

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

DEAR FRIENDS OF THE COALITION,

For our Annual Reports, I try to find a word that fully captures everything that happened over the last year. And while many of the words that first come to mind to describe 2020 may not be overly positive, I have settled on the word *resilient*. The early months of quarantine due to the coronavirus pandemic demonstrated our ability to adapt to this new online and socially distant world. And while it was not without challenges, we found comradery around adapting to our new 'offices.' I have enjoyed seeing new aspects of my colleagues' lives, including virtually meeting their partners and children, and commiserating over the adorable dog that seems to think the moment you have unmuted yourself is the perfect time to bark at the mail truck.

As we adapted to this "new normal," we faced more personal and emotional challenges. The murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and too many other Black people in this country, required all of us to look in the mirror and ask the question to both ourselves and our organizations, "what are we doing to be anti-racist?" As a community, we held difficult but necessary conversations around diversity, equity, inclusion and justice that were long overdue. Now more than ever, the Coalition's members and partners are taking steps to learn, grow, and evolve to become a community that works with and for all the people who call the Chesapeake watershed home.

While our priorities stayed the same, you will see in this report that some of our work evolved, as we and our members adapted to a changing world. Thanks to the dedication and resilience of our members, the Coalition saw many victories this year, including securing a historic high funding level of \$87.5 million for the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program and the passage of Chesapeake WILD, which created a new funding mechanism for on-the-ground projects improving habitat and wildlife throughout the watershed. In addition, Coalition members worked together to expand and support our network through the Young Professionals of Color Mentorship program, re-constituted the Coalition's Agriculture Workgroup, and worked with our members and partners to advance the creation of the first agricultural cost-share program in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

As you read through this year's report, I hope you not only reflect on what the Coalition and our more than 250 members have accomplished, but, more importantly, what we have learned about ourselves and our work. The strength of the Coalition has always



lived in our collective power—what we can accomplish together. And if I have learned anything from the year 2020, it is the remarkable resilience of our members to advance our shared goals for clean water and our unwavering commitment to our community, work, and to each other.

For clean water,

KRISTIN REILLY
Director

ABOUT

The Choose Clean Water Coalition harnesses the collective power of more than 250 groups to advocate for clean rivers and streams in all communities in the Chesapeake Bay region. By mobilizing the advocacy community and coordinating policy, messaging, action, and accountability, the Coalition is able to speak louder with one voice toward our collective goal—clean water.

POLICY PRIORITIES

Agriculture
Communications
Energy
Equity

Federal Affairs Stormwater TMDL

STAFF



MARIAH DAVIS
Policy and Campaigns Manager



EMILY HARRIS
Program Coordinator



PETER MARX
Federal Affairs Contractor



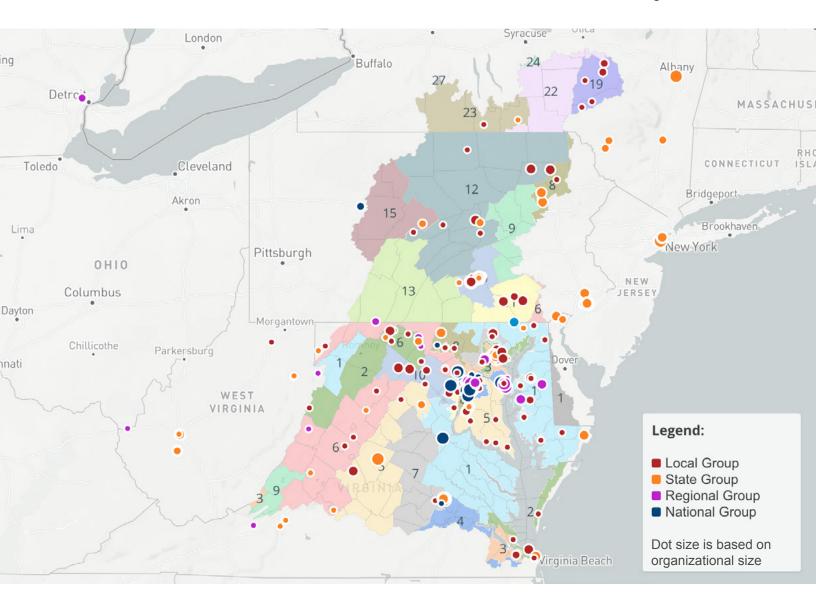
DREW ROBINSONSenior Communications Manager

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR STATE AND OUTREACH LEADS:

Ellie Ezekiel (DE) Laura Miller (DE) Ben Alexandro (MD) Danny Lapin (NY) Amy Wyant (NY) Renee Reber (PA) Pat Calvert (VA) Tanner Haid (WV)

MEMBER MAP

The Coalition has more than 250 members that span the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed, with organizations in every state and the District of Columbia. To see full list of Coalition members, visit: www.choosecleanwater.org/members.



