

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 22, 2019

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
125 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Hoeven  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and  
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies  
129 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeffrey A. Merkley  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and  
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies  
190 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Commerce, Justice, Science, and  
Related Agencies  
142 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Commerce, Justice, Science, and  
Related Agencies  
125 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski, Chairman Hoeven, and Chairman Moran; and  
Ranking Member Udall, Ranking Member Merkley, and Ranking Member Shaheen:

As Senators for the six-state Chesapeake Bay watershed region, we thank each Subcommittee for its legacy of leadership with respect to the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. Our states are heavily invested in implementing a Chesapeake Clean Water Blueprint designed to restore this national treasure. Continued federal partnership to support this complex, cross-state effort is key to their success. To maintain the trust and collaboration of state and local partners, we have identified essential programs across the federal agency partners in Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20).

States in the Chesapeake Bay watershed have been working together to restore this national treasure since 1983, when Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania signed the first Chesapeake Bay Agreement—a voluntary, regional partnership to achieve the states' vision of an environmentally and economically sustainable Chesapeake Bay. That same year, Congress established the Chesapeake Bay Program to support the agreement. As a testament to the value of this federal-state partnership, all watershed states signed the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. Under the Agreement, states and federal agencies have voluntarily committed to work together to restore water quality in the Chesapeake Bay by 2025. We must maintain federal investment in the programs below to support state efforts and ensure their success.

## *Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies*

### **EPA Chesapeake Bay Program (CWA §117)**

This program was created under President Ronald Reagan to support the original Chesapeake Bay Agreement. This unique regional partnership brings together leaders and experts from a vast range of agencies and organizations. Each partner uses its own resources to implement restoration and protections activities. Federal Chesapeake Bay Program funds are used to coordinate the complex cross-state science, research, modeling, monitoring, data collection, and other activities essential to support partners' collaboration. Over 60% of federal funds are passed through to states and local communities, primarily through grants programs that leverage private investment for restoration activities. We note that in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Environment and Public Works Committee approved legislation to increase the authorization of this program to \$90,000,000 that was reintroduced on a bipartisan and bicameral basis in the current Congress, and strongly urge at least this funding level for FY20. Within the additional amount provided, we support increasing the Subcommittee's previously funded investments in the Chesapeake Bay small watershed grants and the Chesapeake Bay nutrient and sediment removal grants from \$6 million for each program to \$9 million for each program. We also support directing some of the increase in appropriations for local government implementation funds and for effective basins.

### **EPA State Revolving Funds**

The Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) and the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) are important, flexible financing programs that provide communities with a permanent, independent source of low-cost financing for the water quality infrastructure projects critical to the 1,779 local governments throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed region for upgrading their water systems and therefore, to the success of the Agreement. Investments in water and wastewater infrastructure provide significant economic benefits to our communities. We strongly support the Subcommittee's continued investments in CWSRF and DWSRF above the FY19 enacted level of \$1,694,000,000 for the CWSRF and \$1,164,000,000 for the DWSRF.

### **EPA STAG/Nonpoint Source Implementation Grants (CWA §319)**

Nonpoint source pollution is a significant cause of water pollution in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Section 319(h) grants are available to locate and partially finance the agricultural, urban, and residential best management practices planned pursuant to the Agreement and to leverage other local and private funding sources. States also independently provide project management and technical assistance to local stakeholders to install these practices. We urge you to support at least the FY19 enacted level of \$170,915,000.

### **EPA STAG/Pollution Control Grants (CWA §106)**

Section 106 grants help states in the Chesapeake Bay watershed manage EPA's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). Under the Clean Water Act, it is unlawful to discharge any pollutant into U.S. waters without a NPDES permit. Without sufficient funding, this permit process gets bogged down, resulting in business losses and reduced permit monitoring and enforcement. We urge you to support at least the FY19 enacted level of \$230,806,000.

### **USGS Chesapeake Bay Program Activities**

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) conducts the watershed-wide research, assessment, monitoring, and modeling that helps Chesapeake Bay Program partners make informed management decisions to restore and protect the Chesapeake Bay. This data and analysis are critical for federal, state, and academic science partners in the Chesapeake Bay Program to plan the best stewardship of natural resources and taxpayer dollars. USGS Chesapeake Bay Program activities are conducted under six Mission Areas and appropriations accounts: Ecosystems, Water, Environmental Health, Climate Change and Land Use, Core Science Systems, and during 2019, a new project on Risks to Coastal Habitats was begun from an additional Mission Area, Hazards. We thank you for encouraging this work to continue and urge continuity for each of the Chesapeake Bay activities across all Mission Areas for a total of at least \$12,850,000 for FY20.

### **Land and Water Conservation Fund**

The Land and Water Conservation Fund helps to protect large-scale landscapes throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed region. This fund provides significant support to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement goal of conserving an additional 2 million acres of land by 2025, and increases the impact of existing conservation efforts. We urge you to support at least the FY19 enacted level of \$435,000,000.

