

FIVE MILLION TREES INITIATIVE
2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Maryland Department of the Environment

December 2025



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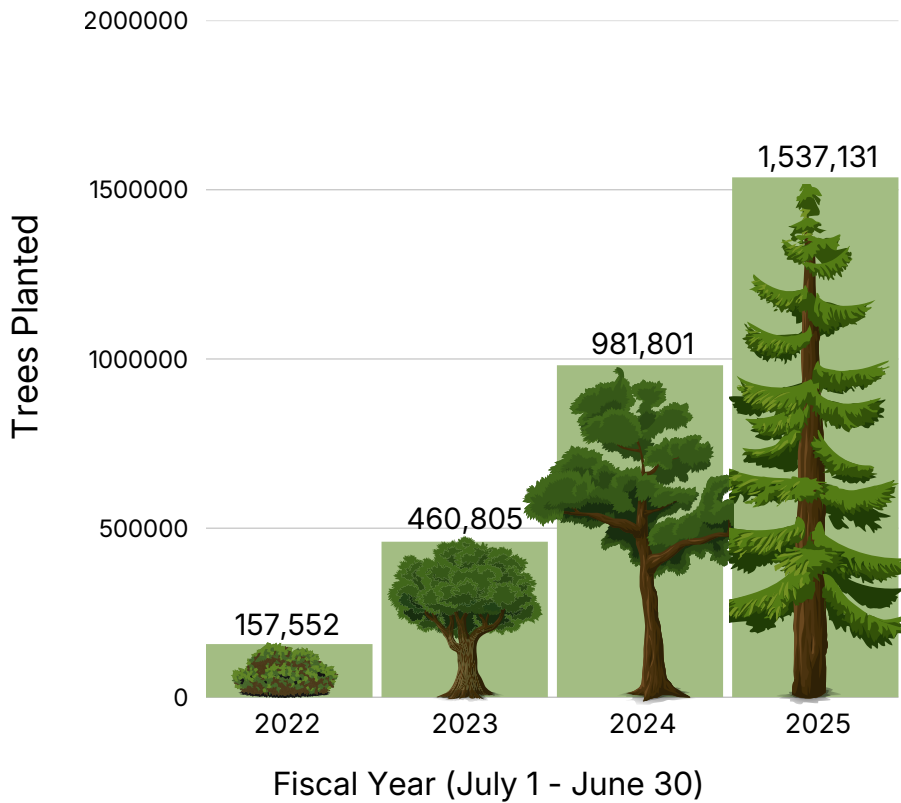
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FY25 PLANTING PROGRESS

THIS YEAR'S MILESTONES

PROGRESS TOWARDS 5 MILLION TREES



CUMULATIVE IMPACT

1.5 million

total trees planted towards the 5 Million Tree goal

86,500

of these trees were in urban, underserved areas

555,330

plantings reported between June 30, 2024 - July 1, 2025

PROGRAM PROGRESS OVERVIEW

Since July 1, 2021, the start of the initiative, a total of **1,537,131** plantings have been recorded in the State of Maryland, representing **30 percent** progress toward the goal of **planting and maintaining** 5,000,000 native trees by 2031. To view the tracking tool for the initiative, visit mde.maryland.gov/trees

GOAL TOWARDS 5 MILLION TREES

30%



AGENCY HIGHLIGHTS

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

CUMULATIVE PLANTINGS TO DATE BY ENTITY



1,053,313

Maryland Department
of Natural Resources



38,216

Chesapeake Bay
Trust



2,127

Maryland Department
of Transportation



43,169

Independent Plantings



315,346

Maryland Department
of Agriculture



84,960*

Maryland Department
of the Environment

**MDE collects National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) tree planting data from its administered programs. This number is reflective of Phase II MS4s only (Municipalities, State, and Federal entities)*



PARTICIPATION AND REPORTING

Trees are being planted by a diverse audience. MDE leads the initiative with leadership support from DNR, MDA, MDOT, and the Trust. This interagency network submits tree planting data to MDE from state supported afforestation programs.

