

**\*\*\* NEWS RELEASE \*\*\***

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## **3D VIRTUAL INTERNET TOURS SHOWCASE WATERSHED PROTECTION EFFORTS**

**Web site uses top-shelf panoramic photography and  
digital video to highlight wetland and habitat restoration**

ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA – Today, in the space of a just a few moments, citizens can view the rushing whitewater of Great Falls near Washington, D.C., look out over the Shenandoah Valley from a mountain overlook in Virginia, and witness the serene landscape of Antietam National Battlefield in Maryland. The Potomac Watershed Partnership (PWP) has created a unique Interactive Watershed web site — [www.potomacwatershed.net](http://www.potomacwatershed.net) — that showcases watershed restoration efforts. Using innovative 360-degree panoramic photography and digital video, the web site invites users to learn about ongoing watershed restoration activities in an engaging and interactive way.

Virtual 3D tours of many watershed areas are made possible with the use of 360-degree panoramas, which are accompanied by explanatory text outlining the restoration activities taking place there. In addition, digital terrain maps give users the choice of many sub-watershed areas, including views that span great distances or examine riverside microenvironments. Users can move the 360-degree panoramic views side to side and up and down to find additional active hyperlinks to descriptive text, photographs, and high quality audio-video sequences of people talking about watershed resource issues.

The primary watershed areas covered in the web site at this time are the Shenandoah in Virginia, the Monocacy River and Antietam Creek in Maryland and Pennsylvania, and the Potomac River near Washington D.C. Restoration activities include efforts to improve water quality, restore upland and riparian vegetation and wetlands, and rehabilitate fish and wildlife habitats. This Interactive Watershed web site also features a Watershed Community Center, in which watershed groups and interested individuals can engage in real-time interaction about ongoing restoration work.

The PWP web site project is just part of a larger "Interactive Watersheds" project. Across the United States, four additional watersheds are also producing similar virtual tours of their watersheds. A portal web site for these other watershed efforts can be found at [www.interactivewatersheds.net](http://www.interactivewatersheds.net).

"I do not believe there is anything on the Internet that compares to the high quality content these community watershed groups are providing—with detailed interactive terrain maps, immersive 360-degree interactive panoramas, text, images, and audio-video hot spots—to tell stories about natural resource issues," says Gary Grimm with Mountain Visions, the Boise, Idaho-based multimedia production company that designed and produced the Interactive Watersheds web sites.

Beginning in the fall of 2000, funds for the Potomac Watershed Partnership's Interactive Watershed web site project have been provided by the Potomac Conservancy, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, and by a grant to the National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

The Potomac Watershed Partnership is a large-scale restoration and stewardship project dedicated to restoring the health of the land and waters of the Potomac River Basin. In addition to hundreds of local organizations and citizens, PWP brings together the strengths of six primary organizations - the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, the Potomac Conservancy, the Virginia Department of Forestry, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) - Forest Service, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, and Ducks Unlimited.