



July 23, 2015

Dear Senators and Representatives:

We, the Chesapeake Executive Council are writing to ask you to support appropriations of all \$39.7 million of Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) monies requested for the Chesapeake Bay watershed in President Obama's 2016 budget. More than \$33 million of the requested funding is part of the *Rivers of the Chesapeake* collaborative proposal in which we enthusiastically participate.

On June 16, 2014 the Governors of the Chesapeake watershed states, the Mayor of the District of Columbia, the Chairman of the Chesapeake Bay Commission and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency on behalf of the federal governments, signed the new *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, setting restoration goals and outcomes to restore and protect the Bay.

The Watershed Agreement renews incorporated conservation goals contained in the President's Chesapeake Executive Order #13508, specifically calling for the permanent protection of an additional two million acres by 2025. Federal assistance is essential if we are to achieve these goals. The *Rivers of the Chesapeake* collaborative partners—Federal agencies, States and non-governmental organizations in the Chesapeake region—submitted a strong proposal for fiscal year 2016 that would conserve more than 31,000 acres in Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania over the next three years – lands critical to protect water quality, habitat, and indigenous cultural resources and increase public access to and utilization of the Bay and its tributaries.

Of all of the proposals nationwide that sought the LWCF collaborative funding, the Chesapeake is the only one with a federal Executive Order Strategy explicitly directing the U.S. Department of Interior to “coordinate and target conservation efforts across federal agencies” to achieve the goal of “conserving bay lands throughout the watershed.” It is the only proposal located in one of the most densely populated, urban, and socially diverse regions of the country—over 11 million people live within a one hour drive of lands that would be conserved through the proposal.

We urge you to include all the funding requested for the *Rivers of the Chesapeake* collaborative and parcels in the Chesapeake watershed within the fiscal year 2016 appropriation for LWCF. Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to ensuring the Chesapeake remains a national treasure for generations to come.

Sincerely,

The members of the Chesapeake Executive Council

The Honorable Terence R. McAuliffe, Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia (EC Chair)

The Honorable L. Scott Lingamfelter, Chairman, Chesapeake Bay Commission

The Honorable Jack A. Markell, Governor, State of Delaware

The Honorable Muriel Bowser, Mayor, District of Columbia

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan Jr., Governor, State of Maryland

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor, State of New York

The Honorable Thomas W. Wolf, Governor, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

The Honorable Earl Ray Tomblin, Governor, State of West Virginia

Cc: Gina McCarthy, Administrator, U.S. EPA