



Keiller laughing with a farmer at a meeting © TNC

Profile of a Conservationist

Keiller Kyle

Old MacDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O. And on his farm he practiced advanced nutrient management... That isn't quite how the song goes, but Agriculture Specialist Keiller Kyle would definitely sing along.

On Maryland's Eastern shore, Keiller works with farmers and agribusinesses to promote advanced nutrient management practices. Keiller understands that fertilizer is expensive and that using it as precisely as possible helps farmers save money and helps keep fertilizer out of the local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay. This knowledge stems from Keiller's upbringing on a family-owned farm.

Keiller believes that, "farmers are conservationists at heart, and Maryland farmers are some of the most forward-thinking growers in the country."

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A Life of Bay Science

Dr. Walter Boynton, Admiral of the Chesapeake

"This whole Chesapeake Bay Program—the idea of a nutrient diet—is a grand experiment. Not just a scientific experiment, but a social and economic experiment. We have a high-rent society living cheek by jowl to an estuary that exchanges its water pretty slowly with the ocean, and we have to be careful what we put in the water. So, the question is: Can we have a quality estuary, and a quality environment on the land, together? That's the big experiment."

Dr. Walter Boynton, Professor Emeritus, University of Maryland Center for Environmental Sciences (UMCES); Trustee, The Nature Conservancy Maryland/DC Chapter

Bay scientist Walter Boynton spent 40 years working at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science's Chesapeake Biological Laboratory on Solomons Island before retiring in 2017. During the first part of his career, Walter grimly watched the nation's largest estuary deteriorate to its worst condition in recorded history. After helping design the Chesapeake Bay Program in the mid 1980s, Walter has had the honor of watching the Bay bounce back—thanks in no small measure to his own life's work.

Walter has served on The Nature Conservancy Maryland/DC chapter's board of trustees for six years and recently committed to another three-year term. He is a trusted adviser and champion of TNC's work to restore and protect the Bay, and his services will continue to help advance the chapter's innovative programs around reducing agricultural nutrient runoff and urban stormwater pollution.

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Oyster sanctuaries in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries improve water quality, habitat and coastal resilience.
Photo © Jay Fleming Photography

Nature's Water Filter

Filtering up to 50 Gallons of Water Per Day, Oysters Help Clean the Bay

“Oysters lay as thick as stones. We had more sturgeon than could be devoured by dog or man. We saw grampus, porpoise, seals, stingrays, brits, mullets, rockfish, trout, soles, perch of three sorts and a variety of shellfish.”

Observations from Captain John Smith in 1608, upon his arrival to the Chesapeake Bay

Our native oyster does a lot besides get served in restaurants. It filters water, provides important habitat and reduces coastal erosion and wave energy during large storms. Maryland's beloved blue crab and rockfish also depend on oyster reefs for food and as nurseries. The Bay once had an abundance of oyster reefs, but populations today are greatly reduced because of disease, poor water quality and overharvesting.

In 2015, a coalition of partners including The Nature Conservancy completed the world's largest oyster restoration project at Harris Creek, Maryland. A recent study funded by TNC, the Oyster Recovery Partnership (ORP) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) shows the benefits from investing in large-scale oyster restoration. For example, the study found that the restored reefs can filter the entire volume of Harris Creek in less than 10 days. It also showed that the restored reefs can remove 1 million pounds of nitrogen from the Bay over a decade. With these kind of benefits, sustained investment in oyster restoration by the state of Maryland and the federal government is a clear win for nature and people. Then, perhaps we will have a Bay that more closely resembles the thriving estuary encountered by John Smith.

LEARN MORE: nature.org/mdoysters

NATURE
MARYLAND/DC

Walter Boynton

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Photo © University of Maryland
Center for Environmental Sciences

One of Walter's most well-known virtues is his ability to communicate science in simple terms. He has a way of making complex ecological concepts clearly understood by non-scientists, especially policymakers. When talking to elected officials about the Bay recovery, Walter has learned that it's important to use tangible examples of success:

“The single best story is the seagrass story because it's so visual. I mean, who wants to talk about nitrate models?” asks Walter. “We know that seagrasses are the equivalent of canaries in the coal mine. When we see seagrass expansion, like we have seen for the past decade, we know we're doing something right.”

WATCH THE VIDEO:
nature.org/chesapeakebay