

March 4, 2019



The Honorable Sanford Bishop, Jr., Chairman  
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration  
and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
2362-A Rayburn House Office Building  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry, Ranking Minority Member  
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration  
and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Fortenberry:

The undersigned members of the Choose Clean Water Coalition request continued support for clean water in the Chesapeake Bay watershed through fully funding the conservation programs of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill). There are 83,000 farms in the six-state Chesapeake region and they are critical to the economy - responsible for more than \$10 billion of agricultural production each year. After forests, agriculture is the largest land use in the watershed.

The 2018 Farm Bill, which we strongly supported, should, if fully implemented and funded, ensure that well run, responsible farms in the Chesapeake region remain economically viable. The Conservation Title of the 2018 Farm Bill is also critical to maintain and restore clean water to the rivers and streams throughout the Chesapeake region, and for the Bay itself. These programs are essential for regulated agricultural operations to meet federal requirements under the Clean Water Act and help farmers meet state regulations that address both farm health and water quality.

We urge you to maintain full funding for mandatory agricultural conservation programs in Fiscal Year 2020. The 2018 Farm Bill made a number of improvements to key programs, and should accelerate our path toward clean water in our region, but only if these conservation programs are funded as Congress intended. With the support of much of the conservation community and clean water advocates, the 2018 Farm Bill maintained level funding for the Conservation Title.

Two-thirds of the 18 million people in the Chesapeake region get the water they drink directly from the rivers and streams that flow through the cities, towns and farms throughout our six state, 64,000 square mile watershed. Protecting and restoring clean water is essential for human health and for a robust regional economy. Much of the work and funding necessary to achieve and maintain clean and healthy water in this region would be accomplished through the Farm Bill's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). We urge you to provide full funding, \$300 million for the RCPP. The Chesapeake Bay Watershed is one of eight Critical Conservation Areas under the RCPP, and this program is vital for

our region's farms and waterways.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is also a key conservation program for our region's farmers, and we urge you to provide full funding for FY20 at \$1.75 billion. Historically, EQIP has been the primary financial assistance program for conservation in the Chesapeake Bay region.

All six Chesapeake Bay watershed states have participated in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), and this program is the key to restoring riparian buffers that are critical for water quality and wildlife habitat. The 2018 Farm Bill codified CREP and we urge you to ensure that the U.S. Department of Agriculture fully enrolls CREP acres based on the new provisions in the 2018 Farm Bill.

In order to follow a common sense path to maintain economically viable well run farms and to have healthy local water and a restored Chesapeake Bay, which is critical for our regional economy, we request full funding for all conservation programs in the Farm Bill for Fiscal Year 2020.

Thank you for your consideration on this very important request to maintain funding for these programs which are critical to both our agricultural community and for clean water throughout the mid-Atlantic region. Please contact Peter J. Marx at 410-905-2515 or [peter@choosecleanwater.org](mailto:peter@choosecleanwater.org) with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Action Together Northeastern Pennsylvania  
Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay  
Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley  
American Chestnut Land Trust  
American Rivers  
Anacostia Riverkeeper  
Anacostia Watershed Society  
Annapolis Green  
Arundel Rivers Federation  
Audubon Maryland/DC  
Audubon Naturalist Society  
Audubon Society of Northern Virginia  
Back Creek Conservancy  
Baltimore Tree Trust  
Blue Heron Environmental Network  
Blue Ridge Watershed Coalition  
Blue Water Baltimore  
Butternut Valley Alliance  
Cacapon Institute  
Capital Region Land Conservancy  
Catskill Mountainkeeper  
Center for Progressive Reform  
Chapman Forest Foundation  
Chemung River Friends  
Chesapeake Bay Foundation  
Chesapeake Climate Action Network  
Chesapeake Conservancy  
Chesapeake Legal Alliance

Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage  
Clean Fairfax  
Clean Water Action  
Clean Water Liganore  
Coalition for Smarter Growth  
Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania  
DC Environmental Network  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Delaware Nature Society  
Ducks Unlimited  
Earth Conservation Corps  
Earthworks  
Earth Forum of Howard County  
Eastern Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned  
Mine Reclamation  
Eastern Shore Land Conservancy  
Elizabeth River Project  
Environmental Integrity Project  
Environmental Justice Center of Chestnut Hill  
United Church  
Environmental Working Group  
Experience Learning  
Float Fishermen of Virginia  
Friends of Accotink Creek  
Friends of Frederick County  
Friends of Herring Run Park  
Friends of Little Hunting Creek  
Friends of Lower Beaverdam Creek

Friends of Quincy Run  
 Friends of Sligo Creek  
 Friends of the Bohemia  
 Friends of the Cacapon River  
 Friends of Dyke Marsh  
 Friends of the Middle River  
 Friends of the Nanticoke River  
 Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River  
 Friends of the Rappahannock  
 Friends of St. Clements Bay  
 Goose Creek Association  
 Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake  
 James River Association  
 Lackawanna River Conservation Association  
 Lancaster Farmland Trust  
 Little Falls Watershed Alliance  
 Lower Shore Land Trust  
 Lower Susquehanna Riverkeeper  
 Lynnhaven River NOW  
 Maryland Conservation Council  
 Maryland Environmental Health Network  
 Maryland League of Conservation Voters  
 Maryland Native Plant Society  
 Maryland Nonprofits  
 Maryland Science Center  
 Mattawoman Watershed Society  
 Mid-Atlantic Council Trout Unlimited  
 Middle Susquehanna Riverkeeper  
 Muddy Branch Alliance  
 National Aquarium  
 National Parks Conservation Association  
 National Wildlife Federation  
 Natural Resources Defense Council  
 Nature Abounds  
 NeighborSpace of Baltimore County  
 New York League of Conservation Voters  
 New York State Council of Trout Unlimited  
 Neighbors of the Northwest Branch  
 Otsego County Conservation Association  
 Otsego Land Trust  
 Partnership for Smarter Growth  
 Patapsco Heritage Greenway  
 Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust  
 PennEnvironment  
 PennFuture

Pennsylvania Council of Churches  
 Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited  
 Piedmont Environmental Council  
 Potomac Conservancy  
 Potomac Riverkeeper  
 Potomac Riverkeeper Network  
 Potomac Valley Audubon Society  
 Queen Anne's Conservation Association  
 Preservation Maryland  
 Rachel Carson Council  
 Restore America's Estuaries  
 Rappahannock League for Environmental Protection  
 Richmond Audubon Society  
 Rivanna Conservation Alliance  
 St. Mary's River Watershed Association  
 Savage River Watershed Association  
 Severn River Association  
 Shenandoah Riverkeeper Shenandoah Valley Network  
 ShoreRivers  
 Sidney Center Improvement Group  
 Sierra Club – Maryland Chapter  
 Sleepy Creek Watershed Association  
 Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project  
 Southern Maryland Audubon Society  
 SouthWings  
 Susquehanna Heritage  
 Talbot Preservation Alliance  
 The Downstream Project  
 Transition Howard County  
 Trout Unlimited  
 Upper Potomac Riverkeeper  
 Virginia Association of Biological Farming  
 Virginia Conservation Network  
 Virginia League of Conservation Voters  
 Warm Springs Watershed Association  
 Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore, Inc.  
 Waterkeepers Chesapeake  
 West Virginia Citizen Action Group  
 West Virginia Environmental Council  
 West Virginia Highlands Conservancy  
 West Virginia Rivers Coalition  
 Wetlands Watch  
 Wicomico Environmental Trust