Dear Friends of the Coalition,

This year was critical for Chesapeake Bay restoration. 2018 marked the release of the midpoint assessment, which shows the progress of the Bay cleanup effort. While we must maintain momentum since there are still many areas for improvement, it is important to celebrate the success we have achieved to date. The Chesapeake Bay is rebounding in a record-setting way. For instance, by reducing pollutants, we are seeing the largest resurgence of Bay grasses recorded anywhere in the world. Bay grasses are important because they provide crucial habitat for a wide range of aquatic life, like blue crabs and rockfish. These clean water wins would not be possible without the hard work of the members of the Coalition who continue to play a major role in driving the restoration forward.

While there is progress, we cannot rest on our laurels; we must continue to press on and fight back against attacks on clean water. The Coalition has worked tirelessly with our Congressional delegation to ensure the Chesapeake Bay Program receives level funding and the cleanup continues to gain bipartisan support. As a coalition, we know that when we forge strong partnerships with our elected officials and pursue collective action within our community, we will have a more significant impact and are able to further our clean water goals.

In 2019, we will continue to cultivate our Chesapeake champions as well as advance clean water policy at the federal, state, and local level. We will accomplish this by building the capacity of our Coalition members to achieve their goals and to engage a larger more inclusive cross-section of the public in our movement. All of this will further our efforts to return clean water to our rivers, streams, and the Chesapeake Bay.

Yours in clean water,

Chanté Coleman
Director

The Choose Clean Water Coalition harnesses the collective power of more than 230 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.

IN 2018 THE COALITION HAD:

12 Policy sign-on letters
605 Signatures on sign-on letters
36 Meetings with congressional offices on Lobby Day

MAP OF THE COALITION

The Coalition has more than 230 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

---

Kristin Reilly
Communications Director

Mariah Davis
Field Manager

Peter Marx
Federal Affairs Contractor

Special thanks to our state and outreach leads

Angela Hotaling (NY)
Ben Alexandro (MD)
Laura Miller (DE)
David Lillard (WV)
Taylor Nezat (PA)
Pat Calvert (VA)

Facebook.com/ChooseCleanWater
@ChooseCleanH2O
@ChooseCleanH2O

Background photograph courtesy of the Chesapeake Bay Program
OUR PRIORITIES

The Coalition focuses on six different policy priority areas that are critical to the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. Each of these priorities have a dedicated workgroup, which gives Coalition members a space to engage, strategize, and collaborate. Here are some of the highlights from these workgroups in 2018.

AGRICULTURE

Ensure the agricultural sector achieves pollution reductions necessary to reach the 2025 water quality goals.

The Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) Program has distributed more than $200 million dollars to help thousands of farmers and landowners implement practices like stream exclusion fencing and forest buffers, which help prevent pollution from reaching local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay. In 2018, the Coalition’s Communications Workgroup partnered with our Virginia members to demonstrate the need for increased and sustained funding for the VACS Program to the Virginia General Assembly. The workgroup identified and created materials that would be helpful in conducting educational outreach to newly elected officials, including one-pagers, before and after photos of projects, testimonial, and talking points. The workgroup also determined that a series of videos highlighting Virginia farmers utilizing the state cost-share program would help to elevate this issue.

The Coalition interviewed three different farmers from strategic areas of Virginia about their experience with the VACS program and why the funding is so important. What the videos show is that farmers not only benefit economically from installing these projects, but they also understand the importance of conservation and want to protect their local waterways. For more information on this project and to watch the interviews, please visit www.choosecleanwater.org/blog.

SHALE

Protect communities, water resources, and landscapes from the impacts of natural gas development and related infrastructure by supporting member campaigns and sharing significant information.