### **NPS Chesapeake Bay Office**

The National Park Service (NPS) Chesapeake Bay Office works to increase public access to the ecological, cultural, and historic resources of the watershed region through multiple programs. We are requesting at least the FY19 enacted level for these key programs administered by the National Park Service in the Chesapeake Bay watershed: Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail (at least \$400,000); and support for coordinating these programs through the NPS Chesapeake Bay Office (at least \$488,000). In addition, as in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016, we urge you to extend the authorization for the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Trails program for at least two years and increase funding for FY20 to the authorized level of \$3,000,000 from the FY19 enacted level of \$2,020,000. The Chesapeake Gateways and Trails program provides technical and financial assistance to state, community, and nonprofit organizations in the Chesapeake Bay watershed region to enhance access to the Bay and its rivers, to conserve important landscapes and resources, to engage youth in meaningful work and place-based education, to improve recreational opportunities, and to interpret the natural and cultural resources of the watershed region.

## ***Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies***

### **NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**

Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the U.S. Department of Agriculture shares the costs for installing water pollution-reducing practices on farms, a key element of all state Blueprints. We support at least the full mandatory funding level, to reflect the bipartisan Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018.

### **NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**

The Conservation Stewardship Program helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resources concerns like those in the Blueprint. We support at least the full mandatory funding level.

### **NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)**

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program funds conservation-focused partnerships. Within this program, the Chesapeake Bay watershed has been designated as a Critical Conservation Area (CCA), and is eligible to receive a portion of CCA funding for projects that help reduce nutrient and sediment runoff that impacts the Chesapeake Bay and the local rivers and streams that feed it. We support at least the full mandatory funding level.

### **NRCS Conservation Reserve Program/Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CRP/CREP)**

Through this program, the federal government partners with Chesapeake Bay states and land owners to support installation of a key practice in states' watershed implementation plans: riparian buffers. These buffers are one of the most cost-efficient and effective methods for reducing pollution to and improving the health of local rivers and streams and the Chesapeake Bay. We support at least the full mandatory funding level.

## *Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies*

### **NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office**

The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office (NCBO) focuses on applied research and monitoring in fisheries and aquatic habitats; synthesis, and analysis to describe and predict Bay ecosystem processes; and the delivery of policy advice and technical assistance to Bay decision makers in the following core areas: Fisheries Research and Management, Oyster Restoration, and Bay Observations. NCBO is funded under the NMFS' Habitat Conservation and Restoration budget line. We urge the Subcommittee to support the work of this office with at least the FY19 enacted level of \$5,500,000, including at least \$1,500,000 for oyster restoration activities. The NCBO also manages invaluable public education programs, including the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program and the Chesapeake Bay Interpretive Buoy System.

### **National Sea Grant College Program**

Essential Sea Grant program activities in the Chesapeake Bay include university research on oyster diseases, restoration, and human health risks; research on the biology, prevention, and forecasting of harmful algal blooms; research, education, and extension services on coastal resilience; and university research on sustainable aquaculture. The program also funds the Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship, which places Fellows in Congressional offices with a demonstrated interest. We urge the Subcommittee to support at least the FY19 enacted level of \$68,000,000 for the National Sea Grant College Program and \$12,000,000 for Marine Aquaculture Program.

Our Chesapeake Bay Watershed states have invested significant resources into restoring a national treasure. In fact, state investments continue to dwarf federal investments, as OMB reported to Congress in the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Spending Crosscut in October 2017. To maintain the spirit of trust and collaboration that is the hallmark of this successful agreement, it is essential to maintain consistent federal support. Despite record rainfall in 2018, the Chesapeake Bay is showing great resilience. We thank you for supporting this unique partnership with our respective states in an extraordinary effort to restore a national treasure for generations.

Sincerely,



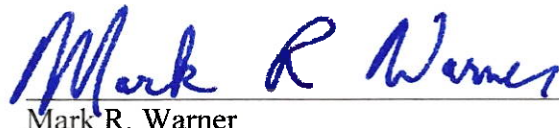
Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator



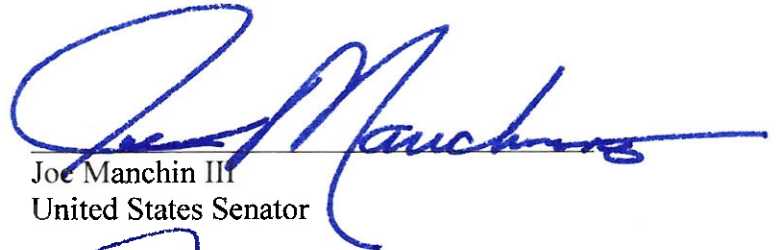
Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



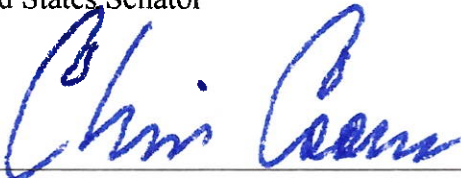
Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator



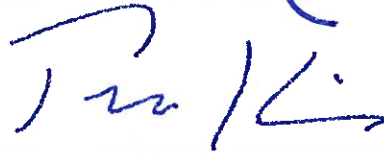
Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Joe Manchin III  
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator