



# Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense (WILD) Program

Faren R. Wolter, Ph.D.

Collaboration Science Coordinator & Conservation Social Scientist  
USFWS, Science Applications, Chesapeake Bay Field Office

[Faren\\_wolter@fws.gov](mailto:Faren_wolter@fws.gov)

Friends came together  
Conservation inspires us  
Now the work begins

Haiku credit: Mike Slattery





Improve the functionality and connectivity of habitat for imperiled and listed fish and wildlife



Improve water health to benefit both human and fish and wildlife communities



Enhance climate resilience and readiness in natural and human communities using nature-based solutions



Equitably connect people with nature to improve wellbeing and grow support for restoration and conservation actions and funding



Build capacity to access funding and implement coordinated restoration and conservation activities; emphasis on underserved partners and communities

# WILD Grant Cycles (FY22 & FY23)



**In 2 years, ~\$28M  
invested!**

- 2022: **awarded \$3.5M to 12 projects**
  - **total conservation impact of nearly \$8M** (>\$4M match)
- 2023: **awarded \$7.7M to 25 projects**
  - **total conservation impact of nearly \$20M** (>\$12M match)





# WILD Grant

## Impact: Ecological

- **Excellent coverage of grant pillars** (WILD goals)
  - **Imperiled & Listed spp...**turtles, mussels, fish, birds, butterflies...
  - **Science and data gaps**
  - **Actions led by Indigenous and people of color**
  - **Cross-jurisdictional management & capacity-building**



All reported data subject to change

# FY23 WILD Grant Impact: Ecological



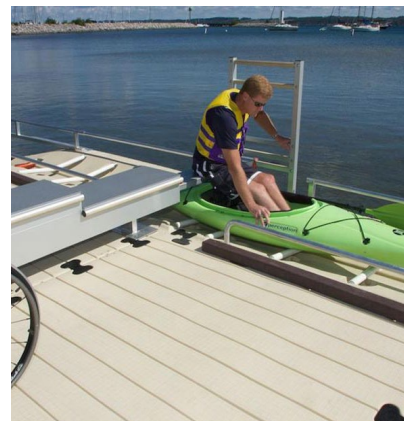
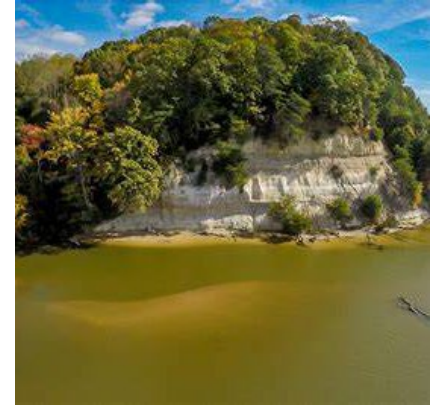
- Permanently protect forest, wetland, pollinator, and marsh habitat: **>4,700ac**
- Restore riparian forest and wetland habitat: **>32mi**
- Improve river and trail recreational access: **>31mi**
- Aquatic connectivity/river opened for migratory species: **>120mi**
- **Nature-based solutions** for stormwater & erosion management



# FY23 WILD Grant Impact: Connecting People with Nature



- **Restore cultural connections** with living resources
- **Equitable access**
- **Community led** and **managed greenspaces** and **pollinator habitat**
- **Faith-based** and **injustice-led conservation actions**



All reported data subject to change

# FY23 WILD Grant Investments in Underserved Communities



- **83% of WILD proposals** are doing conservation work in places with **more diversity, higher poverty and unemployment, and lower household income**, than the national average!
  - **65% of WILD proposals** work in a **highly underserved community**
- **89% of FY23 WILD funds** will be invested in conservation actions in **underserved communities!**



# Chesapeake WILD 2024: SAV opportunity



All reported data subject to change



# SAV Spp and Habitat Conservation



- **Habitat condition and availability – land/riparian habitat projects that support water clarity and address climate adaptation and mitigation.**
  - nature-based solutions/living shorelines
  - permanently protect marsh migration corridors
- **Restoration**
  - recover/restore natural seed banks
  - direct plantings
- **Science/data gaps and monitoring of restoration projects**
- **Protection of Existing and Recovering SAV and Public perception, knowledge, and Engagement (Conservation Social Science)**
  - Community partnerships, direct engagement of communities & organizations associated with using shallow water habitat to co-develop implementation, recovery, and monitoring of projects.

# Chesapeake WILD FY24 RFP



- **FY24 RFP release** (late Jan/early Feb)
- **Applicant Webinar** (TBD)
- **FieldDoc Webinar** (TBD)
- **Proposal Due Date** (~mid-Apr)
- **Proposal Review Period** (Apr – Aug)
- **Awards Announced** (~Sept)

## ➤ **Proposal Technical Assistance**

- **WILD Proposal Labs** (Feb – Apr)
- **Webinars** (TBD)
- **NFWF Field Liaisons** (year-round)
- **One-on-one meetings** (year-round)





Questions? Then Jam Board Input





# WILD Imperiled Species & Habitat



- Headwater/high elevation and contiguous forest habitat contiguous forest areas
- Forested riparian buffer habitat
- Grasslands and upland/early successional habitat
- Pollinator habitat
- Aquatic/stream habitat and adjacent riparian floodplain
- Nontidal wetland habitat
- Tidal marsh and estuarian habitat
- Submerged aquatic vegetation habitat
- Urban/Sub-urban habitat