*This Conservation Easement Template is a standardized document for permittee-responsible mitigation sites in Maryland. Modifications to this template shall be identified using tracked changes with an explanation for those changes provided in a cover memorandum.*

*(Template Version Date: 27 March 2024)*

STATE OF MARYLAND

COUNTY OF \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**CONSERVATION EASEMENT**

**(*Insert Mitigation Site Name)***

THIS CONSERVATION EASEMENT made this \_\_\_\_\_day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_, by [*full legal name of granting landowner*] (the “Grantor”), in favor of ***[full legal name of holder of the conservation easement]*** (the “Holder”) and **[*full legal name of the permittee*]** (collectively, the “Parties”), with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the “Corps,” to include any successor agency) and the Maryland Department of the Environment (“MDE,” to include any successor agency) as Third-Party Beneficiaries (collectively the “Third Parties”).

RECITALS

 WHEREAS, Grantor*(s) is/are* the fee simple owner*(s)* of certain real property (“Property” which shall include wetlands, streams, any interest in submerged lands, uplands, associated riparian/littoral rights, and other aquatic resources) located in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_County, Maryland, more particularly ***[describe tract to be preserved, including: 1) acreage, 2) a reference to recorded plat(s), and 3) any excluded property]*** and shown in Exhibit A (i.e., metes and bounds of the Property), and Exhibit B (i.e., a metes and bounds and a scaled plat of the area subject to the Conservation Easement, the “Conservation Area”), and made a part hereof; and

 WHEREAS, as compensatory mitigation under Federal and State law for Department of the Army Permit No. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District (“Corps” or “Baltimore District,” to include any successor agency), and certification(s) and/or permit(s) No. \_\_\_\_\_\_ issued by the Maryland Department of the Environment (“MDE,” to include any successor agency) (collectively, the “Permits”), and incorporated by reference in this document, and in recognition of the continuing benefit to the permitted property, and for the protection of waters of the United States and/or the State of Maryland and scenic, resource, environmental, and general property values, Grantor*(s) has/have* agreed to execute and record this Conservation Easement placing certain restrictive covenants on a Conservation Area within the Property, in order that the Conservation Area shall remain substantially in its natural condition forever predominately in accordance with the vegetative and hydrological conditions described in the compensatory mitigation performance standards of the Permits; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the mitigation plan approved by the Permits (”Mitigation Plan”), and incorporated herein by reference, the Permittee proposes to create, maintain, and preserve a high-quality, self-sustaining natural aquatic system and buffer located on a portion of the Property described in Exhibit B attached hereto (the “Conservation Area”), which contains or will contain land, functions, values, and services that may serve as compensation and mitigation for impacts to waters of the United States and/or waters of the State that were permitted by the Third Parties; and

WHEREAS, the Parties intend that the Conservation Area will be used as a mitigation site to be known as the ***[insert Mitigation Site Name]*** approved by the Permits; and

***[Use thE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPh ONLY if a separate authorization was required for impacts associated with the mitigation site:]***

WHEREAS, under Federal and State law, the Corps has issued Permit No. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and MDE has issued Permit No. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, for impacts to waters of the United States and/or the State of Maryland expected to result from the creation of the self-sustaining natural aquatic system located on the Conservation Area; and

 WHEREAS, the Permits require that this Conservation Easement be executed and recorded in order that the Conservation Area shall remain substantially in its natural or improved condition forever; and

 WHEREAS, the Permittee*(s)* desire(s) to comply with the conditions of the Permits by imposing this Conservation Easement on a Conservation Area within the Property; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of the continuing benefit to the Property, and for the protection of aquatic resources and scenic, resource, environmental, and general property values, the Grantor and Holder have agreed to place this Conservation Easement on the Property, in order that the Conservation Area shall be retained and maintained in perpetuity predominately in accordance with the vegetative and hydrological conditions described in the compensatory mitigation performance standards of the Mitigation Plan;

WHEREAS, the Mitigation Plan and associated approved Long-Term Management Plan (“Long-Term Management Plan”), incorporated herein by reference, names the **[PERMITTEE/FILL IN NAME OF NONPROFIT OR GOVERNMENT ENTITY]** as the Long-Term Steward of the Mitigation Site. Any subsequent transfer of responsibilities to a different Long-Term Steward shall be approved in writing by the Corps and MDE and shall be incorporated into the Long-Term Management Plan by amendment. The Grantor and Holder hereby agree to provide the Long-Term Steward, or subsequent approved Long-Term Steward, access to the site, as described in Exhibit B, to conduct the activities entrusted to the Long-Term Steward in the Long-Term Management Plan and as described in paragraphs 6 and 7.

