



# PRESS RELEASE

## State Agencies Highlight Spring Tree Planting Efforts

### Goal of Planting One Million Trees by Inmate Crews Reaches Halfway Mark

**Towson, MD (April 21, 2010)**--- Honoring both Arbor Day and Earth Day in the month of April, collaborative environmental efforts between the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS), the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the State Highway Administration (SHA) were highlighted on Wednesday, April 21 on Wye Island NMRA, managed by Maryland State Parks in Queenstown, MD. The effort, launched by Governor Martin O'Malley, not only beautifies and improves the State's environmental sustainability under the Governor's *Smart, Green and Growing* initiative, but also provides needed work skills for offenders nearing their release from incarceration.

"The offender tree planting program has already made a major impact in our natural world, moving Maryland toward a more sustainable future," said Governor Martin O'Malley. "Trees stop polluted storm-water runoff, clean the air, and improve property costs. Planting a tree is something every Marylander can do to help create a smarter, greener future."

Newly planted saplings lining the fields of the Wye Island NRMA, along an inlet of the Chesapeake Bay, were just a small portion of the 400,000 put in the ground all across Maryland this spring. Each planted by a crew of offenders nearing their release from a Maryland Division of Correction pre-release facility. The 140,000 on Wye Island alone were done by the Eastern Pre-release Unit. Following the conclusion of this spring's planting, more than 600,000 trees will have been planted in parks, along roadways and on institutional property since Secretary Gary D. Maynard of DPSCS pledged to plant One Million by 2012. [See map of planting locations.](#)

"Community-based projects help rehabilitate Maryland's incarcerated offenders by providing the opportunity to learn new employment skills, and creating connections back to the community," stated Maynard during Wednesday's event. DPSCS has on average over 400 offenders on any given day involved in public works projects across Maryland. "Doing this provides an offender the chance to give something back and to be a part of something that is bigger than them."

The trees for the project are grown at the John S. Ayton Nursery. Both Maryland State Parks and the Wildlife and Heritage units provide public lands across the state for plantings. The sites are strategically picked to maximize their environmental benefits. These one million trees will help improve the health of the Chesapeake Bay by filtering runoff from rainfall before it enters the streams and rivers. The nutrient and sediment reductions improve water quality, and provide a healthier home for bay grasses, oysters, crabs and fish.

The effort is part of a larger *Marylanders Plant Trees* initiative which aims to involve every citizen in the important task of enhancing the sustainability of Maryland by planting a tree. The citizen component of the initiative was launched April 2009 to give Marylanders an accessible opportunity to make an impact in the natural world around them. In cooperation with participating nurseries, *Marylanders Plant Trees* program continues to offer [\\$25 coupons](#) toward the purchase of native trees costing \$50 or more, redeemable at nearly 70 nurseries across the State. Governor O'Malley and DNR encourage Marylanders to register every tree they plant. Not only will they be eligible for prizes, but they will be able to see the environmental benefits of their trees through interactive maps and charts. Marylanders planted and registered 41,000 trees in 2009.

SHA is also a key partner in Maryland's tree planting initiative, and the major funding source for the trees planted by inmate crews. They are also involved in the American Chestnut Tree Restoration project, and the Partnership Plantings Program where SHA helps volunteers find safe locations along roadways to plan landscaping and plant trees. Each year, SHA undertakes tree planting programs along highway medians, grassy areas or interchanges throughout the state. The trees that are planted are over and above the required mitigation that results from construction or maintenance projects.

The partnership between the three state agencies utilizes available resources more effectively, to accomplish a greater outcome than each could alone. The goal of One Million trees is expected to be reached by this time next year.

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