

Address by Stephanie K. Meeks (As Prepared for Delivery)
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- Thank you, Jim, for those kind words, and good morning everyone. It is great to be here with you.
- Before I begin, let me thank Jim and everybody at the Maryland Environmental Trust for inviting me to be with you today.
- And thanks for putting together this big show! Opportunities like this to get together, meet colleagues and build bridges, and listen and learn from each other is how we move forward. It's great that you have been doing this for 15 years now.
- And to all the land trusts represented here today: Thank you for working to preserve the pristine landscapes and historic lands of Maryland, a state with such rich history, and one that is so central to our American story.
- As you know, the Chesapeake Bay region is more than just a striking and gorgeous landscape.
- It is the cradle of colonial settlement, where English settlers first encountered native peoples, and made the new home that would become the United States.
- And these are the lands where the Civil War, our defining event as a nation, was waged. America's bloodiest day ever unfolded not far from here in Antietam. It is so important we preserve this hallowed ground.

- So thank you for all you do to keep all of Maryland's historic, environmental, and ecological treasures thriving.
- I want to talk today about something which I believe is vital to the future of both of our respective fields, and that is bringing land conservation and historic preservation back together, into one cohesive and coordinated movement.
- I know this is not a new idea for many here – some of you have been working on this for years, if not decades! And I think, over the past twenty years or so, we've been making some very real forward strides.
- That being said, there is still work we have to do. We all know we can be better about listening to and learning from each other. And if anything, coming together as a cohesive movement is even more fundamental to our mutual success going forward than ever before.
- Working together is the only way we'll be able to address common threats, like the increasingly troubling ramifications of climate change for the places we seek to protect.
- And it is the only way we can capitalize on and maximize opportunities for growth, like the surging interest among young people in history, preservation, and conservation that we are seeing in our research.
- I'll talk more about each of these later on. But I want to first talk a little about the unfortunate distance that grew between our fields over the course of the 20th century, and how we're now seeing that gap

close, opening up exciting new possibilities for both conservation and preservation.

- This is something I experienced firsthand in my own life. [As Jim said], before I came to the National Trust in 2010, I spent more than 17 years with the Nature Conservancy.
- And while we often have distinct focuses, use different tools, and have our own unique cultures, I am often struck today by the commonalities between our two movements.
- Both are built on a keen appreciation of the fragility of our heritage, be it natural or man-made, and a strong desire to preserve the unique and irreplaceable.
- Both movements are committed to sustainable solutions, and focused on helping communities take action to preserve what matters to them.
- And both are full of people who recognize the power of a mutually beneficial partnership.
- Because, when we work together, amazing things can happen.
- And we're a natural fit. Indeed – perhaps because we are a young country with wide-open, uninhabited spaces – only in America did historic preservation and land conservation evolve on such separate paths.
- For example, our counterpart in the United Kingdom is called the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest *or Natural Beauty*. This

is probably in part because it's hard to find any land in England that was not inhabited at one point or another!

- But here in the US, while we were the first country in the world to set aside lands for conservation, for five decades after the Park System was created, we were also the only major western nation that had no national *historic* preservation policy.
- England, France, Germany, Sweden, Italy – they all emphasized preservation. But America did not. It took us some time to catch up.
- As you know, the National Park System is having its 100th birthday next year. We just celebrated No. 99 last week with #FindYourPark.
- And I was struck to discover, when I joined the National Trust, that roughly two-thirds of our more than 400 national park units – 65% -- are historical parks, sites, monuments, or memorials.
- But it didn't start out that way. In fact, the original drive to create the Trust came from preservationists, many of them in the Park Service, who wanted to see a stronger federal role in saving historic places.
- A 1935 report for Franklin Roosevelt found that, among all the parks and monuments of the then 19-year-old Park System, there were only 23 historic buildings.
- And these – the report said, quote – “can hardly be classed among the first rank of historic houses of national significance.”

- So, beginning that year, there was a push to change that, which reached a head in 1949 with the creation of the National Trust.
- Since then, our Park Service has come a long way from those first 23 buildings!
- Today, across over 400 units in the national park system, there are nearly 27,000 historic buildings, 3500 historic statues & monuments, two million archaeological sites, and 123 million museum objects and documents – only the Smithsonian has a bigger historic collection of artifacts.
- So, when it comes to the Park Service, preservation and conservation have once again grown intertwined, which is great for both movements.
- But, because we did professionalize at different times, preservationists and conservationists have not always been on the same page.
- We've developed different skill sets and emphases, and haven't talked to each other, and learned from each other, as much as we should.
- For example, and speaking in general terms, conservationists are experts at easements, while the preservation community tends to rely more often on mandated federal [Section 106 and 4f] reviews and obtaining historic designations.
- Conservationists rely heavily on maps and survey data, and have been much more proficient at utilizing technology like GIS mapping to

inform their work. Until very recently, preservationists lagged behind in that regard.