 NOW THEREFORE, for good and valuable consideration and in consideration of the mutually held interests in enhancement and preservation of the environment, as well as the terms, conditions, and restrictions contained herein, and pursuant to the laws of the United States and the State of Maryland, Grantor does agree to the following terms and conditions, which shall run with the land and be binding in perpetuity and forever on all heirs, successors, assigns (they are included in the terms, “Grantor,” below), lessees, or other occupiers and users.

**1. Purpose.** The purpose of this Conservation Easement is to preserve, protect, and enhance the native flora, fauna, soils, water table, aquifers, springs, drainage patterns, wetland resources, and other related environmental functions and values of the Conservation Area in perpetuity and to prevent any use of the Property that will impair or interfere with the aquatic resource values of the Property.

**2. Covenants and Restrictions.** Neither the Grantor*(s)*, nor any subsequent owner or owners of the Conservation Area or any portion thereof, shall undertake or cause to be undertaken within or upon the Conservation Area within the Property, as described in (*Recitals and/or the site plan attached*), any of the following:

 a. Removal, excavation, or dredging of soil, sand, gravel, minerals, organic matter, or materials of any kind;

 b. Changing existing drainage characteristics, sedimentation patterns, flow patterns, or flood retention characteristics;

 c. Disturbance of the water level or water table by drainage, impoundment, or other means;

 d. Dumping, discharging of material, or filling with material, including the driving of piles and placing of obstructions;

 e. Grading or removal of material that would alter existing topography;

 f. Destruction or removal of plant life that would alter the character of the aquatic resources, or introduction of exotic species;

 g. Agricultural or forestry activities, such as aquaculture, plowing, tillage, cropping, seeding, cultivating, and grazing and raising of livestock, sod production, harvesting for production of food and fiber products. Forestry activities mean planting, cultivating, thinning, harvesting, or any other activity undertaken to use forest resources or to improve their quality or productivity;

 h. Use of off-road vehicles and motor vehicles;

 i. Destruction or alteration of the Conservation Area EXCEPT:

(i) Alteration necessary to construct the mitigation areas and associated improvements proposed to be built by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, or its successors, and/or assigns, as approved in the mitigation plan included in the Permits;

(ii) Alteration necessary to ensure the success of the mitigation areas including monitoring, reconstruction, maintenance, or repair of the constructed mitigation areas, as approved by the Corps and MDE;

(iii) Removal of vegetation when approved by the Corps and MDE and conducted for removal of noxious or invasive plants;

**[*all exceptions (including those affecting buffer areas) must be specifically spelled out in the PermitS or Approved mitigation plan; also, additional, specific, exceptions may be listed in this paragraph, e.g., fire or wildlife management plans, boardwalks, etc*].**

 j. Utilizing a non-reporting Nationwide Permit, Regional Permit, or State Programmatic General Permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act or state general permits under MDE regulations to impact any aquatic feature on the Property. Notification shall be required to the Corps and MDE for the use of any Nationwide Permit, State Programmatic General Permit, or Regional Permit.

**3. Duration and Amendment.** The covenants and restrictions listed herein are created pursuant to the Annotated Code of Maryland, Real Property Article § 2-118 and shall run with and bind the Property, and be binding on the Grantor*(s)*, its/their personal representatives, heirs, successors and assigns, unless and until terminated or modified by the Third Parties, or other Federal, State, or County agencies which have the legal authority to enforce these covenants and restrictions by regulations, permit, or agreement. The failure of the Third Parties, or other such agencies to enforce the provisions of this Conservation Easement shall not be deemed a waiver of any rights created hereunder. After recording, this Conservation Easement may only be amended by a recorded document signed by the Third Parties and Grantor*(s)*. The recorded document, as amended, shall be consistent with the Baltimore District and MDE model conservation easements at the time of amendment. Amendment shall be allowed at the discretion of the Third Parties, in consultation with resource agencies as appropriate, and then only in exceptional circumstances. Mitigation for amendment impacts will be required pursuant to Third Parties’ mitigation policies at the time of amendment. There shall be no obligation to allow an amendment. The Third Parties shall be provided with a 60-day advance written notice of any legal action concerning this Conservation Easement or of any action to extinguish, void, or modify this Conservation Easement in whole or in part. This Conservation Easement is intended to survive foreclosure, bankruptcy, condemnation, or judgments affecting the Property. Should the Property be transferred, sold, or conveyed, be subject to foreclosure or bankruptcy, or transferred by any other means whatsoever, the Grantor or Permittee shall immediately notify the Corps in writing. This Conservation Easement shall not be invalid solely because aquatic resources within the Conservation Area are determined not to be waters of the United States or waters of the State.

