

Clouding the Waters

BY VERNA HARRISON



Preeminent among the initial philanthropic interests of Keith Campbell, founder of The Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment, was the desire to restore the native Chesapeake Bay oyster for its value as a natural filter.

Over time and as staff was employed, these interests grew to a selection of policy work designed to address the greatest threats to the living resources and water quality of the Bay. These threats included air pollution from coal fired power plants and water pollution from agriculture and stormwater runoff. We joke that we crawled out from the sea and onto the land and into the air.

Only recently has it dawned on us that the evolution of our Foundation's mission must continue into a darker, wilder place. We now recognize that the largest threat to the Chesapeake Bay lives in an unsustainable habitat 20 miles down the highway where politicians talk about leaving a nation better for their mothers and their grandchildren. Unfortunately, they don't seem to understand that those mothers and grandkids need clean air to breathe and clean water to drink.


Indeed, these politicians think they need to give each other something — and this gift is the emasculation of the laws, agencies and budgets that serve as the underpinning of our water and air protections. The

Campbell Foundation now realizes that included among our core strategies must be effective grantmaking to ensure that the electorate is educated, empowered and encouraged to exercise their civic responsibilities at the voting booth.

We look forward to learning from funders who currently support both environmental and civic causes about their approaches to this essential mix of program elements. We offer to those that have not yet embarked down this path our most sincere hope that you will join us. Clean air and water depends on it.

We are proud to offer the accompanying visualization of this issue by students from the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). ■

VERNA HARRISON has been Executive Director of the Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment since 2003. The Foundation promotes policy, advocacy, and enforcement to improve water quality, restore ecological balance, and foster an engaged citizenry within the watersheds of the Chesapeake Bay, Atlantic Coastal Bays and the Pacific Coast region. She is co-chair of the Chesapeake Bay Funders Network, and co-chaired the 2012 Environmental Grantmakers Association Fall Retreat.



thanks for having me, Verna.