How will we remember the land? How will the land remember us? If the land or soil could talk, what stories would it tell?

Sixty years ago, threat of development spurred a small but mighty group of citizens to take the first step in preserving a very special piece of shoreline along the Potomac River. That step helped establish what would one day become Piscataway Park and set a new standard for land conservation in the United States. With the land preserved, our founders looked to the future and asked, “what do we do next?”

Innovation means continually asking ourselves that same question. New threats of development loom on the borders of Piscataway Park, climate change presents urgent environmental challenges, and communities find themselves more disconnected from the land than ever before. We find ourselves in a mess of our own making, quickly approaching the proverbial “tipping point,” and to us it seems that the question, “how did we get here?” is imperative to figuring out, “what do we do next?”

We must recognize that we, as a society, have not been perfect stewards. That convenience and opportunity often spurred us to make at best, flawed, and at worst, catastrophic decisions with regard to the land and its resources. That providing education on what we’ve done wrong and how we can do better is imperative to the health of our future.

The question, “what do we do next?,” has a lot of answers. But the Accokeek Foundation is ready to take it on. We have been stewards of the land for 60 years, and we will continue to steward the land for the next 60 years.

We will continue to teach younger generations to think critically and make informed choices. We will continue to teach adults the story of the land, in all of its complexity. We will continue to learn from our partners so that we improve every day. And we will continue to engage the community as they hone their skills and become better stewards themselves. And through this work, we will continue to be innovators in the field of land preservation.

As this year comes to an end and we plan for the future, we hope that we can gather as a community and share the stories of this landscape.

Sincerely,

Virginia Busby
Chair, Board of Trustees
our work: cultivating the next generation of stewards

The fields, trails, and shoreline of Piscataway Park become a unique outdoor classroom where K-12 students can interpret both the seen and unseen elements of the natural world.
Eco-Explorers: Colonial Time Warp

““I learned at the farm that what you do can affect your future.”—Fort Washington Forest 4th grader

Are modern conveniences—like toilet paper, pesticides, and sunblock—worth the environmental impact they have? This year, the Accokeek Foundation’s flagship school tour taught over 2,000 students to think critically about how decisions we make every day can affect our environment and the future.

With the help of the National Park Trust, this year’s Eco-Explorers included 737 students that came to us through the National Park Foundation’s Every Kid in a Park grant—a program that helps fund transportation costs for underserved 4th graders.

Green History Teacher Institute

Funded by the Chesapeake Bay Trust and based on the Eco-Explorers school program, the 2017 Green History Teacher Institute assisted 11 Prince George’s County School teachers with creating Meaningful Watershed Education Experiences for their students.

Through a week of professional development activities, these teachers went back in time to 1770, participated in a Potomac River shoreline clean-up, explored the Underspace exhibit, helped plant cover crops, and got hands-on experience with rotational grazing.

The lessons learned through these activities will help these teachers as they work with students to complete environmental education action projects at their schools in the coming school year.
For the third year, Accokeek Foundation partnered with Prince George’s County Public Schools’ William S. Schmidt Outdoor Education Center to expand educational field studies for middle school students in Piscataway Park. This year, our partnership brought 11 schools and over 400 students to learn about native wild rice as part of a Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience.

Potomac Crescent Waldorf School

For three months this spring, the Accokeek Foundation welcomed the 2nd and 3rd grade classes from Potomac Crescent Waldorf School. The students were studying farming and gardening in the classroom, so their work on the farm gave them the practical experience to connect with their studies. But above that, it gave them a completely unique learning experience.

During their time on the farm, the students learned how to differentiate between plants as they weeded vegetable beds. They took the plants they weeded and built compost piles they used to enrich the soil of the pumpkin patch before seeding it. They broadcast marigold seeds into the patch to help protect the pumpkins from squash bugs. They planted tomatoes and turmeric, and talked to the plants to help them grow big and strong. They learned about rotational grazing as they helped shepherd sheep and cattle into new pasture areas. And they learned about the importance of biodiversity while feeding heritage chicks and rabbits.