Planting data is also independently registered from private landowners, municipalities, NGOs, and other entities with federal or private funding. This could also include self-reported data supported and/or funded by this interagency network. Independent plantings were nearly **5 times higher** than the year before.

To view the tracking tool for the initiative visit mde.maryland.gov/trees 6



Photo credit: Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR)

DNR advanced large-scale afforestation and community forestry efforts across the state with support from public and private partners. Through coordinated efforts among DNR–Maryland Forest Service, the Maryland Forestry Foundation, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, Healthy Forests Healthy Waters program, and the Western Maryland Resource Conservation and Development Council, the Department planted **389,872 trees** resulting in **1,010 acres of new forest** in Maryland, a significant increase from 661 acres planted in the previous year. This acceleration reflects increased planting effort and a strengthened operational capacity across partner organizations.

DNR's planting efforts with partners demonstrate how multi-program collaboration is driving rapid expansion in Maryland's afforestation capacity.

These partnerships continue to support rural and urban planting, filling critical gaps in landowner engagement, contractor networks, and technical assistance.

DNR also worked to expand community engagement and environmental education. In FY25, DNR hosted **188 public events**, engaging Marylanders in tree planting, seed collection, and hands-on learning opportunities that help build long-term stewardship.

The Maryland Environmental Trust (MET) contributed by highlighting tree-planting programs through its Stewardship newsletter, reaching conservation-oriented landowners and partnering with the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) to further expand participation.

AFFORESTATION IMPACT

389,872

trees planted this year

1,010

*acres of new forest
created this year*





Photo credit: Edwin Remsberg

DONATION IMPACT

\$346,000

collected for the DNR TreeMendous Program from the MDOT MVA Tree Donation feature during the vehicle registration process

8,665

trees that could be planted with the funds collected by the MDOT MVA donation feature



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (MDOT)

MDOT had its most successful year yet through the [Urban Tree Grant Program](#), noting a **25% increase** in tree plantings. These efforts reflect MDOT's ongoing commitment to sustainability and its goal to be the greenest transportation agency in the nation.

The Maryland Port Administration and MDE launched a **\$1 million partnership** to plant trees in Baltimore City and County communities near the port, creating greenspace, mitigating heat island effects, and improving stormwater management. Additionally, MDOT MVA, in partnership with DNR, hosted volunteer tree planting events throughout the year at MVA facilities across the state.



Photo credit: Appa Kappa Alpha University of Maryland Chapter

URBAN TREES PROGRAM

41

projects in FY25

18,170

trees committed to plant



CHESAPEAKE BAY TRUST (THE TRUST)

The Trust continued to administer the [Urban Trees Program](#) which awarded **41 projects** in FY25 committing to plant **18,170 trees**, of which 11,233 were planted across fall 2024 and spring 2025, and the remaining trees will be planted in fall 2025.

Additionally, in partnership with the Maryland Forest Service (MFS), the Trust administered the final round of the [Community Forestry Catalyst Fund](#) to expand forestry workforce development programs, and strengthen community-based forestry initiatives statewide. This includes awards to 8 new projects that will plant and maintain approximately 350 trees. The Trust also launched the first round of the [Mid-Atlantic Environmental Forestry Fund](#), a participatory grant program funded by the US Forest Service and other local foundations in which members of impacted communities have the power to decide who and what to fund. **16 projects** were awarded in Maryland to support projects that will plant and maintain roughly **2,700 trees** while advancing environmental equity across the region.

These projects do more than plant trees that help capture carbon: 5MT is stimulating local green jobs and expanding access to green careers by funding projects that offer workforce development programs to train crew members in site preparation, tree planting, and tree maintenance work, all while also improving physical and mental health by providing cleaner air, cooler streets and homes, and more beautiful places to live, work, and play.



Photo credit: Maryland Dept. of the Environment

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT (MDE)

In the Spring of 2025, MDE launched Phase 1 of a statewide 5MT advertising campaign to raise awareness and inspire public participation. Running from April to July, the campaign delivered more than **9.5 million** media impressions across radio, digital, and social platforms, doubling website traffic and exceeding engagement benchmarks.