- In order to save historic structures, preservationists, on the other hand, have developed a keen understanding of building materials and maintenance. These are not areas – again, speaking in general terms – where conservationists have garnered as much expertise.
- Put simply, conservationists have focused on landscapes, natural systems, and biological units; preservationists on human impacts and history. And, even when all of us have been working to save the exact same places, we haven't always been very good at working together.
- A few years before I came to the Trust, there was a case in Dartmouth, Massachusetts where our Northeast office was working to save an historic farmhouse along the South Coast – the Almy House.
- This house was the centerpiece of an 800-acre stead, which also included barns and a small family cemetery.
- It was one of the oldest in the region. It had seen generations of occupants since 1740, and had hosted luminaries like John Jay Audubon and George S. Patton. So very much worthy of preservation attention.
- Much of the surrounding land had been protected by conservation easements and agricultural preservation restrictions. Some of the estate had become an Audubon Society sanctuary.

- But the Almy House itself had never been protected. And it wasn't.
- And so, when the property was sold in 2004, the new owners ignored the local outcry, and completely demolished this historic farmhouse.
- This home had anchored the entire landscape since before the American Revolution. But even in the midst of protected lands, it was not safe.
- This story happens the other way as well. Too often in the past, historic preservationists have been extraordinarily concerned about saving a grand and beautiful building, with little thought put in to the importance of the surrounding landscape. This is something we have been working to change.
- And the fact of the matter is, we are stronger together.
- Around the time I joined the Trust, one of our historic sites – Drayton Hall, near Charleston, South Carolina – and its surroundings were threatened by encroaching sprawl.
- Drayton Hall is the oldest preserved plantation house in America that is open to the public. It holds the oldest African-American cemetery still in use in the country.
- And it features what historian Suzanne Turner has called, quote, “the most significant undisturbed historic landscape in America.”

- And yet, right across the road, a 6600-acre mega development was proposed – one that would feature a hotel and golf course along with new housing.
- Now I have nothing against golf, but, in South Carolina, you have many options for hitting the links, but only one Drayton Hall.
- So we at the Trust joined together with local conservationists looking to protect the Ashley, a scenic and historic state river which wends through the area.
- Together – and only together – we were able to block the development, and stop this beautiful and historic landscape from being overwhelmed.
- Or to give you an example closer to home, look at what happened when land conservationists and historic preservationists came together to defend the Antietam battlefield from encroaching development.
- In the mid-80's, it looked for awhile like these sacred fields, where 23,000 Union and Confederate soldiers were killed and wounded in one single day, would become paved over with shopping malls, victims to exurban sprawl.

- Three years in a row – 89’, ’90, and ’91 – Antietam was featured on our annual 11-most endangered places list.
- But preservationists and conservationists; groups like the Maryland Environmental Trust, the Civil War Trust, the Land Conservation Fund; some of you here in this room; stood up together and said, No, Not here.
- They came together as the Save Historic Antietam Foundation. They employed the best tools of both our disciplines – conservation easements, federal transportation funding, progressive land-use policies – to save this hallowed ground and protect its viewshed.
- Thanks to increased funding, the National Park Service now owns about 2100 acres around Antietam, over half of which has been acquired since we collectively sounded the alarm.
- And today, Antietam is one of the best-preserved Civil War battlefields in America. It brings visitors and tourists from all around the world, generating income for the local community and the state of Maryland, all while preserving both the history and natural beauty of that place.
- That is how it should be. Antietam is a critical turning point in our nation’s story. It should be commemorated and protected as such. Public lands like these should be in public hands, and kept in steward for future generations to explore, learn, from, and enjoy.

- And this is the power and potential of our partnership. When we bring our skill sets together and work in unison, we can accomplish so much for our communities, and our country.
- Over the past few decades, you can see this convergence happening here in Maryland and all across the country: At Sotterly Plantation. At the new Eastern Shore Conservation Center, formerly a historic factory.
- Along the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway and the Journey Through Hallowed Ground. More and more often, we are coming together in exciting ways.
- And this is a particularly fruitful time to strengthen our partnership.
- On one hand, the conservation community is in the midst of a refocusing on the critical importance of open and natural spaces in urban communities.
- On the other, the preservation movement has been moving past its focus on grand buildings, and working towards a broader understanding of what constitutes an historic place.
- As many of you know, current federal guidelines for the National Register stipulate that buildings must have physical integrity, meaning they still look like they did long ago, and either be at least fifty years old or meet a standard of “exceptional importance.”

