



March 1, 2016

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 their drinking water directly from the rivers and streams that flow through the cities, towns and farms throughout our six state, 64,000 square mile watershed. This water quality is critical to both human health and to the 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 2017:

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 \$12 million for the Chesapeake Small Watershed Grants and the Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grants - \$6 million each – that Congress appropriated in FY16. 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 last year's 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 2017 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill.

Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) --\$1.448887 billion

This program is critical to the 1,779 local governments throughout the Chesapeake region. The funding level has eroded over the years as the clean water needs of local communities have increased dramatically. The Choose Clean Water Coalition supports efforts to close the gap between federal infrastructure investment in clean water and the known need. For instance, legislation has been recently introduced which would authorize the Clean Water State Revolving Fund grant program at a level of \$5.96 billion for FY2017. This is the direction in which we should be going, but at a minimum, appropriations should not fall below \$1.44887 billion the level appropriated in Fiscal Year 2014 and 2015, when Congress stabilized this critical program. Congress restored most of the President’s cuts last year, but the \$1.394 billion was 3.7% below the FY14 and 15 level.

These low interest loans are critical for clean water and for ratepayers in the Chesapeake region and nationwide. We urge you to support the \$1.448887 billion funding level that provided \$311 million in low interest loans to local governments in Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia. The President’s 2017 Budget request would cut \$102.146 million from those six Chesapeake watershed states and the District of Columbia – a drastic 31% cut for our region from the FY16 level. We do however, strongly support the provision in the President’s budget request that targets 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. The Clean Water SRF enables local governments in the Chesapeake watershed to take actions to protect their local waters to meet Clean Water Act requirements. As the list of clean water infrastructure needs in the Chesapeake region continues to expand, we request that Congress restore funding for the Clean Water SRF at least to its FY 14 and 15 levels.

Department of the Interior

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) -- Chesapeake Bay Studies -- \$12.491 million

We support the President’s 2017 budget request of \$12.491 million for the USGS to provide the critical science necessary for restoration and protection efforts in the Chesapeake Bay region, and to implement the 2014 Chesapeake Watershed Agreement. This includes \$500,000 for USGS to collect and use Light Distance and Ranging (LIDAR) data to produce high-quality elevation information needed for the eastern shore of the Chesapeake Bay in Delaware, Maryland and Virginia. The results will help the Chesapeake Bay Program to develop high-resolution land cover information to more effectively place conservation practices to improve water quality and help conserve healthy watersheds.

The USGS will focus on: 1) understanding the factors affecting freshwater fisheries and streams, including the effects of shale gas drilling; 2) identifying sources and effects of endocrine-disrupting compounds and other contaminants that threaten fisheries and wildlife; 3) assessing the effects of sea level rise and development on coastal wetlands important for waterfowl; (4) forecasting the potential effects of land and climate change to

inform land conservation; and 5) monitoring and explaining water quality change to inform nutrient and sediment reduction efforts.

National Park Service -- Chesapeake Regional Programs -- \$3.05 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.

The key programs in the President's FY 2017 budget request that we support are: Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Trails (\$2.02 million); Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail (\$391,000); Star Spangled Banner National Historic Trail (\$151,000); and, support for coordinating these programs through the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office (\$488,000).

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 - \$28.261 million

We support the President's 2017 budget that calls for the strategic use of funds for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and, for the second consecutive year, requests funding 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. These projects will enhance public access and education, preserve key historic and heritage sites and will protect important freshwater and tidal habitat areas critical to an array of fish and wildlife species.

- Bureau of Land Management - Nanjemoy National Resource Management Area (MD) - \$1.6 million*
- Bureau of Land Management - Nanjemoy National Resource Management Area (MD) - \$1.668 million
- Bureau of Land Management – Meadowood Special Recreation Management Area (VA) - \$1.4 million*
- Bureau of Land Management – Meadowood Special Recreation Management Area (VA) - \$2.8 million
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge (MD) - \$1.2 million*
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – James River National Wildlife Refuge (MD) - \$0.9 million
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Rappahannock River National Wildlife Refuge (VA) - \$8.5 million
- U.S. Forest Service – George Washington-Jefferson National Forests (VA) - \$1.0 million
- National Park Service – Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail (VA) - \$2.1 million*
- National Park Service – Appalachian National Scenic Trail (VA) - \$2.0 million*
- National Park Service – Piscataway Park (MD) - \$0.55 million
- National Park Service – Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County National Military Park (VA) - \$4.543 million

* Indicates projects with Current/Discretionary Authority

National Park Service –Land Protection in Maryland through the Land and Water Conservation Fund -- \$794,000

We support the President's 2017 budget that calls for the strategic use of funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund to protect and preserve key assets in the National Park System at Piscataway Park (\$794,000) in Maryland. This project will enhance public access and education, preserve key historic and heritage sites and protect key habitat areas critical to an array of fish and wildlife species.

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 with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

American Rivers
Anacostia Watershed Society
Audubon Naturalist Society
Blue Heron Environmental Network Inc.
Blue Ridge Watershed Coalition
Blue Water Baltimore
Cecil Land Use Association
Chapman Forest Foundation
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage
Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future
Clean Water Action
Coalition for Smarter Growth
Conservation Pennsylvania
Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania
Delaware Nature Society
Earth Forum of Howard County
Eastern Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine
Reclamation
Environment America
Environment Maryland
Environment Virginia
Friends of Accotink Creek
Friends of Dyke Marsh
Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River
Green Muslims
Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake
Izaak Walton League of America
James River Association
Lackawanna River Conservation Association
Lynnhaven River NOW
Maryland Conservation Council
Maryland League of Conservation Voters
Mattawoman Watershed Society
Mehoopany Creek Watershed Association
Middle Susquehanna Riverkeeper

National Aquarium
National Parks Conservation Association
National Wildlife Federation
Nature Abounds
Natural Resources Defense Council
Otsego County Conservation Association
Otsego Land Trust
PennEnvironment
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Piedmont Environmental Council
Potomac Conservancy
Potomac Riverkeeper
Potomac Riverkeeper Network
Rivanna Conservation Society
Rock Creek Conservancy
Sassafras River Association
Savage River Watershed Association
Shenandoah Riverkeeper
Shenandoah Valley Network
Sidney Center Improvement Group
Sierra Club – Maryland
Sierra Club – Pennsylvania
Sierra Club – Virginia
Sleepy Creek Watershed Association
South River Federation
St. Mary's River Watershed
Stewards of the Lower Susquehanna
Trout Unlimited
Upper Potomac Riverkeeper
Upper Susquehanna Coalition
Virginia Conservation Network
Virginia League of Conservation Voters
Water Defense
West & Rhode Riverkeeper
West Virginia Rivers Coalition