



## CALVERT NATURE SOCIETY

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### **P R E S S   R E L E A S E — For immediate release**

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### ***Unique Habitat Protected; Historic Barn Preserved*** **Local Group Acquires 100+ Acres Next to Battle Creek Cypress Swamp**

**Prince Frederick, MD** – Calvert Nature Society recently acquired more than 100 wooded acres, fields and wetlands, further protecting one of Calvert County’s unique natural habitats. The purchase of the property on Sixes Road effectively doubles the protected area around Battle Creek Cypress Swamp, one of the northernmost stands of bald cypress trees in the country.

Noteworthy features of the 107-acre farm include a century-old farmhouse and an historic tobacco barn built from locally harvested and milled cypress logs. The barn dates from the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century and documents local and national construction techniques of that era.



*The Cypress Log Barn dates from the end of the 19th Century*

The \$435,000 acquisition was made possible with an \$80,000 grant from the Maryland Heritage Area Authorities and a \$348,000 bridge loan from The Conservation Fund, which gives the Society time to fundraise for this time-sensitive project.

The property will be called Keim Forest, after its former owner, the Keim Family. Daniel Keim was an environmentalist who recognized the uniqueness of the Battle Creek Cypress Swamp and purchased swampland and neighboring farm in the 1930s, with the intent to protect it. Daniel sold a portion of his property to the Nature’s Conservancy so it would be protected. His son Shewell D. (Bud) Keim (1918-2014) inherited the farm and grew tobacco on it until he was drafted into the U.S. Army during the WWII era. Shewell Keim did everything he could to protect and preserve the property. “Both father and son would be delighted that the property has been sold to the Calvert Nature Society,” said Carol Crane, Shewell Keim’s stepdaughter.

## Connecting Land and People

This property is a key acquisition for Calvert Nature Society. It offers a new location for outdoor recreation such as hiking, fishing, and nature study by providing public access to the Bald Cypress swamp, a farm pond suitable for fishing, and upland forest trails.

“This property has important natural and cultural resources,” said Executive Director Anne Sundermann. “We will be walking the land this winter, developing a trail system around the property and connecting to the Cypress Swamp trails.”

Working closely with partners, including Maryland Heritage Areas Program and The Conservation Fund, the Society was able to preserve a large tract of woodland with cultural significance, as well as protect the sensitive Cypress Swamp area from future logging activity. “We are grateful to the Maryland Heritage Areas Program and The Conservation Fund, who saw the value of this project and financially supported our acquisition,” said John H. Jones, Society President.

“The Maryland Heritage Areas Program encourages economic development through heritage tourism,” stated Assistant Administrator Jennifer Ruffner. “With the acquisition of this property, Calvert Nature Society will provide visitors and residents alike with opportunities to experience this special place, and to discover the authentic heritage of Maryland.”

“The protection of the Keim forest not only provides important buffer to the Cypress Swamp, it also offers opportunity to create a green corridor for wildlife in central part the county,” said Reggie Hall, Director of The Conservation Fund’s Land Conservation Loans program. “We are honored to assist in this conservation effort by providing timely bridge financing and technical assistance.”

## Protecting a Rare Habitat

The Battle Creek area has long been treasured by visitors and residents. A 1956 report by Romeo Mansueti and G. Flippo Gravatt notes “In Calvert County, where Battle Creek swamp is located, cypress has been used for tobacco barns, ship building and many other purposes....” The report further states: “Battle Creek Cypress swamp as great scientific and aesthetic value.”

The Nature Conservancy purchased 100 acres of the Cypress Swamp in 1957— its first land project in Maryland. The Cypress Swamp was recognized as a National Natural Landmark in 1965 and is also designated a Wetland of Special State Concern. The Nature Conservancy land is now a Sanctuary run by the Calvert County Division of Natural Resources. “This acquisition promotes the goals in the County’s Comprehensive plan to protect ecologically significant sites.” said Karyn Molines, Division Chief. “Through our partnership with the Society, Keim Forest will be a buffer to further protect the unique bald cypress swamp.”

This section of Battle Creek is dominated by the bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), but is also home to native trees, vines, shrubs, and plant species. The swamp is home to two rare and endangered species, the red



*The Keim Forest property will allow easier access to a champion bald cypress (hugged here by Naturalist Tania Gale).*

turtlehead (*Chelone oblique*) and the longbeaked arrowhead (*Sagittaria longirostra*).

With its feathery branches and signature “knees,” the bald cypress forest provides critical habitat for many animal species, including barred owl, pileated woodpecker, and many woodland mammals. The Cypress Swamp also provides freshwater fish habitats for a variety of fish turtles, frogs, snakes, and salamanders. The Keim Forest property will allow easier access to a champion bald cypress.

***About Calvert Nature Society***

Calvert Nature Society is dedicated to the protection and preservation of Calvert County’s natural heritage and the creation of an environmentally literate and aware community. We provide opportunities for appreciation and understanding of our natural world through our outreach initiatives and in support of the mission of the Calvert County Natural Resources Division. Visit the Society at [www.calvertparks.org](http://www.calvertparks.org).

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