- But, for many of the places we now characterize as exceptionally important, the physical structures might have changed substantially, or there may even be no physical structure at all.
- At the Trust, we are working to encourage this broader sense of mission, and to reemphasize the historic importance of many of our natural landscapes.
- A few years ago, we launched a new signature initiative – our National Treasures. This is a diverse and revolving portfolio of over fifty places across America that are threatened and face an uncertain future.
- While historic buildings are of course important, we also wanted our Treasures to emphasize neighborhoods, communities, and landscapes.
- So, for example, among our National Treasures is the Palisades along the Hudson River, which are threatened by out of scale development by the electronics company LG.
- Another Treasure is the Great Bend of the Gila, a Native American crossroads and site of exchange for thousands of years.
- Yet another is the Ancestral Places of Southeast Utah – the cliff dwellings, archaeological sites, and trails that are sacred to the Navajo, Hopi, Pueblo, and Ute Indians, and that tell the story of 12,000 years of human history.

- We have also included among them Chimney Rock in Colorado, recently designated a National Monument.
- Mount Taylor in New Mexico, which is threatened by extensive uranium mining. Willamette Falls in Oregon, where the canals and lock are based on designs by Leonardo da Vinci.
- And historic downtown Annapolis, which is increasingly threatened by the changing climate.
- In all of these instances, we are working with our friends and allies in the conservation world, and encouraging the preservation movement to think more broadly about what we do.
- We are not just about saving grand mansions, and we cannot just be the “paint police.”
- We need to think innovatively, and form bold, outside-the-box collaborations and partnerships, to save the places that matter.
- And we hope land trusts will do the same – to think about the historic resources on protected lands, and work with us to protect them too.
- Our partnership is critical when it comes to supporting the policies, at the every level of government, that we know help save places.

- To take an example that bears on everyone in this room, I understand the Maryland legislature recently passed language calling for an audit of state preservation and easement acquisition programs:
- Programs like the Maryland Environmental Trust and Program Open Space, which provides funding for historic preservation, parks, playgrounds, farmlands, and forests.
- This audit could lead to permanent changes in the funding formula that would seriously compromise this state's ability to protect the Maryland landscape and provide public space for its citizens.
- So we need to work together to make sure land trusts, conservation groups, and preservation advocates are all being heard on this issue going forward.
- We have also been working to encourage our field to adopt the tools and techniques of conservationists. Take for example GIS mapping.
- Environmental advocates have been using GIS for years to show trends over time and make a more compelling case for conservation.
- But perhaps because we are focused on the past, preservationists have been slow to follow suit. As a result, we have been missing out on the amazing power of this tool for our work.
- And so a lot of information that could be enormously useful – the hard work of previous generations of our profession – is just sitting unused in file cabinets in state historic preservation offices all across America.

- You all know how useful this technology is, and what a difference it could make for our preservation efforts:
- We can use GIS to help Native American tribes and indigenous peoples unearth the past. We can help cities and SHPOs manage reams of important data and understand patterns in real estate, housing, and development.
- And we can use it to better make the case for saving more places.
- We have been working with ESRI, one of the industry leaders in GIS technology, to get us up to speed on what is already a fundamental tool in the conservation space. And it is already paying dividends for us.
- I can give you a great example from just across the border. Along with our friends at the Chesapeake Conservancy, we are currently working to stop a power line from ruining the historic viewshed along the James River in Virginia.
- If it goes up, all the visitors at Colonial Williamsburg, Jamestown, and other historic sites will have to look at this giant power line – the equivalent of 17 Statues of Liberty running across this cradle of English settlement.
- With the help of ESRI, we created a GIS video of exactly how the power line would diminish this historic area.

- We showed it at a recent meeting in Richmond with the National Park Service and representatives from Dominion Power, and it changed the focus of the discussion.
- We ran it back and again many times over! There was no better way to dramatize the impact this power line would have on the James River.
- It made clear to everyone there, on both sides of the issue, that the damage to the landscape would be much more significant, and more costly, than previously imagined.
- This may seem like old hat to many of you. But it's exciting for us to think about the capacity tools like these can bring to our work. And it's another great example of how bringing conservation and preservation together is enriching our work – how we are learning from you.
- These partnerships between us are maturing just in the nick of time. Because we – preservationists and conservationists both – are taking our first steps down a challenging road.
- From now on, part of our job will be to help address the many crises posed by accelerating climate change.
- I know, on Capitol Hill or on talk radio, some still question whether climate change is happening.
- But we don't have that luxury in our fields. And we are already experiencing and grappling with it in very concrete ways.

