



March 23, 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chair  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies  
S-128 Capitol  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall, Ranking Minority Member  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies  
S-146A Capitol  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

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.

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 2018:

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

##### **Chesapeake Bay Program -- \$73.0 million**

We support level funding of \$73.0 million for the base budget of the Chesapeake Bay Program, which coordinates Chesapeake Bay watershed restoration and protection efforts. The majority of the program's funds are passed through to the states and local communities for on-the-ground restoration work through programs such as the Small Watershed Grants, Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grants, State Implementation Grants, and the Chesapeake Bay Regulatory and Accountability Program grants.

We strongly support the highly successful and popular Chesapeake Small Watershed Grants and the Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grants – \$6 million each – that Congress

appropriated in FY 2016. These are two well-run, competitive grant programs that have contributed significantly to water quality improvements throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. These are the Bay Program's only grants that go directly to on-the-ground restoration efforts by local governments and communities. 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 strongly support the language in the FY 2016 Consolidated Appropriations Act, where Congress protected these critical local grant programs: "The Committee recommends \$73,000,000 for the Chesapeake Bay program. From within the amount provided, \$6,000,000 is for nutrient and sediment removal grants and \$6,000,000 is for small watershed grants to control polluted runoff from urban, suburban and agricultural lands." We urge you to retain the same language in the FY 2018 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, for both the overall Chesapeake Bay Program and for the local grant programs.

#### Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) --\$4.047 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 this Clean Water SRF has eroded over the years as the clean water needs of local communities have increased dramatically. The Choose Clean Water Coalition supports efforts in both the House and the Senate, and within the Administration, to triple the current funding for the Clean Water SRF – and this 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 \$4.047 billion funding level that would provide \$891 million in low interest loans to local governments in Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia – triple 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.

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 and 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 last year's FY16 levels.

#### **Department of the Interior**

#### U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) -- Chesapeake Bay Studies -- \$11.991 million

We support level funding from FY 2016 of \$11.991 million for the USGS 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 focuses on monitoring and assessing fisheries, waterfowl and the quality of their habitats, which provide economic benefits to the states involved in the Chesapeake restoration effort and represent the priorities of the Department of the Interior.

USGS activities are critical for the restoration of several freshwater fish species, including brook trout, an important recreational fishery. A related activity is identifying chemicals, and their sources, which lead to fish consumption advisories for humans. USGS also provides the expertise to restore and conserve coastal wetlands, critical habitat and food for the more than one million waterfowl that winter in the Chesapeake region. USGS helps to coordinate the collection and assessment of monitoring data collected by the states and USGS. These assessments will help the states focus on areas and types of practices, for more effective approaches toward water quality improvements.

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 will help state and federal partners more effectively focus actions and utilize available resources.

#### National Park Service -- Chesapeake Regional Programs -- \$3.0261 million

The National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office runs 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 level funding for these key programs administered by the National Park Service in the Chesapeake Bay watershed: Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail (\$385,000); Star Spangled Banner National Historic Trail (\$150,600); support for coordinating these programs through the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office (\$476,500); and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Trails (\$2.014 million). In addition, as in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016, we urge you to extend the authorization for the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Trails program for two more years.

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

#### National Park Service/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/Bureau of Land Management/U.S. Forest Service - Rivers of the Chesapeake Collaborative Landscape Planning Projects – Land and Water Conservation Fund - \$30.519 million

We support continuation of the strategic use of funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for the Rivers of the Chesapeake Collaborative Landscape Planning initiative. This effort targets conservation funds for priority landscapes throughout the country; the Rivers of the Chesapeake is one such priority area. The collaborative proposal focuses on the great rivers of the Chesapeake and would protect 8,000 acres in the Potomac, Rappahannock, James, Nanticoke and Susquehanna watersheds in Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia. The areas in the Chesapeake include 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.

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@choosecleanwater.org](mailto: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  
American Rivers  
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 Sligo Creek  
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  
Southern Environmental Law Center  
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