

March 4, 2019



The Honorable Betty McCollum, Chair  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies  
2007 Rayburn House Office Building  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Joyce, Ranking Minority Member  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair McCollum and Ranking Member Joyce:

The undersigned members of the Choose Clean Water Coalition request continued support for programs that are essential to maintaining and restoring clean water to the rivers and streams throughout the Chesapeake Bay region and to the Bay itself. Two-thirds of the 18 million people in this 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.

Over the past decade the states and the federal government have cooperated jointly and committed to a massive restoration program in the Bay watershed to restore the Bay and its tributaries by 2025. None of these goals can be met without the leadership, guidance, science and funding support provided by various Federal agencies. A lot of progress has been made, and as we enter the final few years approaching the 2025 deadlines, this is not the time to slow down the premier estuarine restoration effort in the world.

The efforts to clean the Chesapeake began under President Reagan in 1983. In his 1984 State of the Union speech President Reagan said, "Preservation of our environment is not a liberal or conservative challenge, it's common sense."

To follow a common sense path to maintain healthy local water and restore Chesapeake Bay, which is critical for our regional economy, we request funding for the following programs in Fiscal Year 2020:

### **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

#### **Chesapeake Bay Program -- \$90 million**

We request an increase in funding to \$90 million for the base budget of the Chesapeake Bay Program, which coordinates Chesapeake Bay watershed restoration and protection efforts. More than two-thirds of the program's funds are passed through to the states and local communities for

on-the-ground restoration work through the Small Watershed Grants, Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grants, State Implementation Grants, Chesapeake Bay Regulatory and Accountability Program grants and local government grants. This would be the first increase in funding for the Chesapeake in six years - since a very modest 4% increase in FY15. We are advocating for an additional \$17 million to go to the states, local governments and local entities to do on-the-ground restoration that will help the region move toward its clean up goals in 2025.

New data released by the Chesapeake Bay Program and confirmed by all of the states, indicates that there is an additional pollution load resulting from Conowingo Dam no longer trapping sediment and associated nutrient pollution. This “dynamic equilibrium” means that on average, an additional 6 million pounds of nitrogen and 260,000 pounds of phosphorus will now be entering the Bay every year. This was not the case in 2010 when the Chesapeake Bay total maximum daily load (TMDL) was established. All six Chesapeake Bay watershed states and the District of Columbia will have to make up for this added load by 2025, and increased funding will help to achieve this.

We strongly support the highly successful and popular Chesapeake Small Watershed Grants and the Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grants – and request \$9 million for each of these critical grant programs. These are two well-run, competitive grant programs that have contributed significantly to water quality improvements throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The demand for these grants far exceed the current funding levels by more than double. These grants go directly to on-the-ground restoration efforts by local governments and communities, including to family farms, and are critical to addressing the new increased pollution loadings from Conowingo Dam. Without specific Congressional direction, EPA has, in the past, reallocated this grant money for purposes other than local restoration. This is not the time to stop local implementation of restoration work. We recognize the high priority that Congress has placed on these two grant programs for years and support the effort to get more federal funds on the ground at the local level.

We urge you to fund the Chesapeake Bay Program at \$90 million in FY2020, and specify that \$9 million of that amount be provided for Small Watershed Grants (\$3 million more than in FY19) and \$9 million be provided for Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grants (\$3 million more than in FY19). We also support additional funding of \$5 million for Local Government Implementation Funding and \$6 million for priority watersheds to address the additional pollution reductions that must be met over the next six years, due to the Conowingo Dam.

#### Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) --\$5 billion

This program is critical to any national initiative to provide a Federal Infrastructure Spending Plan and it provides the lifeblood for the 1,779 local governments throughout the Chesapeake region to secure their water infrastructure. The funding level for the Clean Water SRF has eroded over the years as the clean water needs of local communities have increased dramatically. The Clean Water SRF is one of the funding components of the Clean Water Act to ensure that local governments have federal funding support for the Act’s mandates. The Choose Clean Water Coalition supports efforts in both the House and the Senate, and within the Administration, to enhance investments in key water infrastructure projects nationwide, and the Clean Water SRF is the single best mechanism to accomplish that goal. We support tripling the current funding for

the Clean Water SRF – and that is what we are requesting. This will help to close the gap between federal infrastructure investment in clean water and the known need. This will also dramatically improve water quality and protect human health in our region and across the nation.

These low interest loans are critical for clean water and for ratepayers in the Chesapeake region and nationwide. We urge you to support the \$5 billion funding level that would provide \$1.07 billion in low interest loans to local governments in Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia – three times the current level of funding. We also strongly support targeting 20 percent of the Clean Water SRF funds for green infrastructure and innovative projects including those to manage stormwater, which helps communities improve water quality while creating green space, mitigating flooding, and enhancing air quality. These funds should be accompanied by federal technical assistance to help states raise awareness of green infrastructure’s benefits and build demand for green projects.

The Clean Water SRF allocates money to the states based on a set formula, which is then used for low interest loans to local governments for critical capital construction improvement projects to reduce nutrient and sediment pollution from wastewater treatment and stormwater facilities; nonpoint sources of pollution, such as farms and development; and other sources. In addition to the use of these funds on farms and for nonpoint source pollution, it provides assistance for other pollution reduction and prevention activities in rural areas, such as reforestation, forest protection and stream stabilization and restoration. The Clean Water SRF enables local governments in the Chesapeake watershed to take actions to keep their rivers and streams clean. As the list of clean water infrastructure needs in the Chesapeake region continues to expand, we request that Congress triple the funding of the Clean Water SRF from FY19.

