

MARYLAND
OLP
OUTDOOR LEARNING PARTNERSHIP



2024 Annual Report

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Introduction

Governor Wes Moore established the Maryland Outdoor Learning Partnership (OLP or “the Partnership”) by [Executive Order \(EO\) 01.01.2024.15](#) on April 22, 2024. OLP is charged with empowering all of Maryland’s youth to grow as environmental stewards that access, conserve, and restore our natural resources to ensure a climate-ready Maryland. The Executive Order directs the Partnership to “Report to and advise the Governor on the status of the Partnership’s work and provide an annual report by January 30th on the prior year’s progress.”

This is the Outdoor Learning Partnership’s 2024 Annual Report which highlights the Partnership’s work during 2024, including:

- Maryland’s History of Environmental Education Collaboration;
- Overview of the Partnership;
- Partnership Membership; and
- 2024 Partnership Progress.



"We owe it to the people of Maryland to keep our drinking water clean, keep our air safe, and preserve our natural treasures – from the Western Mountains to the Chesapeake Bay," **said Gov. Moore.** "Together, we will continue our work to build a Maryland that is cleaner, greener, and thriving."

A History of Collaboration

Maryland as a Leader in Environmental Education

Maryland has long been a leader in environmental education. In 1989 Maryland became the first state to require a comprehensive, multidisciplinary program of environmental education. The state standards for environmental literacy were adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education (MSBE) in 1999. Maryland also provides leadership in the Chesapeake Bay Program in support of the [Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement's Environmental Literacy Goal](#).

Previous Iterations of the Partnership

The Outdoor Learning Partnership continues Maryland's legacy of collaboration between state agencies, federal partners, nonprofit environmental and outdoor education organizations, and formal education partners. Previous iterations of the partnership include the Partnership for Children in Nature (CIN) and Project Green Classrooms (PGC).

In 2008, Governor Martin O'Malley established CIN through the signing of [EO 01.01.2008.06](#). The Partnership was charged with promoting outdoor experiential activities and environmental education for Maryland's young people and building a coalition of ongoing support for these endeavors. The work of CIN emphasized the need to ensure that every child in every community experiences nature directly and develops a personal connection with our environment.

CIN led to the creation of the Outdoor Bill of Rights and other projects. Additionally, CIN provided the collaborative space to hone recommendations that guided the revision of the Maryland Environmental Literacy Standards and the adoption of the Environmental Literacy High School Graduations Requirement in 2011.

In 2017, PGC was established by Governor Larry Hogan through the signing of [EO 01.01.2017.12](#) to promote outdoor activities and environmental education through schools, communities, and on public lands to benefit Maryland's young people. PGC recognized that to create a future generation of environmental stewards, all youth should have the opportunity to learn about the environment, develop a connection with nature, and have a sense of place in their local natural surroundings. PGC stressed that maintaining a connection with nature is a vital element in protecting their health and the future of Maryland's great natural resources, which also affects the State's economy and citizens' quality of life.

PGC was followed by the passage of the Maryland Green Schools Act of 2019, publishing of the Maryland Conservation Careers Guide in 2022, and publishing of the Maryland Environmental Literacy Standards Framework in 2023, among other achievements.

A Bold New Charge

Governor Moore's signing of Executive Order (EO) 01.01.2024.15 ushered in a new era of the Partnership with an expanded purview that emphasizes climate change education, diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice, and workforce development in green careers. The Membership of OLP was expanded to include more representatives from the formal education system, community representatives, and other stakeholder groups.

Overview of the Partnership

Co-chaired by Josh Kurtz, Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources, and Dr. Carey M. Wright, State Superintendent of Schools, OLP consists of members representing state and federal agencies, non-profit organizations, Local Education Agencies, Parent-Teacher and youth-based organizations, and other stakeholders.

The Department of Natural Resources and the Maryland State Department of Education provide staff support for the Partnership. OLP meetings are open to the public in accordance with Maryland's Open Meetings Act.

In alignment with the Responsibilities outlined in [Executive Order \(EO\) 01.01.2024.15](#), OLP is organized into five working groups, including:

1. Environmental and Climate Literacy;
2. College and Green Careers;
3. Access to Nature;
4. School Sustainability; and
5. Networks.

Each of the five OLP working groups is a vital contributor to collaboratively fulfilling OLP's responsibility to support the implementation of actions, coordinate resources, make recommendations to decision makers, and monitor progress towards state initiatives.

The **Environmental and Climate Literacy** working group focuses on ensuring that every Maryland Student has access to environmental and climate education and that Maryland's teachers have the funds, training, to support student achievement of Maryland State standards as they relate to environmental literacy.

The **College and Green Careers** working group focuses on the development of students' knowledge and skills needed for success in college and the growing green workforce and supporting Maryland's teachers in these efforts.

The **Access to Nature** working group focuses on Maryland's youth spending time outdoors engaging with the natural world.

The **School Sustainability** working group focuses on ensuring that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) lessen the environmental impact of their school buildings and grounds.

The **Networks** working group focuses on maintaining effective communication and facilitating collaboration between OLP's members as well as the networks and groups vital to our work within and beyond Maryland.

