

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication has been prepared by the Critical Area Commission for the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays as a guide to Maryland's Critical Area Program for all citizens. The Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Protection Act was enacted in 1984 to help reverse the deterioration of the Chesapeake Bay and the surrounding environment. The Act included the creation of a unique partnership between the State government and the 64 jurisdictions surrounding the Bay. It was amended in 2002 to add the Atlantic Coastal Bays and portions of Worcester County and Ocean City. Each jurisdiction has adopted its own local Critical Area Program based on Criteria promulgated by the Commission. This publication is intended to provide general information about the Critical Area Act and Criteria and to outline how local land use programs, regulations, policies, and ordinances are used to implement them. This guide also provides basic information for all Marylanders about the importance of protecting and preserving some of Maryland's most important natural resources – the Chesapeake Bay, the Atlantic Coastal Bays, and their watersheds.

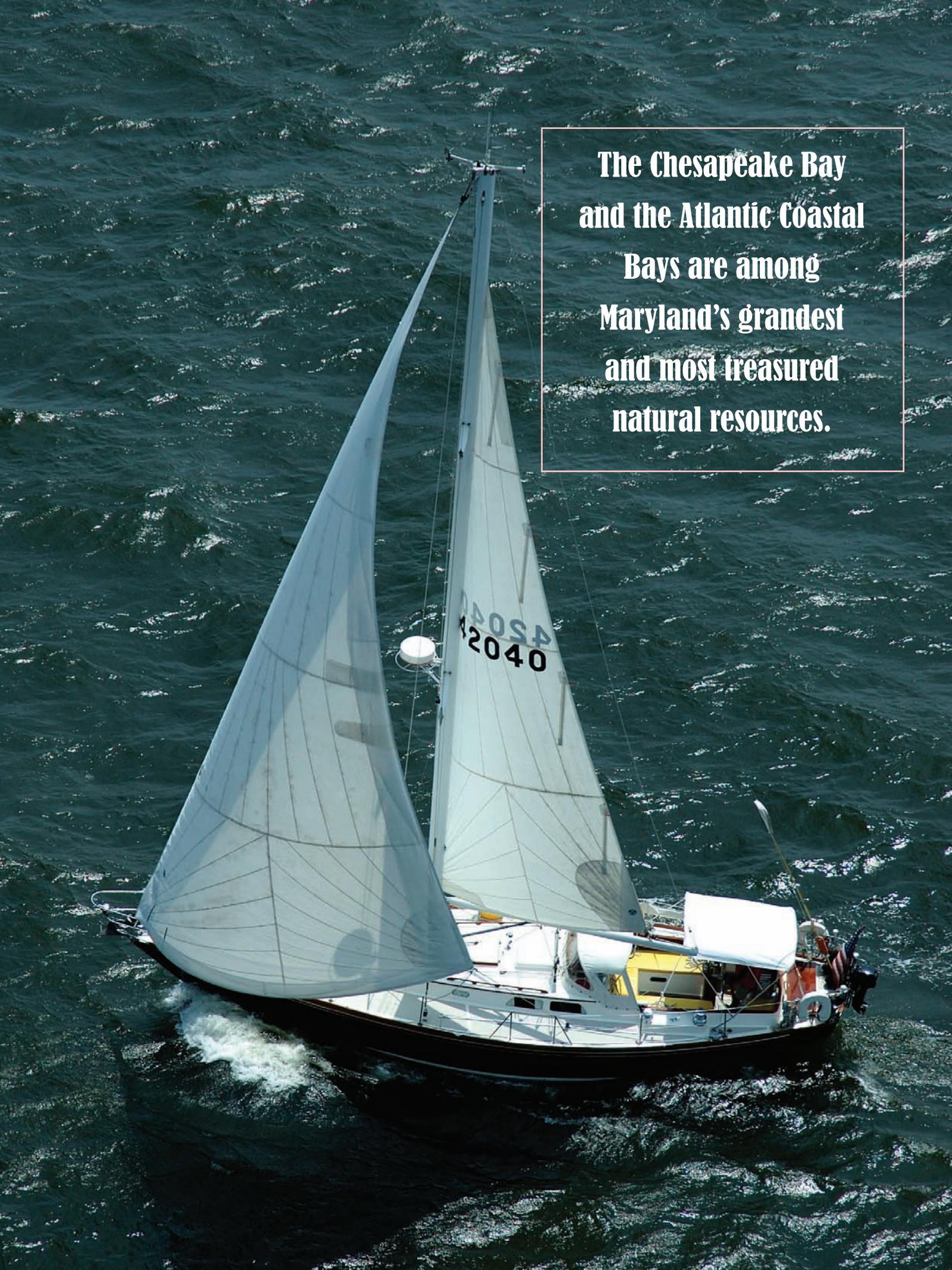
This citizen's guide is a comprehensive revision of the Critical Area Commission's first general guide, *Critical Area and You: The Chesapeake's First Line of Defense*. The original document was patterned on *Baybook*, published by the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, Inc.; *Watershed: An Action Guide to Improving Maine Waters*, published by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection; and the *Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program and How It Affects You*, published by the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Commission. Much of the text in this guide is from the Commission's original publications, and it has been updated to reflect current practices and changes to the Program. Throughout the document, the Critical Area

Law and Criteria are summarized and paraphrased in order to provide clear, accurate, and useful information in a reader-friendly style.

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- Mary R. Owens, Editor

An aerial photograph of a sailboat with two large white sails on a dark blue sea. The boat is moving from the top left towards the bottom right, leaving a white wake. The sails are taut and feature the text 'ADOSP' and '42040' in black. The boat's deck is white with yellow accents. A white cabin cover is visible on the deck. The water is dark with whitecaps.

**The Chesapeake Bay
and the Atlantic Coastal
Bays are among
Maryland's grandest
and most treasured
natural resources.**