The fight to protect our waterways from the impacts of natural gas infrastructure, is challenging, yet over the last year, Coalition members have demonstrated dedication and persistence to protect public health and our most precious resources. Grassroots movements pushing back against new natural gas development have sparked a wave of protests and outspoken leadership at the local, state, and federal level. From the Atlantic Coast Pipeline to the Mountain Valley Pipeline, Coalition members have stood strong in solidarity to protect waterways, drinking water, and communities in the Chesapeake.

This year’s Choose Clean Water Conference was held in Pennsylvania, and the Coalition used it as an opportunity to convene grassroots leaders around the watershed to share their experiences, successes, and failures fighting pipelines in their communities. Melinda Harnish Clatterbuck, founder of Lancaster Against Pipelines, delivered a moving plenary speech on how influential and divisive the fossil fuel industry is in her community and across the state. In addition, members of the Shale Workgroup produced a workshop on various ways communities defend themselves against impending pipeline projects. Strategies include community outreach, advocacy, legal tactics, technology, communications, coalition building, nonviolent action, and visual strategy.

More Highlights:

• Coalition members in Pennsylvania defeated HB2154, a bill that would have dramatically rolled back conventional oil and gas protections.

• Coalition members in Virginia and West Virginia coordinated messaging and organizing tactics to delay construction of the Mountain Valley and Atlantic Coast Pipelines.

• Coalition members in Maryland are working together to push back the proposed construction of the Eastern Shore Pipeline.
Thanks to increased urbanized areas and sprawl, stormwater is the fastest growing source of pollution in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. In order to mitigate the impacts that stormwater has on our local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay, it is imperative that local governments consider green infrastructure projects for existing and future urban and suburban areas, especially as the last phase of the Chesapeake Bay cleanup begins.

For this reason, the Coalition partnered with the Maryland League of Conservation Voters (Maryland LCV) to help Coalition members in Maryland advance their capabilities in communicating with local officials about the importance of on the ground projects that help reduce stormwater. As part of this project, the Coalition and Maryland LCV organized a series of in-person trainings to help members learn how to communicate effectively about stormwater and how to be successful when planning and executing a meeting with a decision maker.

As a result, Coalition members were provided with a variety of tools that they can use when planning upcoming meetings with influencers, such as county council members and county executives, church and school leaders, and other local officials. This project utilized previous work done by Maryland LCV around the creation of the Pollution Solutions website. More information on this can be found at mostcenter.org/casestudies.

More Highlights:
- In December, the Stormwater Workgroup met with the Environmental Protection Agency's Region 3 Administrator Cosmo Servidio to discuss the Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan process in Pennsylvania, general MS4 permit renewals, enforcement of Clean Water Act permits, and listing the lower Susquehanna River as impaired under the Clean Water Act.
- Sixteen Coalition members met with Carroll County Department of Land and Resource Management staff to learn about and tour their stormwater projects in Westminster, Maryland.
- The Coalition had an op-ed published in the Washington Post titled, “After Ellicott City, good news for the environment” signed by the Coalition’s Director, Chanté Coleman. The piece was done in an effort to advocate for more innovative solutions to address stormwater best management practices, accountability for climate change, and challenges of population growth related to combating disastrous flooding in the future.
In early 2018, our Pollution Limits workgroup developed a joint advocacy plan to ensure strong and coordinated outreach among Coalition members ahead of the midpoint assessment, which indicated how close we are to reaching our bay restoration goals. This included strategies on how to communicate with the public about the successes of the cleanup and ways to engage and educate local officials about the importance of clean water projects. Many of the Coalition’s members participated in the development of the plan and have already started taking action.

As we enter the last phase of the cleanup, we have an opportunity to advocate for strong Phase III Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs), which outline how Bay jurisdictions, including local governments, will achieve pollution reductions from now through 2025. As a part of the advocacy plan, the Coalition developed Engagement Guides for each state that provide our members with information and resources they need to advocate for strong WIPs. This advocacy plan builds the capacity of our members to engage in the restoration effort and helps to further our goal of returning clean water to the region.

