Act by a vote of 311-107. I'm passionate about restoring and preserving the Chesapeake Bay. Its always a good day when we can come together in a bipartisan fashion to recognize the historical, cultural and recreational significance the Bay provides to millions in the watershed.

The Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network is responsible for awarding grants to projects that conserve, restore, and interpret natural, recreational, historical, and cultural resources in the Chesapeake Bay watershed which encompasses six states and the District of Columbia. The network also awards grants to projects that link Chesapeake Bay "gateway" sites with trails, watertrails, and scenic roads. There are now more than 150 gateway sites and 1,500 miles of watertrails within the network.

I have seen first hand the benefits of this legislation, and making the program permanent will play a large part in our goal to restore the health and beauty of the Chesapeake Bay. It is my hope that when my own Chesapeake Bay Accountability and Recovery Act comes before the full House for a vote in the coming month, that it too will have the same lasting positive impact

as these programs.

*Congressman Rob Wittman represents the First District of Virginia. He was elected to his first full term in November 2008 and serves on the Natural Resources Committee and the Armed Services Committee where he is the Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.*