STEERING COMMITTEE

*Co-Chair | +State or Outreach Lead

Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley

Anacostia Watershed Society

Audubon Naturalist Society*

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Conservation Voters of PA

Delaware Nature Society+

James River Association

Maryland League of Conservation Voters+

National Aquarium

National Parks Conservation Association

National Resources Defense Council

National Wildlife Federation*

Piedmont Environmental Council

PennFuture+

Potomac Conservancy

Virginia Conservation Network+*

Waterkeepers Chesapeake

West Virginia Rivers Coalition+



Usually, our Annual Chesapeake Bay Day on Capitol Hill helps set the tone for the rest of the year. We started off breaking records, with 156 Coalition members signing onto our appropriation request letters to the House and Senate and holding a record 41 meetings with members of Congress and staff. Eleven Members of Congress came to speak in person at our Lunch Briefing, all voicing their support for securing increased funding for the Chesapeake Bay and passage of America's Conservation Enhancement (ACE) legislative package, which contained three key Chesapeake bills. Even the weather cooperated, where, unlike previous Bay Days when we trudged through snow on our way to meetings, we were met with unseasonably warm weather and a pleasant day to walk around the nation's Capital. It had us thinking, "Perhaps 2020 might be a charmed year."

We couldn't have predicted it, but this event was the last act of "normal" for many Coalition members, as the nation started shutting down the following week due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the coronavirus was a common subject of discussion, we focused our efforts on Bay Day to two broad areas—securing funding for critical Chesapeake programs and advocating for the passage of ACE.

And our efforts on Bay Day were resoundingly successful. The appropriations bill passed in December included historic high funding levels for Bay restoration and ACE passed both chambers of Congress unanimously and was signed into law this fall. With incredible bipartisan support for clean water on Capitol Hill, we look forward to working with our Coalition members and Congress to continue to advance the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort in 2021.

Chesapeake Bay Day on Capitol Hill gives the Upper Susquehanna Coalition the chance to bring our concerns and requests for support directly to our federal leaders. Over the last five years, I had the chance to meet directly with members of Congress, their chiefs of staff and others, to present our current needs to further our work within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

- Emily Dekar, Upper Susquehanna Coalition



Just days after another successful Chesapeake Bay Day on Capitol Hill, the whole world turned upside down. As the Coalition team gathered our office plants and computer monitors to work from home for two weeks, no one could have imagined we wouldn't see each other in the office for the rest of the year. In the aftermath of entering quarantine, we capitalized on our extensive network to gather resources and content to help our members weather this storm.

Given the precarious economic climate, our first order of business was compiling an extensive list of stimulus resources and grants, paired with information on how to successfully apply for this support. We shared this content through a new webpage, breaking down resources available to our members by state.

Beyond the financial impact, we noticed the challenge in talking about COVID-19 and its impact on our work for clean water. To help navigate these tricky waters, we assembled a list of comprehensive talking points. Spearheaded by the Coalition's Communications Workgroup, the talking points include statistics and thorough research to explore the many areas this public health crisis interacts with clean water.

More than anything, the pandemic has highlighted and underscored the incredible resilience of our members. While we are eager to gather in-person again with our members, when we do return to "normal," we will take many positive lessons with us.

The Choose Clean Water Coalition consistently provides thoughtful, accessible, and adaptable communications resources. The team went above and beyond this year in helping member organizations share the importance and impact of our work in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Jen Mihills, National Wildlife Federation



While the Coalition has demonstrated leadership and commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ), this year challenged us to do more. In the wake of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and too many others, Coalition members rose up to the call, condemning the killings, pushing for action, and more importantly, thinking about what their organization would look like if it were truly anti-racist. During this emotional and critical time, the Coalition supported our members of color by providing safe spaces for dialogue, created new opportunities for group and individual learning, and spoke out about the harmful impact the environmental movement has made towards the proliferation of racism in America.

Our work is deeply connected to our fight for equity and justice. The very activities that we as an environmental community encourage, like going for a run, hiking in the woods, or birding in a city park, can put Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in life or death situations. The Chesapeake Bay community needs to do its part to eliminate systems of oppression. We need to create authentic relationships and partnerships across race and other group identities and acknowledge the unique challenges and barriers our colleagues of color experience in the workplace.

For these reasons, the Coalition has remained committed to fostering, cultivating, and preserving a culture centered on DEIJ so that everyone can realize and enjoy a healthy and prosperous community. It is imperative we make investments to advance DEIJ within our own organizations. In 2020, Coalition members have continued to utilize the DEIJ Action Guide, participate in monthly Equity Workgroup calls, and develop policy strategies to overcome clean water injustices. We reaffirmed our commitment to DEIJ by discussing challenges, sharing successes, establishing learning opportunities, and developing resources to create a safer, more equitable environment.

However, our work on becoming a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and justice-focused community is just beginning, and the Coalition looks forward to continuing to advance this important work in the years to come.

Until nature is accessible and safe to all without fear of harm or discrimination we have failed in our mission.

- Mariah Davis, Choose Clean Water Coalition



Despite efforts to diversify our organizations to better reflect the communities we serve, the Chesapeake Bay restoration community still sees a lack of representation from people of color (POC) among their staff, especially in leadership positions. While racial diversity in the United States continues to increase, the number of POC represented within our organizations has stayed stagnant. A 2014 report from Green 2.0 found that POC comprise 36 percent of the U.S. population but account for only 12 percent of the staff of environmental NGOs. To achieve our water quality goals, the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort needs to authentically serve the needs of all 18 million people who call the watershed home. This will only happen if environmental organizations reflect the communities in which they serve.

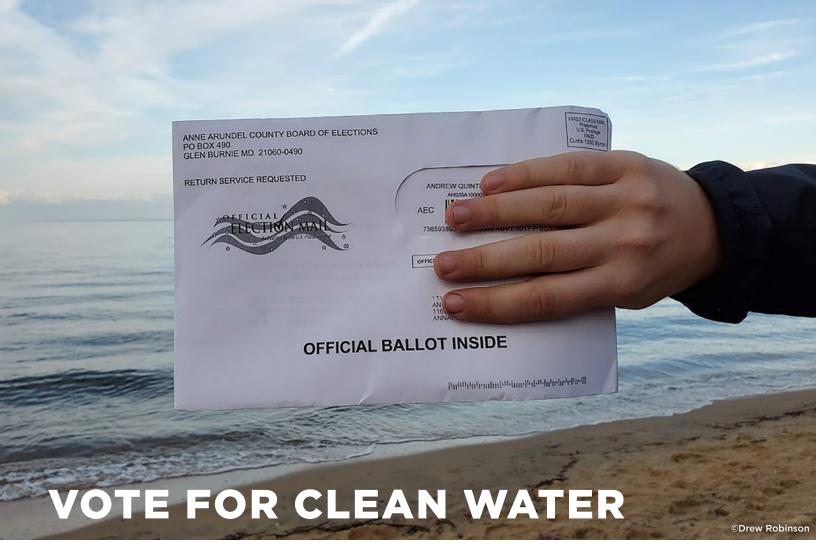
Established in 2016, the Coalition's Young Professionals of Color (YPC) program was designed to close the racial diversity gap that exists within the Coalition's membership and help POC foster their career and professional development goals. YPC is among very few spaces, let alone mentorship opportunities, that builds support for diverse leaders within the Chesapeake Bay community. This year the program hosted 34 professionals who supported each other through professional and personal challenges they face as POC.

With the majority of YPC participants facing multiple structural challenges in their workplace, the Coalition offered customized, facilitated training on topics that ranged from Personal Sustainability and Community Care, to Courageous (Difficult) Conversations, and Overcoming Imposter Syndrome. YPC members have benefited from the program by utilizing their increased knowledge to build their network and apply for new positions, while also boosting their morale and self-confidence.

As the Coalition welcomes its next class of YPC participants in 2021, this program will continue to serve as an active space in the Chesapeake community that empowers and supports young professionals of color through their leadership development.

[YPC] helped me advocate for my promotion and job title change to better reflect the work I do with DEIJ. They gave me the confidence to have difficult conversations with my superiors, and also had me feeling supported and affirmed through various aspects of my work.