MDE worked closely with the Maryland State Advertising Agency (MSAA) for strategic placement and collaborated with DNR and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to expand outreach and promote equity, outdoor learning, and environmental stewardship across

the State. MDE also participated in two hands-on volunteer events in Baltimore City with TreeBaltimore, Inward Discovery, and the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks.

MDE continues to partner with the University of Maryland and NASA's Carbon Monitoring System to track the carbon benefits and survivorship of newly planted trees using remote sensing.

These efforts reflect MDE's ongoing commitment to growing the State's urban tree canopy and achieving our net zero climate goals.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

60

volunteers from MDE and the City of Baltimore

125

native trees planted in urban, underserved areas



MDE supported tree planting events in **Druid Hill Park** for an Earth and Arbor Day Service Project and in **Carroll Park** as a volunteer event. Volunteers removed invasive species and collected trash to restore park habitat and protect the local watershed. This supported the development of a new partnership with Inward Discovery, a nonprofit that helps youth and educators connect with nature through outdoor learning.



Photo credit: Edwin Remsburg

AFFORESTATION IMPACT

358

*acres of tree plantings
across Maryland*

148

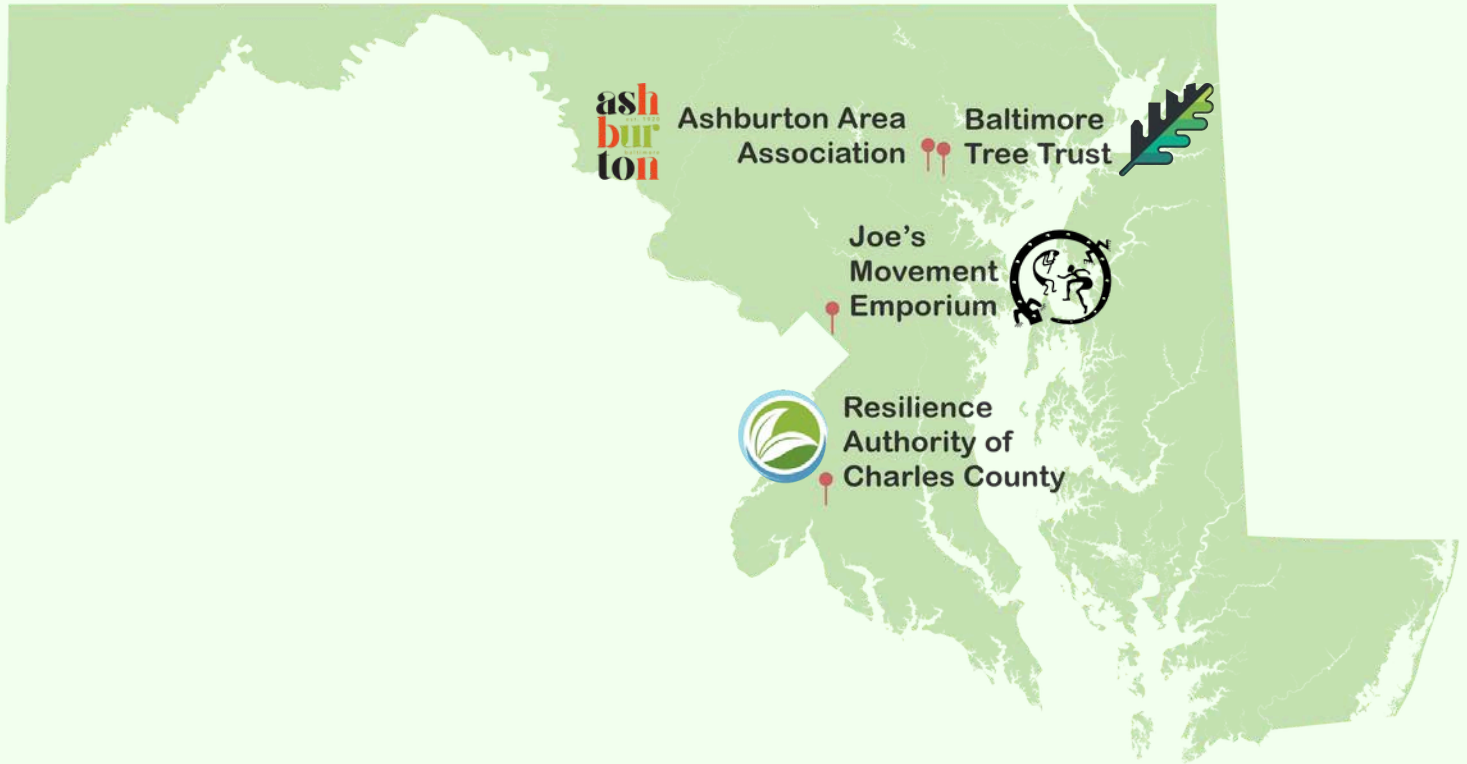
*acres of new riparian
forest buffers*



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (MDA)

In February 2025, MDA expanded public awareness of its tree planting and conservation programs through a statewide Tree Planting PSA that reached more than **170,000 viewers**. Increased outreach supported strong participation in the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share (MACS) Program, which provides up to 100% cost-share assistance for tree and shrub establishment, plus an additional **\$2 per planted tree incentive**. Through MACS and partner programs, MDA supported the installation of **148 acres** of riparian forest buffers and **358 acres** of tree plantings across Maryland. These projects improved water quality, reduced runoff, and enhanced wildlife habitat, helping to advance the state's climate and conservation goals.

Additional conservation initiatives, including the Conservation Buffer Initiative, CREP, and agroforestry practices supported by the Healthy Soils Competitive Fund, further expanded opportunities for farmers to adopt tree-based conservation practices. These programs offer attractive, flexible incentives. The Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act, effective July 1, 2025, strengthens this momentum through the new **Leaders in Environmentally Engaged Farming (LEEF) program**, which will accelerate adoption of high-impact BMPs like tree plantings and buffer restoration while aligning incentives across MDA programs and recognizing farms that demonstrate exceptional conservation and community engagement.



STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Through the dedication of its nonprofit partners and Urban Trees Program grantees, the 5 Million Trees Initiative has brought new trees to Maryland communities that are underserved and overburdened. This map showcases the impact of just four of these partners funded through the Trust’s Urban Trees Program.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

86,500

trees in urban, underserved areas

565

communities served

Communities are defined as the number of urban, underserved census tracts with 5MT plantings as defined by the Tree Solutions Now Act of 2021

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT 1: **BALTIMORE TREE TRUST (BTT)**



330 W 24th St,
Baltimore, MD
21211

3,500
Trees planted

271
Volunteers

45
Students



Photo credit: Baltimore Tree Trust

Baltimore Tree Trust (BTT), a leading urban forestry nonprofit serving Baltimore City, received their third Urban Trees grant from the Trust to plant **3,500 trees**, bringing their total to **9,510 tree plantings** in Baltimore City through this program. BTT's site preparation, tree planting, and tree maintenance work is completed by members of their career pathways program, the Neighborhood Forestry Initiative. BTT hires interested Baltimore City residents, regardless of experience, and provides full-time paid training in urban forestry. By creating a pipeline for underrepresented identities in the environmental field, BTT is bringing new perspectives to community forestry and building a more inclusive and resilient future for Baltimore City.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT 2: JOE'S MOVEMENT EMPORIUM



Photo credit: Joe's Movement Emporium

3309 Bunker Hill Rd, Mt Rainier, MD 20712

487
Trees planted

200
Volunteers

125
Students

10
Teachers

Joe's Movement Emporium received their third Urban Trees grant from the Trust to plant **487 trees**, bringing their total to **951 trees** planted in Prince George's County through this program. The Urban Trees grants have supported the development of their GreenWorks program, which provides urban forestry training and watershed stewardship work for young people of color. With support from community partners and municipalities, Joe's GreenWorks Urban Tree Team will plant these trees in Capitol Heights, District Heights, Bladensburg, Mount Rainier, Cheverly, Cottage City, and Colmar Manor, expanding the region's tree canopy and contributing to canopy conservation.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT 3: ASHBURTON AREA ASSOCIATION



