



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Town of Bel Air, Maryland**

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#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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#### **Nature-Based Play Area Coming to Bel Air Will Make Outdoor Learning Fun**

*Rockfield Park's nature-based play area will promote natural play and environmental stewardship*

**Bel Air, Maryland** – The Town of Bel Air has been selected as a Building Better Communities grant recipient from the American Water Charitable Foundation and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). Bel Air is one of three communities awarded this grant in 2018. Maryland American Water, a subsidiary of American Water, is the water service provider to the town of Bel Air and parts of Harford County.

Community parks like Rockfield Park are vital to connecting children to nature. Nature-based play areas foster an appreciation for environmental stewardship, while providing opportunities for physical activity. Through the Building Better Communities grant program the Town of Bel Air will create Chesapeake Sensory Plaza - a unique 5,000 sf play space designed to represent the Chesapeake Bay watershed area. Manual hand pumps and water switches will start the flow of water into a 70 foot long channel traversing the length of the plaza. The channel will feature a variety of mill wheels, lock gates, flaps, forks and collecting areas to form a highly interactive play experience. Educational signage and illustrations will showcase the watershed's delicate ecosystem as well as highlight the importance of water conservation and environmental stewardship practices.

"We are excited to bring this unique educational play space to Bel Air", says Director of Planning, Kevin Small. "As a Sustainable Community, we value the opportunity to teach local families the importance of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed area."

"Maryland American Water has served the Bel Air community since the 1930s," said Barry Suits, president, Maryland American Water. "Our team has continued to become more engaged in creating a better Bel Air, and we look forward to volunteering at the Chesapeake Sensory Plaza site."

“This water-centric park improvement project will give residents of all ages the opportunity to enjoy, learn about and appreciate the environment and especially our critical natural resource, water, in a fun and engaging way,” said Laura Martin, president of the American Water Charitable Foundation. “We are proud to further American Water’s ongoing commitment to being good stewards of the environment and bettering the communities where our employees and our customers live, work and play through this grant program.”

“NRPA believes every person should have access to parks and recreation for health, conservation and social equity. That’s why we’re proud to present these communities with the Building Better Communities grant,” said Lori Robertson, NRPA director of conservation. “Ensuring children and families everywhere have the opportunity to engage in physical activity and explore the benefits of nature is essential to building healthier, stronger communities and creating the next generation of environmental stewards.”

For more information about the Building Better Communities program, visit <https://amwater.com/corp/customers-and-communities/american-water-charitable-foundation/signature-program>.

**The National Recreation and Park Association** is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to ensuring that all Americans have access to parks and recreation for health, conservation and social equity. Through its network of 60,000 recreation and park professionals and advocates, NRPA encourages the promotion of healthy and active lifestyles, conservation initiatives and equitable access to parks and public space. For more information, visit [www.nrpa.org](http://www.nrpa.org). For digital access to NRPA’s flagship publication, *Parks & Recreation*, visit [www.parksandrecreation.org](http://www.parksandrecreation.org).

**The American Water Charitable Foundation** was established in 2010 with a founding contribution from American Water, the American Water Charitable Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that provides a formal way to demonstrate the company’s ongoing commitment to being a good neighbor, citizen, and contributor to the communities where American Water and its employees live, work and operate. The Foundation helps support American Water employee-identified nonprofit endeavors.

### **About American Water**

With a history dating back to 1886, American Water is the largest and most geographically diverse U.S. publicly traded water and wastewater utility company. The company employs more than 7,100 dedicated professionals who provide regulated and market-based drinking water, wastewater and other related services to an estimated 14 million people in 45 states and Ontario, Canada. American Water provides safe, clean, affordable and reliable water services to our customers to make sure we keep their lives flowing. For more information, visit [amwater.com](http://amwater.com) and follow American Water on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

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