- Gaby Roffe, Chesapeake Conservancy



One of the most important battlegrounds in the fight for clean water is the halls of local, state, and federal government. In one of the most important election years in recent memory, the Coalition teamed up with its members to send the message loud and clear to elected officials that clean water is a priority.

Our voter engagement efforts started with educating members on what 501(c)(3) organizations can do and learning from members with a strong track record on civic engagement work to share their experience and tips on getting involved. But the heart of our efforts centered on providing tools and resources to educate, inspire, and equip our members to actively engage their followers in the electoral process. This was highlighted by a comprehensive toolkit featuring frequently updated posts for social media, an event calendar, civic engagement webpage examples, and email examples. Ultimately receiving more than 600 clicks, the toolkit was a collaborative effort with the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed.

And our work was noticed. One member organization, the National Wildlife Federation, used our toolkit as a model for their get out the vote efforts nationally, and dozens of other Coalition members shared posts on social media,

with information on registering to vote, how to vote by mail, and where to find ballot drop boxes. Leading up to the election, we prepared a list of talking points for the various outcomes of the presidential election.

As we look towards the future, civic engagement will remain an integral part of our work. Just as we advocate for policies friendly to clean water and hold elected leaders accountable, we are committed to equipping our members to play a pivotal role in encouraging citizens throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed to become more civically engaged.

The Choose Clean Water Coalition played a crucial role in the 2020 election and scored a big win for water quality. The Coalition's clear and timely guidance allowed dozens of member organizations to educate and turn out their supporters-helping raise voter participation to an all-time high in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

- Josh McNeil, Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania



This year, in the middle of a pandemic no less, Congress passed the most important piece of federal legislation to help the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers and streams in more than 30 years. Receiving unanimous support, the America's Conservation Enhancement Act (ACE) legislative package demonstrates the incredible level of bipartisan support for clean water.

While ACE addresses conservation nationwide, the Choose Clean Water Coalition and our member organizations worked to ensure that three Chesapeake provisions were included:

- Reauthorization of the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program:
 The Chesapeake Bay Program is the coordinating entity for all Bay restoration efforts. ACE updates the Bay Program's funding authorization for five years and increases the authorized funding level to \$92 million annually—it is currently funded at \$87.5 million.
- Chesapeake WILD (Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense): Coalition staff and member organization Ducks Unlimited brought the idea of Chesapeake WILD to Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) who introduced the bill with Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) in September 2019. Chesapeake WILD authorizes \$15 million for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to create a habitat program specifically for the Bay watershed. This new program will focus not just on tidal areas but everywhere in the six-state 64,000 square mile watershed.
- Reauthorization of the National Park Service's
 Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Water Trails
 Program: This provision will reauthorize this small,

but critically important program for five more years. The Park Service works with state and local partners to promote and increase public access to iconic natural, historic, and cultural landscapes around the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

This groundbreaking legislation provides critical funding for on-the-ground conservation projects, serving as an economic stimulus to communities throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. As Senator Van Hollen said, "The Chesapeake Bay is a cornerstone of Maryland's environment, economy, and culture. The positive impact of investing in its preservation has benefits that extend far and wide...!'m proud that we were able to authorize significant new funding for the Bay in this package...and we will continue to fight for these resources at every turn."

While we celebrate the passage of the ACE Act, our work to leave a legacy of clean water to future generations is not nearly finished. In the months and years to come, we will continue to advocate for investments and policies that advance the mission of protecting and restoring the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers and streams.

This is great news for West Virginia and our Chesapeake Bay watershed region. This law will not only better support conservation and habitat restoration efforts in the area, but also it will bolster our state's growing outdoor recreation industry.

- Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV)



After a brief hiatus, the Coalition was thrilled to reconvene the workgroup addressing the leading source of pollution to the Chesapeake Bay–agriculture. And with states throughout the watershed releasing their plans to reduce their pollution loads, the timing could not have been better. The workgroup had a successful year, covering a wide range of agricultural issues, including:

- Collaborating with experts from Pennsylvania State University to learn about best management practices (BMPs) that address emissions from poultry operations.
- Sharing information on supplemental funding programs non-profits can facilitate for farmers to install more BMPs beyond existing state and federal cost share programs.
- Hosting a webinar with experts from Black Family Land Trust and the Heirs Property Retention Coalition to discuss heir's property law and its impact on our work for clean water.

