

“Save the Bay”— The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation, with over 85,000 members from all fifty of the United States and around the world, is the world’s largest non-governmental organization dedicated to the health of a single waterbody. For more than 25 years, the Foundation has been dedicated to the preservation and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and its resources. At present, CBF has offices in Annapolis, Maryland; Richmond, Virginia; and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; CBF operates programs in Environmental Education, Environmental Defense, and Land Management.

This paper will discuss the methods used by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to achieve its goals, and the strengths and weaknesses of each of them, using specific examples to illustrate where appropriate. We believe that the methods used by CBF are similar to those that are being used, or could be used, by NGOs in other parts of the country and the world. Lessons learned by CBF about what works and what doesn’t will also be discussed. Finally, we will discuss our perspective on the appropriate role of NGOs like CBF with respect to the general public, other interest groups, the academic community, and government itself, and the implications of that role for relationships among them.