### **Department of the Interior**

#### **U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) -- Chesapeake Ecosystem Science and Monitoring** **-- \$12.85 million**

We support full funding for the USGS to continue to provide the critical science necessary for restoration and protection efforts for fish, wildlife and the 18 million people in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. USGS monitoring and assessment informs decisions made by the Department of the Interior as well as other federal and state partners in the Chesapeake Bay Program on issues related to fisheries and associated water quality, waterfowl and their habitats, and land protection.

In FY20, USGS, working with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), will put a new focus on habitat conditions for commercial and recreational fisheries. USGS will focus on habitat conditions in the Bay watershed and NOAA on tidal estuaries. This will help state and federal agencies develop a more comprehensive approach to restore and protect fisheries. The comprehensive approach will better tie together Chesapeake Bay Program efforts to: (1) reduce nutrient and sediment pollution under the Bay total maximum daily load (TMDL); (2) mitigate the effects of toxic contaminants; and (3) improve stream and estuary habitats important for fisheries.

USGS provides the expertise to restore and conserve coastal wetlands that are critical habitat for the more than one million waterfowl that winter in the Chesapeake region. USGS is building from studies on black ducks, to identify important coastal areas for other waterfowl, and assess how those habitats are being impacted from sea-level rise and development. The USGS will work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA, and Maryland and Virginia state governments to apply findings to conserve and restore coastal wetlands and associated habitats.

The USGS will be supplying land-change forecasts to inform land protection. The USGS is providing customized forecasts to the National Park Service and the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership (CCP) of where development may impact healthy watersheds and vital lands across the watershed. The CCP is working with states and local land trusts to focus land protection based on the forecasts.

Finally, the USGS is leading an effort to map areas where restoration and conservation efforts will contribute to multiple Chesapeake goals - benefiting people in the watershed as well as fish and wildlife. This mapping is being used by state and federal partners to more effectively focus actions and share available resources.

#### National Park Service -- Chesapeake Regional Programs -- \$3.891 million

The National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office has led efforts on a number of small, but very important programs that focus on increasing public access and the use of ecological, cultural and historic resources of the Chesapeake region. Expanding access and public awareness fosters stewardship and protection efforts.

We are requesting increased funding for the key program currently administered by the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office in the Chesapeake Bay watershed: Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Trails (\$3.0 million). Since authorized by Congress in 1998, the Gateways program has been the primary Federal program tool to provide and enhance access to public lands within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Gateways helps to preserve critical landscapes and natural resources in the region and has contributed over \$16 million in technical and financial assistance for more than 300 projects in the Bay watershed. We urge you to increase funding for the Gateways program from \$2.02 million in FY19 to \$3 million in FY20. In addition, we urge continued support for coordinating programs through the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office (\$495,000). In addition, as in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, we urge you to extend the authorization for the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Trails program, specifically for two more years.

We also support continued funding for the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail at \$396,000. We are, however, very concerned with the recent administrative transfer of this Historic Trail program from the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office to the Colonial National Historic Park in Virginia. The John Smith Trail was created by Congress in 2006 and the authorizing language is clear that the intent was for this program to be integrated into other efforts under the Chesapeake Bay Program, including the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Trails program, all of which is coordinated and administered by the Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office in Maryland. We urge Congress to reassert your intent that the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail be administered by the National Park Service

Chesapeake Bay Office in Annapolis, Maryland, as it has been since 2007.

**Department of the Interior/U.S. Department of Agriculture**

National Park Service/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service /U.S. Forest Service - Land and Water Conservation Fund Priority Projects in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed - \$16.7705 million

We strongly support full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. In particular, we support continuation of the strategic use of funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for priority projects in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. These efforts target conservation funds for critical priority landscapes throughout the Chesapeake Bay region. The following projects would protect more than 6,000 acres of nationally significant resources, such as migratory bird habitat, spawning areas for economically important fish and shellfish, significant forest resources and projects to enhance public access.

- U.S Fish and Wildlife Service- James River National Wildlife Refuge (VA) – \$750,000 (255 acres)
- U.S Fish and Wildlife Service – Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge (VA) - \$3 million (968 acres)
- U.S. Forest Service – George Washington and Jefferson National Forests (VA) - \$435,500 (144 acres)
- U.S. Forest Service – George Washington and Jefferson National Forests (VA) - \$4,285,000 (2,897 acres)
- National Park Service – Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail (VA) - \$5,000,000 (1,400 acres)
- National Park Service –Richmond National Battlefield Park (VA) - \$3,300,000 (380 acres)

Thank you for your consideration of these very important requests to maintain funding for these programs which are critical to clean water throughout the mid-Atlantic region. Please contact Peter J. Marx at 410-905-2515 or [peter@chooscleanwater.org](mailto:peter@chooscleanwater.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 Linganore  
Coalition for Smarter Growth  
Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania  
DC Environmental Network  
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 Environmental Law Center  
Southern Maryland Audubon Society  
SouthWings  
Susquehanna Heritage  
Talbot Preservation Alliance  
The Downstream Project  
Transition Howard County  
Trash Free Maryland  
Trout Unlimited  
Upper Potomac Riverkeeper

Upper Susquehanna Coalition  
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