In addition to the progress made by the agriculture workgroup, the Coalition launched a campaign in support of Pennsylvania's Agriculture Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP), which would establish an agricultural cost-share program in the Commonwealth. With agriculture as the leading source of pollution to

Pennsylvania's waterways and the Chesapeake Bay downstream, the Keystone State desperately needs to support its farmers to implement BMPs. Fortunately, we learned farmers in the Commonwealth are eager to tackle these projects.

To reach Pennsylvania legislators to support ACAP, we filmed two farmers showcasing the conservation practices they have implemented on their land. Both farmers have installed pollution reducing practices on their land in an effort to not only protect their local environment, but to produce better products and to improve their bottom-line.

While the ACAP legislation did not move out of committee during the 2019–2020 legislative session, Coalition members look forward to supporting the passage of an agricultural cost-share program in Pennsylvania in the months to come.

Most of us farmers...want to do the right thing and want to stay current and manage their stormwater or their manure... We can't always do that on our own so it's sometimes the difference between whether we decide to continue farming or decide to do something else.

- Clint Burkholder of Burk-Lea Farms

MEMBER LIST

INTERNATIONAL

Namati

NATIONAL

American Battlefield Trust American Canoe Association American Rivers Center for Progressive Reform Clean Water Action The Commons Defenders of Wildlife **Ducks Unlimited** Earth Force Farthworks **Environment America**

Environmental Integrity Project Environmental Working Group Izaak Walton League of America Land Trust Alliance

National Aquarium National Parks Conservation

Association National Wildlife Federation

Natural Resources Defense Council NatureBridge Nature Abounds Rachel Carson Council Restore America's Estuaries River Network

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership Trout Unlimited WaterNow Alliance

REGIONAL

Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay Anacostia Riverkeeper Anacostia Watershed Society Audubon Maryland/DC Audubon Naturalist Society Canaan Valley Institute Chesapeake Bay Foundation Chesapeake Climate Action Network Chesapeake Climate Action Network Action Fund Chesapeake Conservancy

Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council Chesapeake Foodshed Network Chesapeake Legal Alliance

Chesapeake Stormwater Network Coalition for Smarter Growth Defensores de la Cuenca

FracTracker

Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake Interfaith Power & Light

Mid-Atlantic Council Trout Unlimited Mid-Atlantic Youth Anglers & Outdoors Program

Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition Potomac Conservancy

Potomac Riverkeeper Potomac Riverkeeper Network Rock Creek Conservancy

Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project

Southern Environmental Law Center

SouthWings

The Downstream Project Upper Potomac Riverkeeper Upstream Alliance

Waterkeepers Chesapeake

DELAWARE

Delaware Center for Horticulture **Delaware Nature Society** Friends of the Nanticoke River

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

DC Environmental Network Earth Conservation Corps Institute for Local Self Reliance Surfrider Foundation - DC Chapter

MARYLAND

Alice Ferguson Foundation American Chestnut Land Trust Annapolis Green Arundel Rivers Federation Baltimore Green Space Baltimore Tree Trust Beaverdam Creek Watershed Watch Group Blue Water Baltimore Catoctin Land Trust Cecil Land Use Association Chapman Forest Foundation Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage Citizens to Conserve and Restore Indian Creek

Clean Bread and Cheese Creek Cleanwater Linganore, Inc Conservation Montgomery Corsica River Conservancy Dorchester Citizens for Planned Growth Earth Forum of Howard County Eastern Shore Land Conservancy **EcoLatinos Engage Mountain Maryland Environment Maryland** Environmental Concern

Environmental Finance Center at the University of Maryland **Envision Frederick County** Friends of Cabin John Creek Friends of Frederick County Friends of Herring Run Parks Friends of Lower Beaverdam Creek Friends of Nanticoke River Friends of Quincy Run Friends of Sligo Creek Friends of St Clements Bay Friends of the Bohemia Growth Action Network of Anne Arundel County

Gunpowder Riverkeeper Healthy Soils Frederick League of Women Voters of Maryland Little Falls Watershed Alliance Lower Shore Land Trust Lower Susquehanna Heritage

Greenway Maritimas

Maryland Academy of Science at Maryland Science Center

Maryland Campaign for Environmental **Human Rights**

Maryland Conservation Council Maryland League of Conservation Voters Maryland Native Plant Society Maryland Nonprofits