More Highlights:

• Forty-six coalition members submitted comments on Exelon’s application for Clean Water Act Section 401(a)(1) Water Quality Certification to Secretary Ben Grumbles of the Maryland Department of the Environment, Deputy Program Administrator Elder Ghigiarelli, Jr. of the Wetlands and Waterways Program - Maryland Department of the Environment, and Maryland Governor Larry Hogan.

• Thirty-six coalition members sent a letter to the Principals’ Staff Committee of the Chesapeake Bay Program asking that the impact of climate change on our region be considered in the creation of the states’ Phase III WIPs.

• At the annual conference, the Coalition hosted a workshop titled “Don’t be Fazed by Phase III,” focusing on how to leverage the midpoint assessment and the Phase III WIPs in order to meet our water quality goals.

The first big challenge for 2018 was to secure federal funding for the Chesapeake restoration effort. President Trump’s first budget surprised many people by eliminating all funding for Chesapeake Bay. This funding battle became the highest priority for the Coalition, and along with our members, we were successful in convincing Congress to restore all funding for the restoration. This included $73 million for the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program. Congress also directed EPA to continue two key restoration grant programs at $6 million each.

The year also culminated two years’ worth of work by the Coalition to pass a federal Farm Bill with strong programs to help the region’s farmers implement key conservation practices. The five-year Farm Bill passed Congress and was signed by the President in December 2018. This bill contains some strong conservation provisions and through two key programs, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), should lead to more pollution reduction practices being implemented and also provide greater habitat for fish and wildlife throughout the region.

The RCPP will provide considerably more funds for pollution reduction practices in eight Critical Conservation Areas across the country – and the Chesapeake Bay watershed is one of those eight areas. The Program is better funded than it was five years ago, and is also streamlined and improved to better assist applicants and awardees, and to provide technical assistance. The CREP is the single most important Federal program to assist in getting riparian forest buffers installed, and the new Farm Bill has expanded this program to allow more flexibility for landowners and to significantly expand the number of acres that will be buffered.

More Highlights:

• The Coalition successfully worked with Congress to prevent the Trump Administration from physically dismantling the Chesapeake Bay Program based in Annapolis, Maryland.

• In March 2018, members of the Coalition meet with 36 different legislative offices to discuss the importance of federal support for the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort.

• In addition to funding for the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program, the Coalition helped to restore funding for the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Water Trails program and the U.S. Geological Survey, which provides the scientific foundation for the policies needed to restore the bay.
The Coalition hosted the 9th Annual Choose Clean Water Conference in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, on May 22-23. This event is designed to bring together our member organizations and encourage attendees to learn from, share, and network with one another. This year’s theme was, “Connecting Our Power,” a slogan developed by our members that highlights how strong our community is when we work together.

More than 300 people attended the conference, which featured sessions on diversity, equity, and inclusion; agriculture, communications, and more. The conference also included remarks from Malinda Hamish Clutterback of Lancaster Against Pipelines and a panel discussion featuring Secretary Cindy Dunn, Secretary Patrick McDonnell and Secretary Russell Redding on the state of the restoration effort in Pennsylvania. There were also nine field trips that highlighted local clean water projects, including a green infrastructure bike tour, snokeling in a local river, and two local dairy farm tours.

The Coalition is excited to announce that the 10th annual Conference will be held on May 20-22 in Baltimore, Maryland. Stay-tuned for more information. To learn more about this year’s conference, and to register, visit www.chooseneatwater.org.
THANK YOU TO OUR ANNUAL FUNDERS

Agua Fund, Inc.
The Campbell Foundation
The Curtis & Edith Munson Foundation
Oak Hill Foundation
Prince Charitable Trusts
Rauch Foundation
Shared Earth Foundation
Town Creek Foundation

Choose Clean Water Coalition
20 Ridgely Ave, Suite 203, Annapolis, MD 21401
www.choosescleanwater.org

Photograph courtesy of the Chesapeake Bay Program