



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON

CITATION

**PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION AWARD**

**RAPPAHANNOCK LAND PROTECTION PARTNERSHIP**

In recognition of the major regional and national nonprofit conservation organizations and Federal agencies that have come together in the Rappahannock Land Protection Partnership for the purpose of protecting the land and the natural and cultural resources of the Rappahannock River Valley.

The resource values of the Chesapeake Bay are well known, and considerable effort has been made to protect and enhance these resources. One of the most important tributaries of the Bay is the Rappahannock River, where Captain John Smith sailed in 1608. The goal of the Rappahannock Land Protection Partnership is the protection of natural and cultural resources in the Rappahannock River Valley. Beginning in 1996, with establishment of the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge, this partnership has grown to include members that assist in acquisition and protection of land and resources throughout the river valley. The partnership includes a number of major regional and national non-profit conservation organizations as well as Federal agencies. Cooperation has been the mainstay for the Rappahannock partners, who gather three to four times a year, cultivating trust and openness, planning projects and celebrating on-the-ground accomplishments. The partnership has protected over 8,000 acres as part of the Refuge. Conservation easements have been used to protect thousands of additional acres, as various partners have negotiated with dozens of private landowners. Some landowners can trace ownership of the land back for generations in the same family. Conveying their land to the ownership and management of others requires an enormous degree of confidence and trust. Of particular note are the 500 acres protected via conservation easement on an historic property which includes a Native American village site, now permanently protected. The partnership restored over 250 acres of former agricultural land to native hardwood forest on the Refuge. And, in 2005, the Refuge gained a 325-acre conservation easement that protects important riparian habitat on Cat Point Creek. Nearly 200 bald eagles were observed on this tributary to the Rappahannock River in a single day. For their cooperative efforts and collaboration among multiple national and regional organizations to protect the significant resources of the Rappahannock River Valley and contribute to protecting the Chesapeake Bay, the Rappahannock Land Protection Partnership is granted the Department of the Interior's Partners in Conservation Award.