- Take, for instance, the historic waterfront down the road in Annapolis – which we named a National Treasure last fall.
- In the early sixties, it experienced nuisance flooding 3 days a year. Because it itself is sinking while water levels are rising, today it is 30-40 days a year.
- The trendline is getting worse. By 2030, it will flood every other day. By 2045, it will flood *every single day*. Annapolis calls itself the Sailing Capital, but I’m pretty sure this wasn’t what they had in mind!
- So the threat is very real. And we’re working with the City of Annapolis to understand what the options are for protecting this historic district, which is the centerpiece of the “Athens of America.”
- This is happening all over. Roughly one-quarter of the Park Service’s 400 park units have already documented climate-related impacts.
- At Cape Krusenstern on the coast of Alaska, the shoreline here is eroding so quickly that the Park Service now uses climate models to direct its survey efforts, so it can find cultural resources before they are lost to the sea.
- Changes on this scale are devastating for native cultures and their traditional practices.
- At Tumacacori [*tomb-ah-CAHK-oree*], a Spanish mission in Arizona, and throughout the Southwest, adobe is deteriorating quickly because of rainfall changes.

- The Park Service is studying how much stress the adobe can endure and what sorts of maintenance work improve resilience.
- At an ancient rock quarry in Minnesota, floods now regularly disrupt Native American rituals.
- The Park Service pumps out the quarry, but the situation has prompted challenging theoretical questions about whether pumping is really a viable solution over the long term.
- Similarly difficult scenario planning is underway at the National Parks in Hawaii, where many cultural resources are likely to be underwater at some point.
- Park service officials have talked at length with Native Hawaiians about how they would feel about ancestral places that are likely to be submerged. Would they still matter in the same way?
- And the answer is yes, they would. The people associated with these places still matter, so the sites would still matter as well.
- Native communities in particular stand to face significant losses, because so much of their history and culture is tied to the landscape.
- I know conservationists are going through a similar reckoning now as well. Including many of you, right here in Maryland.
- We can't prevent all the coming losses, and we're just getting our arms around the kind of triage we will likely face in the years ahead.

- But we will have to work together to make a difference at many of these threatened places. Because no one is better suited than we are to help memorialize places we love, and save the places we can.
- Climate change is frightening, but the future isn't entirely a scary place. We are also very heartened by the wave of young, diverse preservationists we are seeing across the country.
- Research shows that the Millennial Generation, which is both the largest and most diverse generation in American history, is more interested in the past than any other.
- They are very enthused by older buildings, historic resources, and the power of place. And this represents an opportunity, not just for the preservation movement, but for land trusts and conservationists too.
- The historic resources you protect can become an entry point for the next generation, a way for land trusts to connect to this Millennial boom and harness their energy and enthusiasm.
- Of course, to reach this large, diverse generation of Americans, we have had to think outside the box, and find new ways to connect with people that, as a 65+ year organization, may have been a bit out of our comfort zone.
- Did you see last year's Ice Bucket Challenge for ALS? Well, I'm not wild about dumping ice water on my head, but we are trying some new things.

- We know from extensive marketing research that the best way to reach Millennials is to connect on social media and then engage “IRL,” or in real life, as they say.
- So, with that in mind, we’ve been busy experimenting with a series of engagement efforts over the past few years.
- And Grant Stevens, of our Community Outreach office, will be talking about these in a little more depth right after this, in one of today’s breakout sessions.
- But to just give you a flavor:
- We lined a 26-foot box truck with Astroturf and drove it around Houston before an important Astrodome vote—yes, you now need a trucker’s license to work at the National Trust.
- We organized 700 volunteers to paint the interior of Hinchliffe, the Negro League baseball stadium in Paterson, New Jersey.
- We opened a pop-up campaign office in Cincinnati, and had great success with a hard-hat tour of the New York State Pavilion, the first public access in decades. The line was literally a mile long!
- Last year, we worked with the Friends of Miami Marine Stadium, to host nine graffiti artists from around the world.
- They painted murals on the stadium, which were applied under the watchful eye of professional conservators and then photographed. The prints are being sold to raise money to rehab and reopen the stadium.