**4.** **Notice to Government.** Any permit application, or request for certification or modification, which may affect the Conservation Area, made to any governmental entity with authority over wetlands or other waters of the United States and/or waters of the State, shall expressly reference and include a copy (with the recording stamp) of this Conservation Easement.

**5.** **Reserved Rights.** It is expressly understood and agreed that this easement does not grant or convey to members of the general public any rights of ownership, entry, or use of the Conservation Area. This easement is created solely for the protection of the Property, and for the consideration and values set forth above, and Grantor*(s)* reserve*(s)* the ownership of the fee simple estate and all rights appertaining thereto, including without limitation the rights to exclude others and to use the property for all purposes not inconsistent with this Conservation Easement.

**6.** **Monitoring and Maintenance.** The Holder, Permittee, Long-Term Steward (as defined in the Mitigation Plan),and their authorized agents shall have the right to enter and go upon the lands of Grantor*(s)* to monitor and manage the Conservation Area to ensure compliance with the Mitigation Plan and Long-Term Management Plan approved in the Permits and Mitigation Plan. This may include, but is not limited to, completing annual monitoring, controlling invasive species, planting native vegetation, repairing signs/fences, and repairing erosion.

**7.** **Compliance Inspections.** The Holder, Permittee, Long-Term Steward, Corps, MDE and its/their authorized agents shall have the right to enter and go upon the lands of Grantor*(s)*, to inspect the Conservation Area and take actions necessary to verify compliance with the Permits, Mitigation Plan, the Long-Term Management Plan, and this Conservation Easement.

**8.** **Enforcement.** The Grantor*(s)* grant*(s)* to the Holder, Permittee, Corps, the U.S. Department of Justice, and MDE, a discretionary right to enforce this Conservation Easement in a judicial action against any person*(s)* or other entity(ies) violating or attempting to violate this Conservation Easement; provided, however, that no violation of this Conservation Easement shall result in a forfeiture or reversion of title. In any enforcement action, an enforcing entity shall be entitled to a complete restoration for any violation, as well as any other judicial remedy, such as civil penalties. Nothing herein shall limit the right of the Corps and MDE to modify, suspend, or revoke the Permits.

**9.** **Property Transfers.** Grantor*(s)* shall include the following notice on all deeds, mortgages, plats, or any other legal instruments used to convey any interest in the Property and/or Conservation Area (failure to comply with this paragraph does not impair the validity or enforceability of this Conservation Easement):

 **NOTICE:** This property Subject to Conservation Easement Recorded at **[insert book and page references, county(ies), and date of recording]**.

Grantor(s) agree(s) to give written notice to the Corps and MDE of the intent to transfer, sell, or convey any interest of the Property, or to amend this Conservation Easement by any other means whatsoever, at least sixty (60) days prior to the date of transfer.

**10. Marking of Property.** The perimeter of the Conservation Area shall at all times be plainly marked by permanent signs saying, “Protected Natural Area,” or by an equivalent, permanent marking system.

***[Note: The Grantor OR Permittee must identify all encumbrances (i.e., mortgages, liens, easements, rights of way, leases, etc.), that may affect the Conservation Area and show these encumbrances on exhibit B to this easement. If any encumbrance affects the conservation area, then some version of the following clause should be included, and the holder of that interest must sign, subordinating its interest to this conservation easement. if the following clause is inapplicable, include paragraph 11 and state, “intentionally omitted.”]***

**11. Consent of Lender and Trustee.** Grantor*(s)* is/are the maker*(s)* of a note dated \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ secured by a deed of trust dated \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from the Grantor*(s)* to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_as trustees and either of whom may act, recorded in the Clerk’s office in Deed Book \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_at page \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, for the benefit of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Bank (The “Deed of Trust.”). \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, as trustees, join herein for the sole purpose of subordinating the lien, dignity, and priority of the Deed of Trust to this Conservation Easement. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Bank joins herein for the sole purpose of consenting to the trustee’s actions.

**12.** **Recording.** Within thirty (30) calendar days of execution of this Conservation Easement, the Grantor*(s)* and Holder agree(s) to record this Conservation Easement in the Land Records of the County and provide the Third Parties with proof of recordation within thirty (30) calendar days of recordation. A plat depicting the boundaries of the Conservation Area subject to this Conservation Easement shall be recorded in the deed records office for each county in which the Property is situated prior to or concurrent with the recording of this Conservation Easement. The plat*(s)* is/are recorded at ***[include book and page references, county(ies), and date]***.