The students from PCWS formed a deep connection to the land in their outdoor classroom. They learned lifelong skills and began to think critically about our natural resources and how they connect to our everyday lives, and they left the farm with a new language of experience through which to discuss these important issues.
This summer, 11 high school students from Prince George’s County participated in the Accokeek Foundation’s Agriculture Conservation Corps internship. This six-week program, made possible through the county’s Student Youth Enrichment Program (SYEP), introduced the interns to the world of agriculture and environmental stewardship.

As the interns took on topics like the carbon cycle, and agricultural trends like homesteading, urban agriculture, and permaculture, they also began to understand that agriculture is more than going out into a field and planting a crop. They learned where their food comes from and made connections to their own habits. They discovered how agriculture affects the natural ecosystems, and capped off their summer with a floating wetlands built to help reduce nutrient pollution caused by runoff.

Even the interns not interested in growing up to be farmers found something along the way. From one intern reporting improved social skills to another overcoming a fear of birds when handed a chicken, it’s clear that the courage to step outside of their comfort zone and step into nature had a profound effect on the interns.

Agriculture Conservation Corps leader, Christine Smith, had high hopes for the interns’ futures: “How do we actually address these problems that we deal with globally? Whether it’s global warming, whether its political advocacy, how do we get students to take those ideals, and in their small way every day, in their high school or in their personal lives, bring them on board and start to change things? And I think this group may actually do some of that.”

Underspace: The Science of Soil

For 200 campers, a field trip to the farm meant a unique exploration of Underspace exhibit. An immersive experience that puts visitors into the unexplored territory beneath the earth’s surface, this interactive exhibit teaches about the importance of healthy soils and the billions of critters that make up a healthy soil ecosystem.

In addition to their trip to Underspace, campers also learned about rotational grazing, explored water health issues in the Potomac River, planted seeds on the colonial site, and made seed bombs to take home.
our work: sharing stewardship

It’s never too late to learn how to be a better steward. For 60 years, the Accokeek Foundation has been sharing its knowledge with the community.

Public Festival Events

Winter’s Eve
December

The Accokeek Foundation’s annual holiday celebration, Winter’s Eve, drew over 500 people to the park. With a theme of “homemade for the holidays,” the event encouraged visitors to think sustainably when shopping for the holidays.

With natural crafts like holiday wreath making and DIY lip balms, and a selection of gifts from local artisans like the Stitch ‘n Time club, this event engaged visitors in a new set of earth-friendly holiday traditions.

Lattes with Lambs
April

Some of our best teachers on the farm are the adorable lambs and calves that are born in the barnyard each spring.

During Lattes with Lambs, hundreds of visitors gathered to meet these new additions and learn about endangered heritage livestock breeds.

As they frolic through the fields and pose for photos, these special animals help visitors make connections to the importance of biodiversity in sustainable agriculture.

Tails on Trails
June

The Accokeek Foundation celebrated National Trails Day with an event dedicated to four-legged hikers and their human companions.

Adventurous pups explored over 3 miles of nature trails before heading back to the festival to sample eco-friendly and healthy dog treats provided by MOM’s Organic Market.

Sometimes the best way to connect with nature is a stroll through the park with your favorite pup.
Modern Homesteading Workshops

This series of workshops focused on heritage skills that promote a sustainable lifestyle, while reconnecting participants with their community to share practical arts that support the good life.

The series included a Winter Garden workshop taught by permaculture design instructor Patricia Ceglia, an Udder to Butter workshop taught by livestock manager Joe Markley and experts from Firefly Farms Creamery, a Cob Oven workshop taught by Accokeek Foundation staff, and a pickling and fermenting workshop facilitated by Number 1 Sons.

Girl Scout Day: Bring on the Dark!

