



10 Things Members of Congress Can Do to Advance Chesapeake Watershed Restoration

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS

1

USDA Farm Bill The 2014 Farm Bill consolidated the USDA Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative into a new, nationally competitive Regional Conservation Partnership Program. Of the total of approximately \$275 million available, 35 percent will go to eight Critical Conservation Areas, 40 percent will be provided in competitive grants and 25 percent to states.

ACTION NEEDED: Urge the Secretary of USDA to designate the Chesapeake Watershed as a Critical Conservation Area and to give high priority to applications received from partners in the Chesapeake region.

2

Collaborative Landscape Conservation Initiative For the past three years, the Obama Administration has committed over \$100 million each year in Land and Water Conservation Funds to help conserve large landscapes in particular areas of the country. However, proposals submitted by state and federal partners in the Chesapeake region have been rejected, despite high technical rankings.

ACTION NEEDED: Urge the Obama Administration, specifically the directors of OMB, NPS, USFWS, BLM and USFS, to designate the Chesapeake as the highest priority landscape in the President's Fiscal Year 2016 budget and support appropriations if the Chesapeake is included.

3

Education Issues Providing environmental education opportunities for all 3.5 million preK-12 students in the watershed is critical to preparing the next generation to be good stewards of the Bay, its lands and waterways. Yet the U.S. Department of Education provides virtually no financial support to schools for environmental education and the Obama Administration proposes to terminate funding

for the only Federal programs that do: NOAA's Bay Watershed Education and Training Program (BWET) and EPA's environmental education program.

ACTION NEEDED: Urge the Secretary of Education to provide financial support for state and local preK-12 environmental education in watershed schools and restore funding for NOAA's BWET and EPA's environmental education programs.

4

Conowingo Dam Relicensing Issues

The relicensing of the Conowingo Dam on the Susquehanna River offers an opportunity to address several major issues critical to the health of the Chesapeake Bay and its living resources associated with the dam including water quality, fish passage, flow rates, debris management and recreation and conservation.

ACTION NEEDED: Urge the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and other appropriate federal agencies to ensure that the final license agreement includes a comprehensive plan to address water quality, fish passage and living resources, conservation and recreation issues associated with the dam.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

5

Highway/Transit Bill Reauthorization Issues

Stormwater runoff from highways, roads and other impervious surfaces is the fastest growing source of pollution to the Bay and waterways nationwide. Many bridges, which cross navigable waterways, present tremendous opportunities to improve public fishing and boating access to our waters, at little cost.

ACTIONS NEEDED: In the reauthorization bill: A) Support stormwater controls for all new federal-aid highway construction and major reconstruction to maintain runoff at pre-construction levels. B) Ensure

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that due consideration is given to improving fishing and boating access in all appropriate federal-aid bridge construction and major reconstruction projects.

6

Water Resources Development Act

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provides critical support to state and local partners through its oyster restoration and Chesapeake Bay Restoration/Protection Authorities, among others. But in 2015 the Corps will reach its authorized cap on oyster restoration funding and the Chesapeake Restoration and Protection program must be reauthorized and amended to better link its outcomes to the Corps' Comprehensive Bay Management Plan now under development.

ACTIONS NEEDED: Raise the cap on oyster restoration from \$50 million to \$70 million and reauthorize and amend the Corps of Engineers' Chesapeake Bay Environmental Restoration and Protection Program as contained in the Senate-passed WRDA, but not addressed in the House-passed bill.

7

Clean Water Funding

Communities throughout the watershed rely on dollars provided through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund to improve their sewer infrastructure. These funds have resulted in a significant improvement in water quality and are an important part of our efforts to make continued progress. The ability to use these funds for green infrastructure and other non-traditional projects is critical as communities seek new cost-effective and collaborative approaches to water management.

ACTIONS NEEDED: Continue funding support for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and enable these dollars to promote innovative approaches that are cost-effective and help achieve multiple local water management goals.

8

Bay Program Budgets

Funding for the Chesapeake Bay Programs of EPA, NOAA, USGS, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Army Corps of Engineers, USDA and the Forest Service, among others, as well as the national clean water, conservation and wildlife programs, is essential to achieve Bay watershed restoration goals.

ACTIONS NEEDED: In the Fiscal Year 2015 appropriations process, support these programs at least at the levels approved in the Fiscal Year 2014 Omnibus, or at the higher level recommended in the President's budget request.

9

Reauthorization of Bay Programs

Authority for EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program, NOAA's Chesapeake Bay Program and the National Park Service's Chesapeake Gateways and Watertrails Program have expired, but the programs have continued through the annual appropriations process.

ACTIONS NEEDED: Ensure that these program authorities are continued, reauthorized and provided with the funds necessary to implement these programs.

10

Oversight/Accountability

Since the first Chesapeake Bay studies were initiated by Congress, Congressional oversight has been a vital part of the process of ensuring that the various federal agencies are achieving the goals of the program and advancing Chesapeake watershed restoration.

ACTION NEEDED: In the annual appropriations process, in Members' roles on authorizing committees, and in the formulation of the President's budget request, ensure that the federal agencies have the necessary tools and resources to carry out their responsibilities for Bay watershed restoration and are achieving the goals under their authorities and Executive Order No. 13508.



Chesapeake Bay Commission

Policy for the Bay

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