DEAR FRIENDS OF THE CHOOSE CLEAN WATER COALITION,

We are pleased to present you with the Choose Clean Water Coalition’s first ever Annual Report, highlighting the incredible successes that we as a coalition have achieved over the past year. More than 220 members worked together to advocate for meaningful change for the Chesapeake Bay watershed at the local, regional, and federal level. We forged new alliances with important stakeholders, launched a region-wide strategic communications campaign to drive change, and made an unprecedented commitment to bring increased diversity, equity, and inclusion to our community.

By collaborating on these goals as a Coalition, we are able to achieve more. Looking to 2017 and beyond, we are adapting our approaches to address a changing landscape. Recognizing the importance of the agricultural sector to our clean water goals, we adopted a new policy priority for 2017 focusing on agriculture. With a changed federal outlook, our efforts at the state and local level to reduce pollution are more important than ever.

When we harness the collective power of the region’s advocacy community to accomplish our goals, we will achieve long lasting success for clean water.

JILL WITKOWSKI HEAPS
Director

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SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR STATE AND OUTREACH LEADS
Ben Alexandro • Mariah Davis • Brenna Goggin • David Lillard • Tristie Lockwood • Jennifer Quinn • Michael Seltitz

WEBSITE
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2016
225 MEMBERS of the Choose Clean Water Coalition
9 INFORMATIONAL WEBINARS CONDUCTED
19 ADVOCACY LETTERS SIGNED ON TO COALITION ADVOCACY LETTERS

WHAT THE COALITION CAN PROVIDE TO MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

The Coalition supports member organizations through advocacy and policy support, communications assistance, and information sharing and networking.

ADVOCACY AND POLICY SUPPORT

The Coalition advocates for meaningful change at the federal level, as well as through state-specific, targeted campaigns which advance strong policy, greater accountability, and increased funding for water quality improvement.

COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANCE

How we communicate about clean water is vital to our success. Coalition staff and outside communication professionals assist in developing and implementing messages that articulate clean water goals to our audiences, including local decision makers.

INFORMATION SHARING AND NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

With more than 220 members, the Coalition offers significant opportunities and resources for information sharing and networking between organizational members through workgroups, state specific calls, pass-through grants, webinars, and our annual conference.

Policy Priorities

FEDERAL
Promote and defend federal policies and investment that support Chesapeake Bay watershed restoration and protection efforts.

POLLOUTION LIMITS
Ensure Chesapeake Bay pollution limits continue to make progress towards returning clean water to the region.

STORMWATER
Strengthen policies and permits to stop polluted runoff in urbanized areas.

SHELLE
Protect public health, communities and regional water resources from the impacts of natural gas development.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE
Promote environmental justice to ensure underserved and overburdened communities share equitably in the benefits of clean water.

AGRICULTURE
*New in 2017: Ensure the agricultural sector achieves pollution reductions necessary to reach the 2017 and 2025 water quality goals.
In an effort to increase communications capacity around the watershed, the Coalition launched a strategic communications campaign. The campaign brought together advocates and used polling to identify messaging and themes around clean water issues that resonate with Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia residents. The research will help identify untapped audiences in the Chesapeake Bay watershed that are primed for action for clean water.

MD: Our Maryland state lead and Maryland Coalition members worked together to collect more than 50 stormwater success stories from across Maryland to highlight on the ground projects that reduce stormwater pollution. The Coalition plans to use these stories to educate local government officials about stormwater projects and the need for robust local financing.

PA: The Coalition was instrumental in working with Congress and the Obama Administration to allocate $28.8 million for agricultural conservation in south-central Pennsylvania. Coalition staff advocated for the funding to White House officials and worked with the EPA and US Department of Agriculture on the proposal.

NY: In an effort to engage more organizations from the far northern areas of the watershed, the Coalition partnered with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, the Sidney Center Improvement Group, and other local member organizations to host the First Annual Upper Susquehanna Watershed Forum in Oneonta, New York. The day brought together over 90 people from the EPA, state agencies, local government, academia, and the non-profit sector, to discuss the state of the Upper Watershed, build new partnerships, and share successes.

WV: The West Virginia Rivers Coalition launched its 2016 OneWatershed initiative, a program designed to connect local watershed organizations with high school and college students. The fellows analyzed each watershed group’s website, newsletters, and social media for “youth appeal” and created event and outreach plans for upcoming events designed to engage younger demographics.

VA: In response to major gas pipeline proposals through the Central Appalachians, Coalition members Shenandoah Valley Network, Wild Virginia, West Virginia Rivers Coalition, Southern Environmental Law Center, and Shenandoah Riverkeeper helped launch two highly-effective partnerships. The 51-member Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance and the environmental watchdog Dominion Pipeline Monitoring Coalition are drawing attention to the risks of pipeline construction through rugged forest terrain and Bay headwater streams.

Regional: In February, the Coalition partnered with the Audubon Naturalist Society on its first-ever Black History Month Event titled Taking Nature Black. Over 100 people attended this day-long celebration, which brought together environmentalists and naturalists from the region to participate in listening sessions and panel discussions on environmental advocacy, working cross-culturally, and living green.

NY: This past year, over 60 Coalition members attended the 4th Annual Chesapeake Bay Day on Capitol Hill. The visit was a key component of our lobbying efforts to secure $73 million for the Environmental Protection Agency’s Chesapeake Bay Program, and $12 million specifically for on the ground restoration projects in the watershed.

Watershed-wide: In an effort to increase communications capacity around the watershed, the Coalition launched a strategic communications campaign. The campaign brought together advocates and used polling to identify messaging and themes around clean water issues that resonate with Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia residents. The research will help identify untapped audiences in the Chesapeake Bay watershed that are primed for action for clean water.

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DC: In October 2016, the Anacostia Watershed Society co-hosted the Festival del Rio Anacostia, a multicultural and bilingual celebration designed to engage local Latinos in the restoration of the Anacostia River. Over 300 people attended, most of them local families and other members of the public.

DC: In October 2016, the Anacostia Watershed Society co-hosted the Festival del Rio Anacostia, a multicultural and bilingual celebration designed to engage local Latinos in the restoration of the Anacostia River. Over 300 people attended, most of them local families and other members of the public.

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The Coalition’s annual conference is designed to foster an environment to share ideas, learn communications strategies, and build relationships among our member organizations. In 2016, more than 240 people from across the watershed attended the Coalition’s Clean Water Conference: Bridging to New Partnerships conference in Annapolis, Maryland. The conference featured keynote speaker EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy. We heard from Virginia Tech researchers on the Flint, Michigan water crisis and seventh generation farmer and New York Times bestselling author, Forrest Pritchard, and other influential environmental professionals and advocates.

As part of the Coalition’s work to promote diversity, we facilitated a cultural competency training at the conference, to help participants build awareness of how cultural differences can impact people in an organization and to motivate participants to rethink their behavior and attitude toward others.

We kicked off a Young Professionals of Color Mentorship Program, pairing a diverse pool of future environmental leaders with an equally diverse pool of mentors who will help facilitate their rise to oversee the future of our green community. Over the last few years, the Choose Clean Water Coalition has made an unprecedented commitment to bring increased diversity to the Chesapeake Bay community, and this session helped to further that goal. Overall, the conference provided energy and enthusiasm toward a more inclusive, diverse, equitable, and successful Chesapeake Bay restoration.

Please join us on May 23-24 in Charlottesville, VA for the 8th Annual Choose Clean Water Coalition Conference. To learn more about this year’s conference and to register, visit www.choosecleanwater.org.