In colonial times, families woke and slept according to the natural light. Today we’ve overridden nature’s rhythm with technological advances, but at what environmental cost?

With a day full of activities to highlight the past, present, and future of energy conservation, the Accokeek Foundation engaged 250 Girl Scouts and asked them, “How do YOU pledge to save energy?”

After dipping candles, testing the watt-o-meter to spot energy-hogging appliances, learning from PEPCO how to do an energy audit at home, discovering how energy cycles between plants and animals, and creating their own air-powered rockets, these Girl Scouts each made their own pledge to steward the environment through saving energy.
Conservation Volunteers

The Accokeek Foundation’s team of conservation volunteers worked throughout the year on stewardship projects to protect the natural resources of Piscataway Park.

During the fall and spring, volunteers cleaned trash from along the shore of the Potomac River—including the annual Potomac River Clean-Up in April which saw over 1,000 pounds of trash removed in just two hours.

Volunteers also helped maintain the park’s nature trails. One family—the Lees—adopted the park’s Pumpkin Ash trail and came out quarterly to clear brush and invasives.

Farm & Garden Volunteers

There’s a lot growing on in the fields and garden beds of Piscataway Park, which is why we rely on a team of field and garden volunteers to maintain them. These volunteers learn about heirloom crops, organic farming techniques, and permaculture design as they care for the many plants cultivated on the National Colonial Farm and Ecosystem Farm.

But it’s not only the plants that need tending. The farm and garden volunteer teams also care for farm structures, like the historic tobacco barn, which receives a fresh coat of “witches brew” each year to help protect the wood clapboarding. Volunteers like Michael Bussiere assist National Colonial Farm staff with these important projects.

Livestock Volunteers

From cleaning the barn and washing eggs to moving fences and feeding the animals, the Accokeek Foundation’s livestock volunteers are a vital part of saving these endangered heritage breed animals.

Our group of livestock volunteers also includes the Stitch ‘n Time club, which processes all of the wool from the Foundation’s flock of Hog Island sheep. Dedicating hundreds of hours each year, these talented volunteers create all of the wool products for sale in the Visitor Center gift shop. The income from the items the club makes goes back to supporting the Foundation’s heritage breed livestock conservation work.
our work: engaging volunteers as park stewards

Protecting Piscataway Park for future generations takes a village. Our village is made up of the dedicated volunteers that donate their time each year.

3,704 Hours
1,037 Shifts
480 Volunteers

A special THANK YOU to all of the groups who volunteered with us in 2017!

University of Maryland Pre-Vet Society
Heritage Livestock Conservation
Jack and Jill, National Harbor Chapter
Shoreline Clean-Up
Wounded Warrior Project
Ecosystem Farm
Team Rubicon
Ecosystem Farm
United States Naval Academy
Ecosystem Farm
iGlobal University
Ecosystem Farm
Alexandria Seaport Foundation
Heritage Livestock Conservation
MGM National Harbor
Piscataway Park Stewardship
4-H Next Generation Club
Shoreline Clean-Up
Creative Options & Employment
Piscataway Park Stewardship
Community Bank of the Chesapeake Gardens
A new nature trail was added to the series of trails the Accokeek Foundation manages. The new **Accokeek Connector Trail** allows visitors to explore even more of Piscataway Park with a connection between the Accokeek Foundation and the popular Accokeek Creek boardwalk.

Part of the National Park Service’s **Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail** (PHT), this trail completes a one mile segment of trail along the shore of Piscataway Creek. Comprising about 710 miles, the PHT trail network celebrates the natural and cultural history of public lands and waterways between the Chesapeake Bay and the Allegheny Highlands.

Preserving heritage breed animals has been a part of the Accokeek Foundation’s work for most of our sixty years. While the breeds that call Piscataway Park home sometimes change, the important role that these animals play in our agricultural systems has not.

As more farmers begin to incorporate heritage breeds into their own operations, the Foundation is ideally situated to meet the demands of this growing market.

