



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON

**CITATION**

**PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION AWARD**

**POTOMAC RIVER GORGE PARTNERSHIP**

In recognition of the Potomac River Gorge Partnership for their significant contributions to conservation of natural resources and actions that help achieve environmental and natural resource goals.

The Potomac River Gorge partnership between the National Park Service and The Nature Conservancy can be traced back more than 50 years to the Conservancy's 1956 assistance in land protection at Great Falls Park. The present era of cooperation and partnership began in 1996, when the Conservancy became the co-owner of Bear Island with the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park in the heart of the Potomac Gorge. This co-ownership and the exceptional concentration of rare species and natural communities in the Gorge led to a joint planning effort using a Conservancy planning process to bring Service units together for the first time to plan for the Gorge as one organic unit, with shared natural resources and common resource stressors. As a major partner, the Conservancy has worked with the parks to create the Potomac Gorge Site Conservation Plan, which identified the highest priority natural resources, their ecological health or viability, threats to their survival, and priority strategies to address those threats. The Conservancy helped implement the Plan by encouraging researchers to develop subsequent studies to provide critical data for future Service documents. The Conservancy has contributed greatly to the ongoing protection and restoration of park natural resources as a legacy for future generations. The partnership has been very productive, securing and leveraging more than \$1.79 million in public and private funds to accomplish important natural resource conservation and restoration work in the Potomac Gorge. The Conservancy provided resources and technical expertise on many issues in the area, such as the assessment of deer impacts and the balance of native/invasive plant species in upland forest blocks in the Gorge. The Service-Conservancy partnership is a national model for other areas where the two have overlapping interests. For the collaborative work in resource planning and management, the Potomac River Gorge Partnership is granted the Department of the Interior's Partners in Conservation Award.