

Press Release

Online Native Plant Center Helps Chesapeake Bay

Image Matters LLC Develops Native Plant Center Portal for the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, Inc.

Leesburg, Virginia, June 13, 2011 – Image Matters LLC, in partnership with The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, Inc., and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, unveils the online Native Plant Center for the Chesapeake Bay Region. The online guide allows for the identification and selection of native plant species for habitat restoration in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, an effective method for reducing pollution in the Bay. Replacing portions of lawn areas and typical landscapes with native plants that suit local conditions reduces or eliminates the need for fertilizers and pesticides which wash into our streams, rivers and, ultimately, the Chesapeake Bay. Once in our waterways, these pollutants fuel the growth of excess algae, which clouds the water and threatens the health of fish, crabs and the entire Chesapeake Bay ecosystem.

Users to the portal, www.nativeplantcenter.net, can search for native plants by name, plant type, sun exposure, soil texture and moisture, and even find native plants with the same shape, color, size or other characteristics as some of their favorite non-native plants. The portal also includes a geo-locator feature to identify plants suited to a user's specific location. An online network for interacting with other Chesapeake Bay stewards is planned.

The portal uses the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's native plant database, associated with the publication entitled *Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping: Chesapeake Bay Watershed*. "Since its release in 2003, the demand for the resource has never waned," said Leopoldo Miranda Supervisor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Chesapeake Bay Field Office. "Citizens, schools, non-profit organizations, communities and government agencies used the guide to find the native plants that met their local conditions and interests in order to create landscapes to attract wildlife and reduce the amount of pollutants going into the Chesapeake Bay."

To reach more citizens and organizations, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, with support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, contracted with Image Matters LLC to create an online version of the guide, the Native Plants Center, Chesapeake Region. Image Matters, a software technology and professional services company that provides advanced solutions, and consulting services to government and commercial clients, has expertise in producing Public Science Portals.

About Image Matters LLC

Image Matters is a software technology and professional services company that produces software products, develops advanced solutions, and provides consulting services to government and commercial clients. Image Matters is committed to improving decision-making that affects our environment by bringing people closer to science, through Public Science Portals (PSP). For another example of this commitment to Chesapeake Bay and other regions of the U.S., see www.slammview.org to investigate the impacts of sea level rise on coastal wetlands. Image Matters is based in Leesburg, Virginia, with Mid-West operations in Bloomington, Indiana.

For more information about the firm, visit www.imagemattersllc.com.

About the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay engages individuals, groups, businesses, other environmental organizations and not-for-profit groups to develop collaborative solutions to improve, preserve, and protect the Chesapeake Bay and all its resources. Bringing these diverse groups together enables the Alliance to find common solutions to protect the Bay's unique natural resources for future generations while protecting its communities. The Alliance believes there can be healthy streams and rivers and a healthy economy. For nearly 40 years the Alliance has spearheaded innovative ways to engage people and groups to restore the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers.

For more information about the organization, visit <http://allianceforthebay.org/>.

About the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Chesapeake Bay Field Office

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Chesapeake Bay Field Office mission is to conserve, protect and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. Chesapeake Bay Field Office biologists work to protect endangered and threatened species, migratory birds, freshwater and anadromous fish, and wildlife habitats in the District of Columbia, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia. We also coordinate with many private individuals and public groups to preserve and protect living resources of the Chesapeake Bay and Delaware Bay.

For more information about the agency office, visit <http://www.fws.gov/chesapeakebay/>.

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