March 4, 2019

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 the water they drink directly from the rivers and streams that flow through the cities, towns and farms throughout our six state, 64,000 square mile watershed. Protecting and restoring clean water is essential for human health and for a robust regional economy.

Over the past decade the states and the federal government have cooperated jointly and committed to a massive restoration program in the Bay watershed to restore the Bay and its tributaries by 2025. None of these goals can be met without the leadership, guidance, science and funding support provided by various Federal agencies. A lot of progress has been made, and as we enter the final few years approaching the 2025 deadlines, this is not the time to slow down the premier estuarine restoration effort in the world.

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 2020:

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

Chesapeake Bay Program -- $90 million

We request an increase in funding to $90 million for the base budget of the Chesapeake Bay Program, which coordinates Chesapeake Bay watershed restoration and protection efforts. More
than two-thirds of the program’s funds are passed through to the states and local communities for on-the-ground restoration work through the Small Watershed Grants, Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grants, State Implementation Grants, Chesapeake Bay Regulatory and Accountability Program grants and local government grants. This would be the first increase in funding for the Chesapeake in six years - since a very modest 4% increase in FY15. We are advocating for an additional $17 million to go to the states, local governments and local entities to do on-the-ground restoration that will help the region move toward its clean up goals in 2025.

New data released by the Chesapeake Bay Program and confirmed by all of the states, indicates that there is an additional pollution load resulting from Conowingo Dam no longer trapping sediment and associated nutrient pollution. This “dynamic equilibrium” means that on average, an additional 6 million pounds of nitrogen and 260,000 pounds of phosphorus will now be entering the Bay every year. This was not the case in 2010 when the Chesapeake Bay total maximum daily load (TMDL) was established. All six Chesapeake Bay watershed states and the District of Columbia will have to make up for this added load by 2025, and increased funding will help to achieve this.

We strongly support the highly successful and popular Chesapeake Small Watershed Grants and the Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grants – and request $9 million for each of these critical grant programs. These are two well-run, competitive grant programs that have contributed significantly to water quality improvements throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The demand for these grants far exceed the current funding levels by more than double. These grants go directly to on-the-ground restoration efforts by local governments and communities, including to family farms, and are critical to addressing the new increased pollution loadings from Conowingo Dam. 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 recognize the high priority that Congress has placed on these two grant programs for years and support the effort to get more federal funds on the ground at the local level.

We urge you to fund the Chesapeake Bay Program at $90 million in FY2020, and specify that $9 million of that amount be provided for Small Watershed Grants ($3 million more than in FY19) and $9 million be provided for Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grants ($3 million more than in FY19). We also support additional funding of $5 million for Local Government Implementation Funding and $6 million for priority watersheds to address the additional pollution reductions that must be met over the next six years, due to the Conowingo Dam.

**Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) --$5 billion**

This program is critical to any national initiative to provide a Federal Infrastructure Spending Plan and it provides the lifeblood for the 1,779 local governments throughout the Chesapeake region to secure their water infrastructure. The funding level for the Clean Water SRF has eroded over the years as the clean water needs of local communities have increased dramatically. The Clean Water SRF is one of the funding components of the Clean Water Act to ensure that local governments have federal funding support for the Act’s mandates. The Choose Clean Water Coalition supports efforts in both the House and the Senate, and within the Administration, to enhance investments in key water infrastructure projects nationwide, and the Clean Water SRF is...
the single best mechanism to accomplish that goal. We support tripling the current funding for the Clean Water SRF – and that is what we are requesting. This will help to close the gap between federal infrastructure investment in clean water and the known need. This will also dramatically improve water quality and protect human health in our region and across the nation.

These low interest loans are critical for clean water and for ratepayers in the Chesapeake region and nationwide. We urge you to support the $5 billion funding level that would provide $1.07 billion in low interest loans to local governments in Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia – three times the current level of funding. We also strongly support targeting 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. These funds should be accompanied by federal technical assistance to help states raise awareness of green infrastructure’s benefits and build demand for green projects.

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. In addition to the use of these funds on farms and for nonpoint source pollution, it provides assistance for other pollution reduction and prevention activities in rural areas, such as reforestation, forest protection and stream stabilization and restoration. The Clean Water SRF enables local governments in the Chesapeake watershed to take actions to keep their rivers and streams clean. As the list of clean water infrastructure needs in the Chesapeake region continues to expand, we request that Congress triple the funding of the Clean Water SRF from FY19.

