

JOSHUA ELI KURTZ

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MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Appointed by Governor Wes Moore and confirmed by Maryland State Senate as Cabinet Secretary for the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, an agency of 1,400 personnel and a \$675M budget.
- Led the revision of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement as the Chair of the Principal Staff Committee of the multi-jurisdictional Chesapeake Bay Program. The revised agreement will guide the coordinated restoration across federal, state and local governments, along with academic and community partners through 2040.
- Restructured the Department of Natural Resources to improve effectiveness and to incorporate greater focus on climate change action and restorative environmental justice. The changes resulted in significantly more effective HR practices and reduced the agency's vacancy rate by 7% in one year.
- Shepherded the passage through the Maryland General Assembly of Governor Moore's omnibus Chesapeake Bay restoration package in 2024, which created the first-ever integrated water quality monitoring program in state government, created an oyster restoration crediting program, and opened Maryland lands to regenerative agriculture for the first time.
- Created a leadership development program at the Department of Natural Resources that is now a model across other state agencies. The training focuses on personal skill building, communication and teamwork.
- Developed a five-year strategic plan for the Maryland Office of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation that included a shift towards climate mitigation and resilience advocacy as a core component of the organization's work.
- Chaired the Partners for Open Space, which advocated for land protection in Maryland. Secured over \$200M in funding for land protection in the two-year term.
- Launched the Urban Conservation Program at The Nature Conservancy, which included fundraising \$1.7M and recruiting and hiring the director.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Cabinet Secretary

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Annapolis, MD

2023-Present

- Serves as the primary advisor to Governor Wes Moore on all natural resource related policies and programs.
- Represents the State of Maryland on several multi-jurisdictional efforts to restore Maryland's natural resources.
- Responsible for \$675M annual budget and 1,400 permanent employees and 500-700 seasonal employees annually.
- Acts as the main spokesperson for the agency with press, elected officials, and the public. Regularly testifies in Congress, the Maryland General Assembly, and local jurisdictions.
- Recruited and developed a team of 16 individuals who either supervise a significant work stream (land, aquatics, enterprise services, Natural Resources Police, communications, legislative and constituent affairs) and/or are subject matter experts on key areas.
- Led the passage of 27 pieces of legislation that modernized policies and funding opportunities.
- Acts as the appointing authority for the agency; all personnel and human resources decisions are made by the Office of the Secretary.

Maryland Executive Director

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Annapolis, MD

2021 – 2023

- Provided strategic vision and leadership for the policy/advocacy, litigation, science and terrestrial restoration programs, as well as for CBF's Clagett Farm and the Maryland Oyster Restoration Center.
- Developed and managed the \$1.5M annual budget for personnel, programing, and capital expenses. Created funding streams through strategic fundraising, grant applications and revenue raising opportunities.
- Created the process and led the development of the organization's 5-year strategic plan to achieve the 2025 Bay Blueprint. This plan was CBF's first-ever to chart the course for out-year action beyond the federal and state framework.

- Served as the primary relationship manager for key donors, stakeholders and partners, including the Governor’s Administration, Maryland General Assembly, Chesapeake Bay Commission, University System of Maryland, private restoration firms, conservation finance entities, and various coalitions.
- Acted as the primary spokesperson and public face for the Maryland Office by developing strategic communications plans, giving interviews, and developing press engagement opportunities.

Policy and Government Relations Director

Bethesda, MD

The Nature Conservancy

2019 – 2020

- Managed a \$400K budget for the Government Relations Department and the Climate Mitigation Initiative. Completed budget forecasting, managed spending, grants, and salaries for the department.
- Researched and developed policy and regulatory concepts to create climate resilient human and natural communities in Maryland and deliver clean water to residents.
- Supervised the policy and government relations team. Led hiring, oversaw development of work plans, established roles and responsibilities, and advised on career development
- Created grass tops advocacy campaigns by activating trustees, partners, and industry leaders to support conservation and climate policy in the Maryland General Assembly and DC City Council.
- Led the creation of a 5-year strategic plan for climate mitigation in Maryland and DC.

Director of Policy Development

Bethesda, MD

The Nature Conservancy

2016 – 2019

- Identified best policy solutions to drive clean water and climate resilience in the Maryland General Assembly and District of Columbia Council.
- Developed and launched the Climate Smart program in the MD/DC Chapter.
- Created the Youth Advocacy Training program in the Chapter to expand the next generation of conservation leaders. Built out a customizable module for training that can be tailored to specific audiences, geographies and governance levels.

Government Relations Manager

Bethesda, MD

The Nature Conservancy

2015 – 2016

- Created the strategic framework for the evolution of the government relations program to move beyond funding for conservation and protection and into restoration, climate resilience, and clean water.
- Developed a budget letter and advocacy campaign for conservation programs that were aligned.
- Developed and implemented a youth advocacy training program.

Policy and Program Associate

Bethesda, MD

The Nature Conservancy

2013 – 2015

- Tracked priority legislation and attended hearings to assist the Government Relations Director in establishing TNC’s policy priorities.
- Researched policy priorities and developed testimony and advocacy outreach materials.
- Assisted with outreach to the general public, partners, and community groups.

LEADERSHIP AND BOARD SERVICE

Advisory Board Member, University of Delaware College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (2025-present)

Chair, Principal Staff Committee of the Chesapeake Bay Program (2024-2025)

Chair, Governor’s Bays Watershed Council (2023-present)

Chair, Adaptation and Resilience Working Group of the Maryland Commission on Climate Change (2023-present)

Chair, Rural Legacy Board (2023- present)

Governor’s Representative, Chesapeake Bay Commission (2023-present)

Commissioner, Maryland Commission on Climate Chage (2019-2023)

Chair, Partners for Open Space (2017-219)

EDUCATION

George Mason University

Master of Public Policy, May 2012

University of Delaware

B.S. in Wildlife Conservation, May 2008