3201 Dorchester
Rd, Baltimore, MD
21215

23
Trees planted

125
Volunteers

45
Students

5
Teachers



Photo credit: Ashburton Area Association

As part of their second Urban Trees grant from the Trust, the Ashburton Area Association hosted a series of workshops to encourage neighbors to plant trees on their property and enlisted a team of veterans from the neighborhood to provide white glove service to randomly selected participants. This service included complimentary tree delivery, planting, and mulching. The veteran volunteers received **two hours of training** from a tree expert and wore Ashburton t-shirts while planting, generating curiosity and engagement among other neighbors. The program has been personally rewarding for the volunteers and has strengthened community participation.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT 4: RESILIENCE AUTHORITY OF CHARLES COUNTY



Photo credit: Resilience Authority of Charles County

200 Baltimore Street, La Plata, MD 20646

480
Trees planted

30
Volunteers

400
Students

10
Teachers

With their first Urban Trees grant from the Trust, the Resilience Authority of Charles County planted over **480 native trees** at Thomas Stone High School and Waldorf Senior Recreation Center. The Resilience Authority Youth and Youth Adult Corps (RAYC) will provide two years of tree maintenance and paid green jobs for local high school students and young adults. By engaging both students and seniors, these trees and their care will advance climate resilience and support racial and socio-economic equity in urban disadvantaged areas.



PROGRAM UPDATES

STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINED SUCCESS

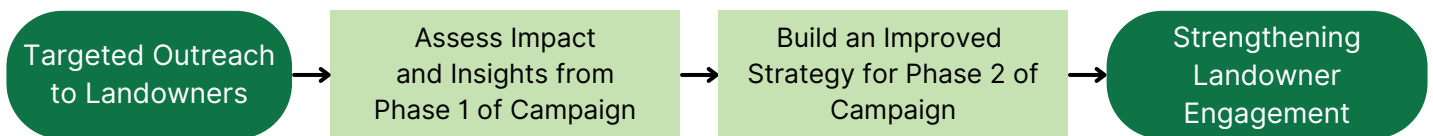


Photo credit: Maryland Dept. of the Environment

PRIORITY ACTION AREAS FOR FY2026

Landowner Engagement

Efforts to engage private landowners continued through a targeted campaign designed to raise awareness and encourage participation in tree planting initiatives. Phase 2 of the campaign will build on successes and lessons learned from Phase 1, refining outreach methods and expanding engagement strategies.



Outreach and Partnership Expansion

The program invested in outreach coordinated with other State agencies to diversify the audiences reached, with a particular focus on historically underrepresented communities. New partners, including Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Department of Juvenile Services (DJS), and Maryland State Ad Agency (MSAA), were brought into program activities. Existing partnerships were leveraged and new relationships developed to increase overall engagement and encourage participation beyond State agency partners. A key example of strategic partnership growth is the DNR - Howard County Office of Community Sustainability partnership, which provided \$230,000 in FY25 to support tree planting in the county which allowed the Department to expand project maintenance of newly planted trees using State Trust Fund resources. The success of this partnership has already generated interest from additional local jurisdictions seeking similar collaboration models. These efforts reflect DNR's commitment to building scalable models for municipal afforestation support.



Photo credit: Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources

Long-Term Maintenance

The 5MT interagency network continues to invest in long-term maintenance and management to ensure the survivorship and ecological benefits of planted trees. As multi-year plantings mature, maintenance demands are increasing rapidly, requiring strategic planning and additional resourcing. The interagency network is exploring mechanisms to sustain this growing workload, including maintenance-specific funding pathways and expanding county partnerships like the Howard County model. One example is a research project by the Trust to evaluate survival outcomes of urban trees that receive two years of maintenance with trees that receive five years of maintenance to better understand how much maintenance is needed to maximize the cost-effectiveness of tree planting programs.