**Department of the Interior**

**U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) -- Chesapeake Ecosystem Science and Monitoring**

-- $12.85 million

We support full funding for the USGS to continue to provide the critical science necessary for restoration and protection efforts for fish, wildlife and the 18 million people in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. USGS monitoring and assessment informs decisions made by the Department of the Interior as well as other federal and state partners in the Chesapeake Bay Program on issues related to fisheries and associated water quality, waterfowl and their habitats, and land protection.

In FY20, USGS, working with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), will put a new focus on habitat conditions for commercial and recreational fisheries. USGS will focus on habitat conditions in the Bay watershed and NOAA on tidal estuaries. This will help state and federal agencies develop a more comprehensive approach to restore and protect fisheries. The comprehensive approach will better tie together Chesapeake Bay Program efforts to: (1) reduce nutrient and sediment pollution under the Bay total maximum daily load (TMDL); (2) mitigate the effects of toxic contaminants; and (3) improve stream and estuary habitats important for fisheries.
USGS provides the expertise to restore and conserve coastal wetlands that are critical habitat for the more than one million waterfowl that winter in the Chesapeake region. USGS is building from studies on black ducks, to identify important coastal areas for other waterfowl, and assess how those habitats are being impacted from sea-level rise and development. The USGS will work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA, and Maryland and Virginia state governments to apply findings to conserve and restore coastal wetlands and associated habitats.

The USGS will be supplying land-change forecasts to inform land protection. The USGS is providing customized forecasts to the National Park Service and the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership (CCP) of where development may impact healthy watersheds and vital lands across the watershed. The CCP is working with states and local land trusts to focus land protection based on the forecasts.

Finally, the USGS is leading an effort to map areas where restoration and conservation efforts will contribute to multiple Chesapeake goals - benefiting people in the watershed as well as fish and wildlife. This mapping is being used by state and federal partners to more effectively focus actions and share available resources.

National Park Service -- Chesapeake Regional Programs -- $3.891 million

The National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office has led efforts on 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.

We are requesting increased funding for the key program currently administered by the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office in the Chesapeake Bay watershed: Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Trails ($3.0 million). Since authorized by Congress in 1998, the Gateways program has been the primary Federal program tool to provide and enhance access to public lands within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Gateways helps to preserve critical landscapes and natural resources in the region and has contributed over $16 million in technical and financial assistance for more than 300 projects in the Bay watershed. We urge you to increase funding for the Gateways program from $2.02 million in FY19 to $3 million in FY20. In addition, we urge continued support for coordinating programs through the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office ($495,000). In addition, as in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, we urge you to extend the authorization for the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Trails program, specifically for two more years.

We also support continued funding for the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail at $396,000. We are, however, very concerned with the recent administrative transfer of this Historic Trail program from the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office to the Colonial National Historic Park in Virginia. The John Smith Trail was created by Congress in 2006 and the authorizing language is clear that the intent was for this program to be integrated into other efforts under the Chesapeake Bay Program, including the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Trails program, all of which is coordinated and administered by the Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office in Maryland. We urge Congress to reassert your intent that the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail be administered by the National Park Service
Chesapeake Bay Office in Annapolis, Maryland, as it has been since 2007.

Department of the Interior/U.S. Department of Agriculture

National Park Service/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/U.S. Forest Service - Land and Water Conservation Fund Priority Projects in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed - $16.7705 million

We strongly support full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. In particular, we support continuation of the strategic use of funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for priority projects in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. These efforts target conservation funds for critical priority landscapes throughout the Chesapeake Bay region. The following projects would protect more than 6,000 acres of nationally significant resources, such as migratory bird habitat, spawning areas for economically important fish and shellfish, significant forest resources and projects to enhance public access.

