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**Main Parking Lot at Harford County's Anita C. Leight Estuary Center Closed for
Environmentally Friendly Repaving Project**

BEL AIR, Md., (July 7, 2017) - The Harford County Department of Parks & Recreation has closed the main parking lot at the Anita C. Leight Estuary Center in Abingdon to all visitors until October for a repaving project that will reduce stormwater runoff and include a water retention garden. The Center is located on a 93-acre county-owned park, including wooded uplands overlooking Otter Point Creek, used for trail hiking, birdwatching, and passive environmental recreation. The park and all programs at the Center will continue throughout the construction period.

Alternate parking areas are available at 618 Otter Point Road, just past the entrance to the park and on the right coming from Route 40, and at the overflow lot on Otter Point Road, prior to the main entrance. Signs are on display at both lots, and both lots are accessible to the Center via foot trails. Visitors in need of assistance can arrange for a staff-assisted shuttle service by calling 410-612-1688.

Unlike a typical parking lot resurfacing, this project will involve replacing 4,600 square feet of asphalt with permeable pavers and a filtering system. The pavers will mimic the way natural land absorbs water, allowing rain that falls onto the parking area to seep back into the ground rather than increasing runoff. Additional layers of stone will help mitigate remaining runoff by infiltrating and treating polluted stormwater before the water is discharged into Otter Point Creek, the Bush River and, ultimately, the Chesapeake Bay.

In addition to the permeable pavers and filtering systems, the project includes planting a water retention garden filled with native plants. The garden will attract pollinators such as butterflies

and hummingbirds, while improving the water quality before it discharges into Otter Point Creek.

Funding for the \$554,500 project is the result of a collaboration between Harford County's Department of Parks & Recreation and Department of Public Works. Capital funds designated for ongoing projects at Anita C. Leight will contribute \$429,500. The remainder will come from two grants to construct stormwater management improvements totaling \$125,000, awarded to the county's Dept. of Public Works. Specifically, \$25,000 came from the Chesapeake Bay Program Office, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and the Chesapeake Bay Trust, and \$100,000 from the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays 2010 Trust Fund. The construction contract was awarded to Imark Builders, Inc. of Edgewood.

In addition to improving water quality, the completed project will provide research opportunities, and demonstrate the value of stormwater management to the Center's nearly 15,000 annual visitors.

The Anita C. Leight Estuary Center is a Harford County Parks & Recreation facility working in partnership with the Otter Point Creek Alliance to promote awareness, understanding, and appreciation of estuarine ecosystems through research, monitoring, and education. It is one of the few remaining large freshwater tidal marshes in the upper Chesapeake Bay accessible to the public. For operating hours and program information, please visit <http://www.otterpointcreek.org/> or call 410-612-1688.

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