Maryland Pesticide Education Network Mattawoman Watershed Society Minorities in Aquaculture Montgomery Countryside Alliance

Muddy Branch Alliance Multifaith Alliance of Climate Stewards Neighbors of the Northwest Branch NeighborSpace of Baltimore County Parks and People Foundation

Patapsco Heritage Greenway Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust Port Tobacco River Conservancy Preservation Maryland

Queen Anne's Conservation Association Safe Healthy Playing Fields Scenic Rivers Land Trust

Severn River Association Severn Riverkeeper ShoreRivers Sierra Club - Maryland Chapter Southern Maryland Audubon Society Sparks-Glencoe Community Planning

St. Mary's River Watershed Association Talbot Preservation Alliance Transition Howard County Trash Free Maryland University of Maryland Extension

Howard County Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore, Inc.

Watts Branch Watershed Alliance West Montgomery County Citizens Association

Wicomico Environmental Trust

NEW YORK

Council

Butternut Valley Alliance Catskill Mountainkeeper Chemung River Friends Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society **Environment New York** Environmental Advocates of New York New York League of Conservation Voters New York State Council of Trout Unlimited Otsego County Conservation Association Otsego Land Trust Sidney Center Improvement Group

PENNSYLVANIA

10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania Action Together Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance for Aquatic Resource Monitoring Clean Air Council

Upper Susquehanna Coalition

ClearWater Conservancy Conodoquinet Creek Watershed Association

Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania Countryside Conservancy Eastern Pennsylvania Coalition

for Abandoned Mine Reclamation Environeers, Inc.

Environmental Justice Center of Chestnut Hill United Church Lackawanna River Conservation

Association Lancaster Clean Water Partners Lancaster County Conservancy Lancaster Farmland Trust

Lower Susquehanna Riverkeeper Association

Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania

Mehoopany Creek Watershed Association

Middle Susquehanna Riverkeeper Paxton Creek Watershed & Education Association

PennEnvironment

PennFuture

Penns Valley Conservation Association Pennsylvania Council of Churches Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited Pennsylvania Land Trust Association Pennsylvania Organization for

Watersheds and Rivers **Protecting Our Waters**

Rivertown Coalition for Clean Air and Clean Water Sierra Club - Pennsylvania Chapter

Susquehanna Greenway Partnership Susquehanna National Heritage Area

Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley Appalachian Voices Audubon Society of Northern Virginia

Capital Region Land Conservancy Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore Citizens for a Fort Monroe National Park Clean Fairfax Council

Eastern Shore Resource Conservation

& Development Council Elizabeth River Project **Environment Virginia** Float Fisherman of Virginia Friends of Accotink Creek

Friends of Dyke Marsh Friends of Little Hunting Creek Friends of Shenandoah Mountain

Friends of the Middle River Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River

Friends of the Rappahannock Friends of the Rivers of Virginia Friends of the Shenandoah River Goose Creek Association

James River Association Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Lynnhaven River NOW

Partnership for Smarter Growth Piedmont Environmental Council Prince William Conservation Alliance

Protect Hanover

Rappahannock League for Environmental Protection Richmond Audubon Society Rivanna Conservation Alliance Rockfish Valley Foundation

Scenic Virginia Shenandoah Riverkeeper

Sierra Club - Virginia Chapter Surfrider Foundation-Virginia Chapter United Parents Against Lead & Other Environmental Hazards

Virginia Association for Biological Farming

Virginia Association for Environmental Education

Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center

Virginia Conservation Network Virginia Interfaith Power and Light Virginia League of Conservation Voters Virginia Organizing Virginia Wilderness Committee Wetlands Watch

Wild Virginia

WEST VIRGINIA

Blue Heron Environmental Network Blue Ridge Watershed Coalition Cacapon Institute Canaan Valley Institute Elks Run Watershed Group **Experience Learning** Friends of the Cacapon River Mountain Lakes Preservation Alliance Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition The Opequon Watershed, Inc. Potomac Valley Audubon Society Sierra Club - West Virginia Chapter Sleepy Creek Watershed Association Warm Springs Watershed Association West Virginia Citizens Action Group West Virginia Environmental Council West Virginia Highlands Conservancy West Virginia Interfaith Power & Light West Virginia Rivers Coalition West Virginia Wilderness Coalition

VIRGINIA