- U.S Fish and Wildlife Service- James River National Wildlife Refuge (VA) – $750,000 (255 acres)
- U.S Fish and Wildlife Service – Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge (VA) - $3 million (968 acres)
- U.S. Forest Service – George Washington and Jefferson National Forests (VA) - $435,500 (144 acres)
- U.S. Forest Service – George Washington and Jefferson National Forests (VA) - $4,285,000 (2,897 acres)
- National Park Service – Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail (VA) - $5,000,000 (1,400 acres)
- National Park Service – Richmond National Battlefield Park (VA) - $3,300,000 (380 acres)

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@choosescleanwater.org with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Action Together Northeastern Pennsylvania
Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley
American Chestnut Land Trust
American Rivers
Anacostia Riverkeeper
Anacostia Watershed Society
Annapolis Green
Arundel Rivers Federation
Audubon Maryland/DC
Audubon Naturalist Society
Audubon Society of Northern Virginia
Back Creek Conservancy
Baltimore Tree Trust

Blue Heron Environmental Network
Blue Ridge Watershed Coalition
Blue Water Baltimore
Buttermilk Valley Alliance
Cacapon Institute
Capital Region Land Conservancy
Catskill Mountainkeeper
Center for Progressive Reform
Chapman Forest Foundation
Chemung River Friends
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
Chesapeake Conservancy
Chesapeake Legal Alliance
Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage
Clean Fairfax
Clean Water Action
Clean Water Linganore
Coalition for Smarter Growth
Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania
DC Environmental Network
Delaware Nature Society
Ducks Unlimited
Earth Conservation Corps
Earthworks
Earth Forum of Howard County
Eastern Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation
Eastern Shore Land Conservancy
Elizabeth River Project
Environmental Integrity Project
Environmental Justice Center of Chestnut Hill
United Church
Environmental Working Group
Experience Learning
Float Fishermen of Virginia
Friends of Accotink Creek
Friends of Frederick County
Friends of Herring Run Park
Friends of Little Hunting Creek
Friends of Lower Beaverdam Creek
Friends of Quincy Run
Friends of Sligo Creek
Friends of the Bohemia
Friends of the Cacapon River
Friends of Dyke Marsh
Friends of the Middle River
Friends of the Nanticoke River
Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River
Friends of the Rappahannock
Friends of St. Clements Bay
Goose Creek Association
Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake
James River Association
Lackawanna River Conservation Association
Lancaster Farmland Trust
Little Falls Watershed Alliance
Lower Shore Land Trust
Lower Susquehanna Riverkeeper
Lynnhaven River NOW
Maryland Conservation Council
Maryland Environmental Health Network

Maryland League of Conservation Voters
Maryland Native Plant Society
Maryland Nonprofits
Maryland Science Center
Mattawoman Watershed Society
Mid-Atlantic Council Trout Unlimited
Middle Susquehanna Riverkeeper
Muddy Branch Alliance
National Aquarium
National Parks Conservation Association
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
Nature Abounds
NeighborSpace of Baltimore County
New York League of Conservation Voters
New York State Council of Trout Unlimited
Neighbors of the Northwest Branch
Otsego County Conservation Association
Otsego Land Trust
Partnership for Smarter Growth
Patapsco Heritage Greenway
Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust
PennEnvironment
PennFuture
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited
Piedmont Environmental Council
Potomac Conservancy
Potomac Riverkeeper
Potomac Riverkeeper Network
Potomac Valley Audubon Society
Queen Anne’s Conservation Association
Preservation Maryland
Rachel Carson Council
Restore America’s Estuaries
Rappahannock League for Environmental Protection
Richmond Audubon Society
Rivanna Conservation Alliance
St. Mary’s River Watershed Association
Savage River Watershed Association
Severn River Association
Shenandoah Riverkeeper Shenandoah Valley Network
ShoreRivers
Sidney Center Improvement Group
Sierra Club – Maryland Chapter
Sleepy Creek Watershed Association
Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project
Southern Environmental Law Center
Southern Maryland Audubon Society
SouthWings
Susquehanna Heritage
Talbot Preservation Alliance
The Downstream Project
Transition Howard County
Trash Free Maryland
Trout Unlimited
Upper Potomac Riverkeeper
Upper Susquehanna Coalition

Virginia Association of Biological Farming
Virginia Conservation Network
Virginia League of Conservation Voters
Warm Springs Watershed Association
Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore, Inc.
Waterkeepers Chesapeake
West Virginia Citizen Action Group
West Virginia Environmental Council
West Virginia Highlands Conservancy
West Virginia Rivers Coalition
Wetlands Watch
Wicomico Environmental Trust