Leveraging Additional Funds

MDE advanced foundational work under the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant–Atlantic Conservation Coalition (CPRG–ACC) by expanding staff capacity and strengthening cross agency collaboration. Early logistical planning and coordination helped establish the systems needed to support future large-scale tree planting and maintenance. These efforts position Maryland to fully leverage CPRG–ACC resources as projects move into the implementation phase.



Photo credit: Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources

DNR and partner agencies secured additional resources including:

- U.S. Forest Service (USFS) funding supporting tree planting among other conservation practices
- Landscape-Scale Restoration grant for projects on the Eastern and Southern Coastal Plain
- USFS Inflation Reduction Act Forest Stewardship grants (two grants of \$4 million each, available through 2029), which include tree-planting components as part of broader forest stewardship objectives.
- Arbor Day Foundation support that has contributed funds for tree purchases for the past two years, offering a growing opportunity to enhance local planting capacity

Additionally, the Trust leveraged the State's investment through the 5 Million Trees Initiative to obtain funding from the US Forest Service and local foundations for new grant programs that expand urban forestry workforce development and capacity building. Collectively, these funding sources enhance Maryland's ability to expand tree planting, support long-term maintenance, and strengthen the statewide afforestation infrastructure.

Locating and Closing Reporting Gaps

Through the 5MT interagency network, strategies to address gaps between trees reported and trees planted have been underway. These efforts are designed to improve data accuracy and ensure that all plantings are properly documented and reflected in program totals.



Photo credit: Maryland Dept. of the Environment

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION

While measurable progress has been made, accelerating the success of ongoing initiatives and optimizing resources across agency partners is critical. In 2025, representatives from the Maryland Departments of Agriculture, Environment, Natural Resources, and Transportation met with partners from the Chesapeake Bay Trust and American Forests to identify obstacles, develop solutions, and generate fresh ideas to streamline their work, enhance data use, and expand partnership networks.

Emerging themes from this inaugural 5MT Summit include:

- **Data Management/Analysis Opportunities:** aligning on methodologies and leveraging existing data sets to inform strategy.
- **Ensuring Urban Communities Benefit:** harnessing shared expertise and resources to build on what is working and identify issues to overcome to accelerate progress.
- **Enhancing Internal and External Communications:** refine collaboration among agencies on tailored messaging and plans to increase our engagement with diverse audiences, from new nonprofit or private sector partners, to other state agencies and legislators.

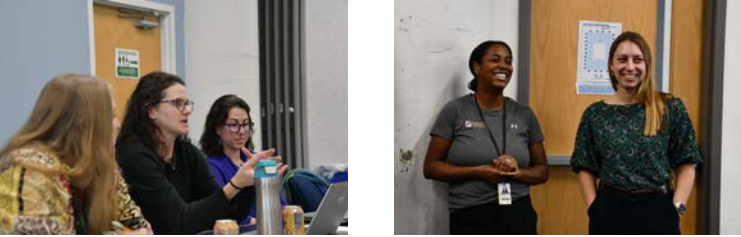


Photo credit: Maryland Dept. of the Environment

EARLY OUTCOMES HEADING INTO 2026

Create Working Groups for Better Coordination

To improve partner agency collaboration, the initiative will organize three dedicated groups: one for long-term planning, one for managing data and reporting, and one for communications and marketing.

Develop a Unified Outreach Plan

Develop a shared outreach plan to engage new partners, educate key stakeholders, and foster broader awareness of program impacts.

Explore Additional Policy and Education Opportunities

Explore additional policy and education opportunities, such as providing an update to the Governor's Subcabinet on Climate and the Maryland Commission on Climate Change.

More In-Person Engagement

Build community through additional in person gatherings, including grantees, local governments, nonprofit organizations, faith institutions and the private sector.

Address Challenges and Streamline Reporting

Address data reporting challenges early on, and streamline the end of year reporting process.

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PHOTO CREDITS

Appa Kappa Alpha University of Maryland Chapter

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Baltimore Tree Trust

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Joe's Movement Emporium

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Maryland Department of the Environment

Resilience Authority of Charles County

