

Kristen Fleming

Division Director Chesapeake, Coastal & Climate Policy

By Katherine Stanford

Born and raised in Hyattsville, it's no surprise that this Maryland native chose to pursue a career with DNR to preserve the beauty of her home state. In fact, Kristen's appreciation of Maryland waters eventually led her to her current position as the Division Director of Chesapeake, Coastal & Climate Policy.

Kristen attended the University of Maryland for her undergraduate studies, receiving a degree in Psychology. After spending a few years working for Lockheed Martin in Human Resources, she decided to change focus, leaving the private sector to join DNR.

Although Kristen was not experienced in the environmental field, she was able to apply her project management skills and offer seasonal help to DNR's tributary team, where she coordinated strategies for the Upper Potomac River Basin.

After her one-year contract was up, she was pleasantly surprised when offered a full-time position. Fifteen years later, Kristen is an integral part of the CCS team.

CCS, a partnership among local, regional and State agencies, collaborates with many private organizations, such as land trusts and economic development groups. Although Kristen has typically managed administrative and financial tasks for the past several years, she recently switched her focus to concentrate more on policy and legislative duties. In fact, the majority of Kristen's work is policy-related — supporting executive staff on relevant Chesapeake Bay issues — which means there is no predicting when something new will crop up and she will need to drop everything to address it.

Kristen is also the point person for *BayStat*, the State program that advances accountability and coordination among key government agencies in improving the health of the Bay.

She liaises with other agencies to make sure everyone is contributing, data is accurate and that Maryland is on track to achieve designated goals. She is in charge of overseeing the management strategies for the new Bay Agreement as well.

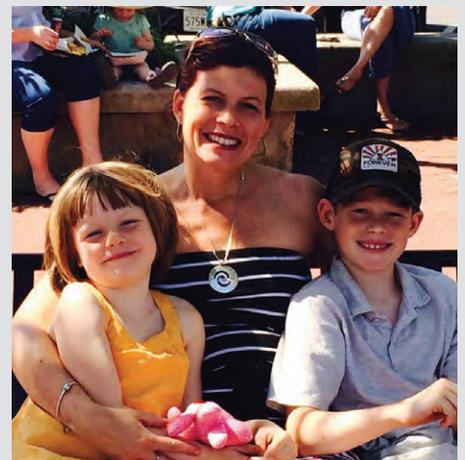
"While we have the Agreement goals and the end results laid out, each state must develop tactical plans on how exactly we are going to achieve those goals and submit them to the Chesapeake Bay Program by June of 2015," explains Kristen.

When asked how exactly CCS works, Kristen reveals that they view themselves as problem solvers.

For example, the Arundel on the Bay community in Annapolis just underwent a major renovation involving shoreline restoration to control flooding and stormwater issues. In this case, as with many others, a community association and a watershed group partnered with CCS to solve the problem in a practical and sustainable way while creating a nice aesthetic.

Kristen's favorite part about her position is that it is ever-changing and dynamic. She finds the challenge important, but also enjoys the satisfaction when the hard work of a completed multi-year project finally pays off.

The job forces her to be focused and sharp — skills that are just as useful outside the office, especially when that means keeping up with two young kids.



Free time is scarce for the Fleming family, but they love to spend time outdoors as often as possible. When winter rolls around, various indoor sports, from the hockey rink to the gymnastics mat, keep them all plenty busy and active.

As a strong team player, Kristen is not only there for her family, but also her unit, where she has had tremendous success. It will be exciting to see what the next fifteen years have in store for her here. ■

Katherine Stanford was a summer intern with DNR's Office of Communications.