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**NOAA CHIEF LEADS VOLUNTEERS IN RESTORING
FORT MCHENRY WETLAND ON SATURDAY**

Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, USN (ret.), director of the nation's top science agency for oceans and the atmosphere, will lead 80 volunteers from NOAA, the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in the annual tidal wetland restoration at historic Fort McHenry in Baltimore's inner harbor on Saturday, April 12. This is the fourth consecutive year that NOAA employees have helped in the restoration project.

Created in 1985, and managed by the National Aquarium in Baltimore, the 10-acre Fort McHenry wetland is a highly visible site and serves as a living exhibit of habitat restoration efforts in the Chesapeake Bay. It is one of the few tidal wetlands in Baltimore harbor, and provides a unique opportunity to study how a man-made wetland functions over time and, it is used to educate and connect city dwellers to stewardship of their environment.

"The Chesapeake Bay is in NOAA's backyard," said Vice Admiral Lautenbacher, NOAA Administrator. "NOAA as a family is committed to getting volunteers working in the community to help conserve and restore valuable habitats like this local wetland. It's been a pleasure working with Aquarium staff these past three years and seeing the fruits of our labor realized."

The wetland restoration event is a partnership between the NOAA Restoration Center in NOAA Fisheries and the National Aquarium in Baltimore.

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Fort McHenry, a late 18th century star-shaped fort, is world famous as the birthplace of the United States' national anthem. The guardian of Baltimore's harbor, it was the valiant defense of Fort McHenry by American forces during a British attack on September 13-14, 1814, that inspired Francis Scott Key to write *The Star Spangled Banner*.

The Fort became an area administered by the National Park Service in 1933, two years after Key's poem became this country's national anthem. Of all the areas in the National Park System, Fort McHenry is the only one designated a national monument and historic shrine.

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources through scientific research, management, enforcement, and the conservation of marine mammals and other protected marine species and their habitat.

The Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

EDITOR'S NOTE: NOAA employees, family members and some friends will gather at the Fort McHenry site at 8:45 a.m. and embark upon day-long activities of removing and cataloguing debris from the wetland, and transplanting trees. Among those spending Saturday volunteering their services are Rebecca Lent, Deputy Assistant Administrator for NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service. Jennifer Koss of NOAA Fisheries will be on site to assist media.

On the Internet:

NOAA - <http://www.noaa.gov>.

NOAA Fisheries - <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>.

NOAA Restoration Center - <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/>

Fort McHenry Wetlands - <http://www.nps.gov/fomc/index.htm>.