**13.** **Separability Provision.** Should any separable part of this Conservation Easement be held contrary to law, the remainder shall continue in full force and effect.

**14.** **Inaccurate or Fraudulent Information.** Should an easement, right or lease on or to the Property not shown on the survey or listed in this Conservation Easement and prior in time and recording to this Conservation Easement, or unrecorded, be exercised in such a manner that it conflicts with or voids the prohibited uses of the Property set out in this Conservation Easement, then the Grantor(s) shall be responsible for providing alternative compensatory mitigation in such amounts and of such service and function as the Corps and MDE or any enforcer of this Conservation Easement shall determine in accordance with the Clean Water Act and/or the Maryland Nontidal Wetlands Act.

**15.** **Eminent Domain.** NOTICE TO PARTIES WITH EMINENT DOMAIN AUTHORITY: If the Property is taken in whole or in part through eminent domain, the consequential value of the Conservation Area protected by the Clean Water Act and/or the Maryland Nontidal Wetlands Act is the cost of replacement of the conservation functions, services, and values with other property in the same watershed. Exercise of eminent domain by any party (“Condemning Party”) to take land held as part of a mitigation site under this [Easement/Declaration] may remove restrictions that the Grantor, Grantee, Holder, the Corps or MDE intend will protect, in perpetuity, the Conservation Area, and preserve the land serving as compensation of other permitted impacts. Where the Condemning Party: (1) intends to take action(s) that will have impacts on the Conservation Area associated with debited mitigation credits, and (2) is required to obtain a Corps or MDE permit for such impacts, the Corps and MDE have discretion to increase the Condemning Party’s wetland and/or stream compensation requirements, as part of the permitting process, in order to account for the loss of functions and values associated with the credits already debited and/or released from the mitigation site.

**16. Merger.** The doctrine of merger shall not operate to extinguish this Conservation Easement if the Conservation Easement and the Property become vested in the same party. If the doctrine of merger applies to extinguish the Conservation Easement, then, unless Grantor, Holder, the Corps, and MDE otherwise agree in writing, a replacement conservation easement or restrictive covenant containing the same protections embodied in the conservation easement shall be recorded against the Conservation Area. The Grantor may suggest a new conservation easement holder and upon approval by the Corps and MDE, grant a conservation easement protecting the Conservation Area.

 **IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, the Grantor*(s) and Holder has/have* duly executed this Conservation Easement the date written above.

**IN THE PRESENCE OF:**  Grantor*(s)*

*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*  By: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

[*type name of witness under signature line*] [*type name of Grantor(s) under signature line*]

  *Its:*

**STATE OF MARYLAND**

**COUNTY OF \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

 **PERSONALLY** appeared before me \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the undersigned witness, and made oath that *he/she* saw the within named \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ [, *by* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, *its* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,] sign, seal and as *his/her/its* act and deed, deliver the within named Conservation Easement; and that *he/she* with the other witness named above witnessed the execution thereof.

 **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

[*type name of Notary Public under signature line*]

**SWORN to and subscribed before me**

**This \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_day of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_.**

**NOTARY PUBLIC FOR**

**My Commission Expires:**

**IN THE PRESENCE OF: Holder**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ By: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

[*type name of witness under signature line*] [*type name of Holder under signature line*]

 *Its:*

**STATE OF MARYLAND**

**COUNTY OF**

 **PERSONALLY** appeared before me \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the undersigned witness, and made oath that *he/she* saw the within named \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_[, *by* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, *its* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,] sign, seal and as *his/her/its* act and deed, deliver the within named Conservation Easement; and that *he/she* with the other witness named above witnessed the execution thereof.

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 [*type name of Notary Public under signature line*]

**SWORN to and subscribed before me**

**This \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_day of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_.**

**NOTARY PUBLIC FOR**

**My Commission Expires:**

**[*IF PREPARED BY AN ATTORNEY, THE FOLLOWING CERTIFICATION IS REQUIRED]:***

I hereby certify this conservation easement was prepared by or under the supervision of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, an attorney admitted to practice by the Court of Appeals of Maryland.

**[*IF SELF-CERTIFIED BY THE PARTIES TO THIS INSTRUMENT, THE FOLLOWING CERTIFICATION IS REQUIRED]:***

I hereby certify this conservation easement was prepared by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, a party to this instrument.