Partnership Membership

Co-Chairs

Josh Kurtz, Secretary, Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Dr. Carey M. Wright, State Superintendent of Schools

Members

Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

- Stephanie Tuckfield
- Olivia Wisner
- Coreen Weilminster
- Melissa Boyle
- Sandi Olek
- Isabel Layton
- Emily Morrow
- Trystan Sill

Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)

- Zachary Carey
- Payton Hesse
- Jillian Storms
- Maria Prawirodihardjo
- Jo Anne Murray
- Swapnil Joshi
- Will Forrester

Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA)

- Karen Fedor

Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC)

- Lyndsay Silva
- Alexis Merriman

Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE)

- Cindy Osorto

Maryland Department of Planning (MDP)

- Deborah Herr Cornwell

Maryland Department of Health (MDH)

- Susannah Beckerman

Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT)

- Katrina Jones

Maryland Energy Administration

- Larissa Pasco

Maryland Department of Civic Innovation (DSCI)

- Robert Godfried

Alice Ferguson Foundation

- Michelle Hickerson

Chesapeake Audubon Society

- Mark Scallion

Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT)

- Emily Stransky

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF)

- Karen Mullin

Living Classrooms Foundation

- Christine Truett
- Lorraine Andrews Warnick

Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF)

- Susanne Richards
- Victoria Stone

Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE)

- Laura Johnson Collard
- Jemima Clark
- Mary Westlund
- Brenda Miller
- Lee Derby

Maryland Recreation and Parks Association

- Stephen Allen

National Aquarium

- Andrew Walker

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

- Shannon Sprague
- Bart Merrick

National Wildlife Federation (NWF)

- Lindsey Walker

Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC)

- Anna Davis, Ph.D.
- Karen McDonald

Sultana Education Foundation

- Chris Cerino
- Jackie Doer

United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

- Genevieve LaRouche

Three representatives of non-profit organizations dedicated to environmental education

- Chiara D'Amore, Ph.D., The Community Ecology Institute
- Rick Garber, NorthBay Education
- Kristen Komlosy, Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School

One representative of a Parent Teacher Organization

- Amy Sawyer, Mt. Rainier Elementary School

Two representatives of local governments that have demonstrated leadership in sustainable development practices

- Victoria Howard, Interagency Commission on School Construction
- *Vacant*

One district environmental literacy supervisor or coordinator

- Melanie Parker, Ed.D., Anne Arundel County Public Schools

One district sustainability supervisor or coordinator

- *Vacant*

One School Superintendent

- *Vacant*

One environmental education teacher

- Katie Dell, Baltimore County Public Schools

Two representatives of youth-based organizations

- LaShawn Tucker, Dream Big Academy
- Meg Boyd, Youth Climate Institute

Two representatives of the business community with demonstrated leadership in supporting the green or sustainable workforce.

- Chris Wheedleton, Partnership for Learning
- *Vacant*

University System of Maryland

- J. Adam Frederick, Maryland Sea Grant

Association for Nature-Based Education

- Monica Wiedel-Lubinski

2024 Partnership Progress

Much of OLP's work in 2024 was spent developing the bylaws and procedures that will govern our diverse Partnership going forward, onboarding new members, and gathering information on the status of environmental literacy in Maryland.

Initiating the Work of the Partnership

Two days after the signing of EO 01.01.2024.15, the Outdoor Learning Partnership hosted its first Leadership Meeting at Broadneck High School. Executive level leaders from the member organizations were given an overview on the status of environmental literacy in Maryland and were introduced to how OLP's collective work relates to Maryland's commitment to the 2014 Watershed Agreement. After this celebratory meeting, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) initiated the work of transitioning to OLP. Existing members were invited to provide input on the goals of potential working groups, develop the shared norms of our new Partnership, and catalog the dynamic landscape of relevant initiatives, programs, and efforts related to environmental and climate literacy across the State. DNR and MSDE then developed supporting structures, procedures, and policies to guide the Partnership.

Recruiting Members

State agencies and non-profit partners identified in EO 01.01.2024.15 each appointed individuals to serve as representatives on behalf of the member organizations. The EO additionally called for representatives from various communities throughout Maryland.

These representatives were identified through the release of the OLP Member Application Form, which opened on August 12, 2024, and closed on September 12, 2024. Some positions remain vacant and can be filled on a rolling basis based on interest.

Celebrating The Full Partnership

On November 22, 2024, the Partnership convened for a second Leadership Meeting, this time with full membership, at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Philip Merrill Environmental Center. Led by co-chairs Josh Kurtz and Dr. Carey M. Wright, the meeting served to update agency and organization Leadership on the collective work of the Partnership as OLP works to empower Maryland's youth to grow as climate ready environmental stewards.

The meeting primed members for action in 2025 looking forward to the initiation of working groups, each ready to engage as communities of practice in their respective focus areas.



Looking Forward

In 2025, the five working groups will convene to identify and implement actions, coordinate resources, make recommendations to decision makers, monitor progress towards state initiatives, and advise the Governor on the status of the Partnership's work.