- We had the full support of the stadium’s architect, Hilario Candela, as well as the endorsement of our Trustee Gloria Estefan, who used to perform at Miami Marine and has been a very prominent supporter of its restoration.
- Now we won’t be turning Banksy loose on Montpelier any time soon.
- But what we are trying to do at Miami Marine Stadium is to celebrate ALL the stories associated with this place—including the story of the street artists who embraced it over the past 20 years, and kept it alive when it was chained up and left to crumble.
- They turned it into a massive canvas, and covered nearly every square inch with paint—sometimes multiple times. Some of this graffiti is actually quite beautiful, and it has an inherent appeal for 20 and 30-somethings especially.
- We did an Instagram tour with the graffiti event and had to turn people away--more than 450 people tried to sign up in the first hour for the 45 available slots.
- That success was an affirmation that these engagement campaigns work—and that social media tools like Instagram are worth the investment.
- Instagram in particular has been a fantastic tool for us. It encourages people to focus in—literally—on the details that make historic places so special. So, if you don’t have an Instagram page yet for the land you are protecting, I strongly encourage it!

- All these campaigns have been a lot of fun, and they've taught us that when we can engage the enthusiasm of young, grassroots supporters, they give us credibility with their peers and bring new ideas and a fantastic positive energy to our work.
- One of our newest initiatives – that we are extremely excited about – is our partnership with The Corps Network and the National Park Service: the Hands-On Preservation Experience Crew, or HOPE Crew.
- I'm sure many of you know about Franklin Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps, his favorite New Deal initiative and far and away the most beloved New Deal program in the 1930's, which enlisted young people in the repair and maintenance of our National Parks.
- HOPE Crew is a spiritual descendant of the CCC. It is a program that helps young people receive critical training and experience in preservation skills by giving them the opportunity to rehabilitate historic places in need.
- This is a win-win partnership. On one hand, young men and women get an opportunity to enter into a high-need field and obtain education and training in preservation skills that can otherwise be hard to come by.
- On the other, HOPE Crew helps to alleviate the \$4.5 billion backlog in deferred maintenance at National Parks sites.

- In just its first year, over one hundred HOPE Crew volunteers have contributed over 12,000 hours to serving their communities by restoring historic sites and structures all over the country.
- Over the past year, HOPE Crews have helped restore the final resting place of veterans at Raleigh National Cemetery and Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument.
- They repaired historic barns in Michigan, stables in Virginia, adobe in New Mexico, and cabins in Wyoming's Grand Teton National Park.
- And they have been working with conservation groups too. They rehabilitated the log cabin home of Lyndon Johnson's grandfather with the Texas Conservation Corps.
- They helped restore shotgun homes along the Atlanta street where Dr. Martin Luther King was born with Greening Youth Foundation. They re-roofed an historic structure at Hyde Park, the lifelong home of Franklin Roosevelt, with Conservation Legacy.
- The program has been receiving a lot of positive press. It garnered 67 media placements, and 81 million media impressions in its first year.
- And the most enthusiastic reviews have come from the participants themselves. "Working on the HOPE crew," said one young member, "has taught me many new skills and opened my eyes to a number of professions that I would never have considered pursuing."

- Another crew leader said of her work, quote: “It’s going to make me feel real good especially walking down the street with my kids and showing them what their mother did and what they can do when they get older.”
- So we’re off to a great start. HOPE Crew is engaging young people and diverse communities in the practice of preservation, while helping to restore the treasures of our collective past.
- We hope to expand this program this year, and in the years to come, to more parks and places in need.
- It is through initiatives like these that we can revitalize preservation and conservation both. By connecting and re-connecting people to the fundamental human impulse that is the power of place.
- Whether it’s the Great Outdoors or the local park, there are places that matter to each of us. Our great opportunity moving forward is to connect people to that sense of place, so we can save more of them.
- As I said at the beginning, we’re coming up on the 100th anniversary of the National Park System. The president who signed it into law, Teddy Roosevelt – he too had a place that meant everything to him, and that moved him to become one of our great conservation leaders.
- Elkhorn Ranch in North Dakota. “I have always said,” he once wrote, “I would have not have been President had it not been for my experience in North Dakota...it was here that the romance of my life began...[the] desolate, grim beauty [of this place] has a curious fascination for me.”

- Today the beauty and serenity of those North Dakota lands are threatened by incompatible development. Oil, gas, and mineral extraction, and a possible road and bridge, all threaten the area.
- But, together, working with the National Parks Conservation Association, we are working to save this place – to protect the viewshed that Roosevelt enjoyed.
- And to ensure that any resource extraction is accomplished in a way that doesn't damage these lands:
- The lands that inspired the creation of the Park Service 100 years ago, and that will continue to inspire us for generations to come.
- This is what we can accomplish if we work together.
- Over the course of this conference, as you meet new colleagues and catch up with old friends, and as you conduct your important work thereafter, I hope you will continue to keep in mind this larger picture.
- The land you work to save, and the historic places we work to protect, are one. And we can accomplish so much more together, as partners and as friends.
- Thank you all so much, and I hope you have a great conference.