

## Chestertown Planner Elizabeth Watson Named to Prestigious Planning College of Fellows

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**CHICAGO** – Elizabeth Watson of Chestertown, MD, has achieved the planning profession’s highest honor by being named to the prestigious American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) College of Fellows for her outstanding achievements in urban and regional planning. Watson is the only planner from Maryland to be named FAICP this year. A lifelong innovator working to enhance rural communities and landscapes, Watson has devoted her career to educating non-planner stakeholders about the benefits of protecting heritage assets and to reinforcing communities’ capacity for effective action.

Fellowship is granted to planners who have achieved certification through the American Planning Association’s professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners, and have achieved excellence in professional practice, teaching and mentoring, research, public and community service, and leadership. Invitations to join the College of Fellows come after a thorough nomination and review process, ensuring the candidate has had a positive, long-lasting impact on the planning profession.

“Individuals who make up the College of Fellows are the true leaders of the planning profession,” said past AICP President Valerie Hubbard, FAICP. “These individuals have made lasting contributions to the profession and have inspired generations of new planners. They are truly awe-inspiring.”

Watson co-authored *Saving America's Countryside*, an award-winning guidebook and textbook published by Johns Hopkins University Press for the National Trust for Historic Preservation that inspired a generation of practitioners. Her work preceding that publication in a pilot community, Oley Township, PA, included the groundbreaking listing of 25 square miles (the entire jurisdiction) in the National Register of Historic Places.

She also wrote and co-produced the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's award-winning film, *Chesapeake: Living Off the Land*, used statewide in environmental education classes, about the impacts of land development on the bay's water quality. The film was produced by Walkabout Productions of Annapolis.

One of Watson's greatest achievements in celebrating American landscapes was leading the early movement to establish a system of National Heritage Areas. Today, Congress has recognized 49 of these unique American regions, whose federal support is managed by the National Park Service. This leadership arose from her experience of planning for the nation's third National Heritage Area, the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor in eastern Pennsylvania. She completed management plans for the D&L twice, in 1993 and 2014, the first with Mary Means & Associates of Silver Spring, MD. From that first D&L plan, she and her partners at Heritage Strategies went on to create National Heritage Area plans for the Shenandoah Valley, northeastern Iowa, Abraham Lincoln territory in Illinois, the Erie Canal, Colorado's Sangre de Cristo Mountains, Niagara Falls, and Revolutionary War landscapes in New Jersey, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. Watson founded Heritage Strategies, LLC, in 2009 with her partner Peter C. Benton of Birchrunville, PA. Heritage Strategies has a national practice in planning for heritage development and historic preservation and special-project strategic planning.

From 2002-2009, Watson was the founding executive director of the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area, a Maryland-certified heritage area serving Caroline, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot Counties.

In other Maryland experience, prior to her work with Stories, she participated in planning for all other Maryland heritage areas serving the Eastern Shore – Lower Eastern Shore, Heart of the

Chesapeake, and Susquehanna Greenway. She also planned the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (now known as Maryland Milestones), and participated in the first plan for Maryland's National Road (a national scenic byway), created by Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects of Alexandria, VA. She recently completed plans for the Potomac River area of Prince George's County and for Southern Maryland combining interpretive themes for the Star-Spangled Banner and Potomac River National Historic Trails and the Religious Freedom National Scenic Byway.

Early in her consulting career, for the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, Watson authored the successful nomination of the Potomac River as one of the nation's eleven American Heritage Rivers. Prior to becoming a consultant, she worked for the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources as special assistant to the secretary, the Land Trust Alliance, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Watson studied as a Loeb Fellow in Advanced Environmental Design at Harvard University in 1993-94 and in 2017 was named by Wake Forest University as a Distinguished Alumna. Her master's degree in regional planning is from Penn State and included study at the Preservation Institute on Nantucket, a program of the University of Florida.

Watson is one of 64 inductees into this year's College of Fellows. Inductions are done biennially. This year's formal induction will take place during APA's National Planning Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, on Sunday, April 22.

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