



March 30, 2017

The Honorable Robert Aderholt, 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 Sanford Bishop, 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 Aderholt and Ranking Member Bishop:

The undersigned members of the Choose Clean Water Coalition request continued support for clean water in the Chesapeake Bay watershed through the Agricultural Act of 2014's (2014 Farm Bill's) conservation programs. There are 87,000 farms in the six-state Chesapeake region; those that are well run protect their water resources and add much to our landscape, environment and economy. We want to ensure that these responsible farms and farmers remain economically viable. Stopping cuts to these conservation programs is critical to maintain and restore clean water to the rivers and streams throughout the Chesapeake Bay region, and for the Bay itself. These programs are essential for regulated agricultural operations to meet federal regulations 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 2018. The 2014 Farm Bill set us on a new path toward clean water in our region, but only if key conservation programs are funded as Congress intended. With the support of much of the conservation community and clean water advocates, the 2014 Farm Bill eliminated nearly a dozen conservation programs (including the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative) and reduced mandatory funding overall to save American taxpayers approximately \$6 billion.

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 new Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). We urge you to provide full funding for mandatory conservation programs that are critical to maintaining a fully funded RCPP. In particular, we urge you to fund the Environmental Quality Incentives Program at \$1.65 billion to help willing producers implement conservation practices on their farms.

In May 2014, the Chesapeake Bay Watershed was designated as one of eight Critical Conservation Areas under the new RCPP. For the first four years of RCPP funding, the Chesapeake received \$43.18 million for projects all, or partially, in the Chesapeake Bay watershed – this is an average of \$10.8 million annually. This is a precipitous drop from the five years of funding from the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative where our region's producers received an average of \$47.6 million annually for conservation practices. This is a huge shortfall for conservation in our region and any further cuts to the RCPP will exacerbate this funding drop off. We urge you to maintain the

2014 Farm Bill's negotiated mandatory funding levels for all conservation programs, including the RCPP.

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 2018.

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 with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

1000 Friends of Maryland
Alice Ferguson Foundation
Alliance for Sustainable Communities
Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
Anacostia Watershed Society
Audubon Naturalist Society
Back Creek Conservancy
Blue Water Baltimore
Cacapon Institute
Capital Region Land Conservancy
Catskill Mountainkeeper
Cecil Land Use Association
Center for Progressive Reform
Chapman Forest Foundation
Chesapeake Legal Alliance
Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage
Chester River Association
Clean Water Action
Coalition for Smarter Growth
Conservation Montgomery
Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania
Delaware Nature Society
Ducks Unlimited
Earth Force
Earth Forum of Howard County
Eastern Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation
Eastern Shore Land Conservancy
EcoLatinos
Elizabeth River Project
Elk Creeks Watershed Association
Environment America
Environment Maryland
Environment New York
Environment Virginia
Environmental Working Group
Envision Frederick County
Friends of Accotink Creek
Friends of Dyke Marsh
Friends of Lower Beaverdam Creek
Friends of Quincy Run
Friends of the Middle River
Friends of the Nanticoke River

Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River
Friends of the Rappahannock
Goose Creek Association
Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake
Izaak Walton League of America
James River Association
Lackawanna River Conservation Association
Lancaster Farmland Trust
Little Falls Watershed Alliance
Lower Susquehanna Riverkeeper
Lynnhaven River NOW
Maryland Conservation Council
Maryland League of Conservation Voters
Mattawoman Watershed Society
Mehoopany Creek Watershed Association
Mid-Atlantic Council Trout Unlimited
Middle Susquehanna Riverkeeper
Montgomery Countryside Alliance
National Aquarium
National Parks Conservation Association
National Wildlife Federation
Nature Abounds
New York League of Conservation Voters
New York State Council of Trout Unlimited
Natural Resources Defense Council
Neighbors of the Northwest Branch
Otsego County Conservation Association
Otsego Land Trust
PennEnvironment
PennFuture
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Piedmont Environmental Council
Potomac Conservancy
Potomac Riverkeeper
Potomac Riverkeeper Network
Queen Anne's Conservation Association
Rivanna Conservation Alliance
Rock Creek Conservancy
St. Mary's River Watershed Association
Sassafras River Association
Savage River Watershed Association
Severn River Association
Shenandoah Riverkeeper
Shenandoah Valley Network
Sidney Center Improvement Group
Sleepy Creek Watershed Association
South River Federation
SouthWings
Sparks-Glencoe Community Planning Council
Susquehanna Heritage
Trout Unlimited
Upper Potomac Riverkeeper
Upper Susquehanna Coalition
Virginia Conservation Network

Virginia League of Conservation Voters
Waterkeepers Chesapeake
West/Rhode Riverkeeper
West Virginia Citizen Action Group
West Virginia Environmental Council
West Virginia Rivers Coalition
Wetlands Watch
Wicomico Environmental Trust