The success of the breeding program—which this year added 14 lambs to the Hog Island sheep flock and 7 calves to the American Milking Devon herd—keeps these animals from going extinct while providing farmers with a reliable source for breeding stock.

To enhance the program new heritage breeds were added, including Jersey Buff turkeys and silver rabbits.
Accokeek: “place of wild fruit”

What does the future of agriculture look like? With a goal of regenerating healthy soils, the Accokeek Foundation is planning for the future of agriculture in Piscataway Park. To preserve this indigenous landscape, we must highlight its unique natural resources (like the native Paw Paw tree) and our responsibility as stewards.

our work: the next sixty years

What’s next for the Accokeek Foundation? How do we carry our message of stewardship into the next sixty years?

Dialogue on Race, Agriculture, and Living History

Triggered by current day racial tension, an interpreter at the National Colonial Farm says she can no longer play an enslaved character. A high school agricultural intern hides any time visitors enter the colonial farm, not wanting anyone to think he is “playing a slave.” How can a living history tobacco farm connect visitors to the land and stories of agriculture through time without perpetuating stereotypes associated with difficult histories?

Held in March 2017, the Dialogue on Race, Agriculture, and Living History brought together a diverse group of 50 people to discuss issues of race using the Accokeek Foundation’s National Colonial Farm and its work in Piscataway Park as a case study.

Featuring keynote speaker Dr. Gail Christopher, and a scholar panel that included Dr. Psyche Williams-Forson, Dr. Gabrielle Tayac, and Dr. Denise Meringolo, the Dialogue asked participants to explore the importance of the stories not being told.

This project was made possible by a grant from Maryland Humanities, through support from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations, expressed in this program do not necessarily represent those of National Endowment for the Humanities or Maryland Humanities.

“It’s complicated
The land, the history, the people
Overcoming noise, Overcoming cacophony,
Overcoming exhaustion, Overcoming silos,
Have we forgotten the land?
Free, Freedom Bounty, Beauty
Expanding Community Growth, Prosperity
Unity, Connectedness,
It’s Complicated.”
-poem from participants

- Accokeek Foundation | 2017 Annual Report
donors

$25,000 +
National Park Foundation
National Park Service

$10,000 +
Marpat Foundation
Mount Vernon Ladies Association
Wallace Genetic Foundation

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Baltimore Gas & Electric Co.
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Russell Tinsley**
Johanna Vaughan
Lewis Vaughn
Bud Wareham
JoVita Wells
Brian Woolfolk
John Wright

*Gift given in-kind; **Workplace donor
financials

Revenues
- Grants: 854,680.00
- Investment Income: 259,797.00
- Contributions: 94,400.00
- Program Income: 60,016.00
- In-Kind: 7,424.00
**Total Revenues**: 1,276,317.00

Expenses: Program Services
- Education: 458,352.00
- Resource Stewardship: 245,852.00
- Agriculture: 196,584.00
**Total Program Services**: 900,788.00

Expenses: Support Services
- Management and General: 187,246.00
- Fundraising: 117,968.00
**Total Support Services**: 305,214.00

**Total Expenses**: 1,206,002.00

Change in Net Assets
- Net Assets, beginning of year: 3,397,343.00
- Net Assets, end of year: 3,467,658.00
**Total Change in Net Assets**: 70,315.00

A copy of the audited financial statement and IRS form 990 is available by calling 301-283-2113.
The Accokeek Foundation is a member-supported, nonprofit organization headquartered at Piscataway Park. Membership from individuals supports educational and interpretive programs serving thousands of school children and visitors annually.

Donations are accepted online by credit card. Donate now at: www.accokeekfoundation.org. Donations can also be made by mail with check or cash, and through electronic bank transfer.

Support the Accokeek Foundation through: participation in workplace giving campaigns, planned giving, sponsoring events, corporate team building days, or by contributing in-kind service or goods that will help to bring our mission to more students, families, and visitors.