



CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION · APRIL 2024

# FEDERAL AGENCY BUDGET REQUEST FISCAL YEAR 2025

**L**AST YEAR, THE CHESAPEAKE BAY PARTNERSHIP CELEBRATED THE 40th anniversary of the signing of the first Chesapeake Bay Agreement. This simple one-page document put in motion one of the most ambitious and successful watershed restoration projects ever attempted. Achieved through the collaborative work of federal, state, local, and nongovernmental partners, and more importantly, a willing and supportive citizenry, we have a cleaner watershed than we did in 1983, despite the environmental challenges brought on by an ever-expanding population and now, climate change.

In the last year, the benefits of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 have allowed us to increase the pace and intensity of our work. Both bills provided significant new federal resources for restoration. And each federal dollar spent leverages three more from state, local, and private partners.

As Congress begins deliberations on the FY 2025 federal budget, the Chesapeake Bay Commission offers this report to identify the federal funding required to continue the success. We also highlight four priorities where targeted action will strategically accelerate the achievement of even greater progress.

## **Who We Are and What We Do**

The Chesapeake Bay Commission is a tri-state legislative commission with bipartisan membership from Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. We work to advance policy at all levels of government to revitalize and protect the Chesapeake Bay watershed. We are the only legislative branch member of the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership. The joint federal-state effort is producing tangible results in cleaner water, healthier fisheries, and greater economic and environmental resilience.



**Chesapeake Bay Commission**  
*Policy for the Bay*

# The Commission's Top Budget Priorities

## ✓ ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

### **Geographic Programs — Chesapeake Bay: \$93,000K** (FY24 level \$92,000K)

These monies maintain the nucleus of the federal-state partnership to restore the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The majority of the funding supports grants to state and local governments, and NGOs, for project implementation to achieve improvements to water quality and the enhancement of habitat for living resources. Program funds are also used to coordinate the complex science and monitoring efforts that drive restoration. As we near the 2025 goal for clean water, the challenge and urgency of our work grows.

## ✓ U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

### **Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense (WILD): \$15,000K** (FY24 level \$8,000K)

America's Conservation Enhancement Act created the Chesapeake WILD program in 2020. The law authorizes up to \$15 million in grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for restoring fish and wildlife habitat in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The Commission supports fully funding this program to enhance USFWS's critical role in the broader Bay partnership. This non-regulatory program enhances fish and wildlife habitat throughout the Bay watershed by collaborating with local partners to implement on-the-ground projects.

## ✓ U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### **Rural Development — Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program: +\$5,000K** (FY24 level +\$3,000K)

We urge Congress to provide an additional \$5 million for the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program to help defray costs for

seafood processors in Maryland and Virginia to install additional processing infrastructure for invasive blue catfish. As an apex predator within the Bay watershed, invasive blue catfish are having a significant and detrimental impact on valuable native species such as the iconic blue crab and menhaden. Increased processing capacity would help limit these detrimental impacts and address the current regulatory dichotomy wherein catfish are inspected by USDA while all other seafood is inspected by FDA. This duplicative regulatory framework has made it difficult to bring invasive blue catfish to market, causing ecological harm to the Bay and creating an economic burden for commercial watermen. These resources for processors will help create a functional cost-effective market for blue catfish to help manage this invasive species issue and protect the Chesapeake Bay's natural ecosystem.

## ✓ U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

### **Office of the Secretary — Military Installation Resilience Project Acceleration Program (new): \$30,000K**

From the beginnings of the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership, the Department of Defense has been an engaged federal participant. Military installations occupy 400,000 acres within the Bay watershed, making their impacts significant. Despite the considerable efforts of the DoD, environmental programs have understandably competed for dollars against programs seen as more mission-critical. The Commission has identified the need for a dedicated program and funding to support climate resilience and stormwater management on installations and is working to have such a program established in the National Defense Authorization Act.

# FY 2025 Budget Request Summary

## Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

- ✓ EPA — Geographic Programs — Chesapeake Bay: \$93,000K
- ✓ EPA — Nonpoint Source (Sec. 319) Grants: \$190,000K
- ✓ EPA — Pollution Control (Sec. 106) Grants: \$243,873K
- ✓ EPA — Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund: \$3,250,000K
- ✓ DOI-USGS — Land Management Research Program: \$55,806K, with \$9,000K for Chesapeake Bay Activities
- ✓ DOI-NPS — Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Trails Program: \$6,000K
- ✓ DOI-USFWS — Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense (WILD): \$15,000K
- ✓ DOI-USFWS — Habitat Conservation — Coastal Programs: \$14,476K
- ✓ USDA-Forest Service — Forest Stewardship Program: \$15,652K
- ✓ Land and Water Conservation Fund (all agencies): \$900,000K

## Energy and Water Development

- ✓ USACE-Construction — Chesapeake Bay Environmental Restoration and Protection: \$12,500K
- ✓ USACE-Construction — Chesapeake Bay Oyster Recovery: \$7,500K
- ✓ USACE-Construction — Continuing Authorities Program — Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration (Sec. 206): \$15,000K; Emergency Streambank and Shoreline Protection (Sec. 14): \$11,000K
- ✓ USACE-Investigations — Coordination with Other Water Resource Agencies: \$1,000K

## Commerce and Justice, Science and Related Agencies

- ✓ NOAA-NMFS — Habitat Conservation and Restoration: \$61,500K
- ✓ NOAA-NMFS — Regional Councils and Fisheries Commissions: \$46,297K
- ✓ NOAA-Office of Education — B-WET Regional Programs: \$12,000K
- ✓ NOAA-Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research — National Sea Grant College Program: \$163,700K

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

- ✓ USDA-Rural Development — Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program: +\$5,000K
- ✓ USDA-NRCS — Conservation Operations: \$1,200,000K
- ✓ USDA-NRCS/FSA — 2018 Farm Bill Programs: Full Funding of Mandatory Conservation Programs

## Defense

- ✓ DOD-Office of the Secretary — Military Installation Resilience Project Acceleration Program (new): \$30,000K
- ✓ DOD-Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program: \$200,000K

# FY 2025 Budget Request, Line-by-Line

## Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Subcommittee

### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

#### ✓ Geographic Programs — Chesapeake Bay: \$93,000K (FY24 level \$92,000K)

See Page 2 for program narrative.

#### ✓ Nonpoint Source (Sec. 319) Grants: \$190,000K (FY24 level \$182,000K)

An overwhelming majority of Americans — 215 million (more than 70 percent) — live within two miles of a polluted lake, river, stream, or coastal area. States have identified more than 600,000 miles of rivers and streams, more than 13 million acres of lakes, and more than 500,000 acres of wetlands that do not meet state water quality goals. The Chesapeake region is no exception, with 21 percent of sampled streams ranked in poor or very poor condition. Pennsylvania alone has 17,544 miles of rivers and streams impaired for aquatic life, fifth most in the U.S. The Sec. 319 grants are a key resource in the effort to improve and protect our nation's waters. In FY 2023, this program provided \$8.9 million for Bay restoration.

#### ✓ Pollution Control (Sec. 106) Grants: \$243,873K (FY 24 level \$237,000K)

This national program helps states in the Chesapeake Bay watershed manage the federal water pollution permit program, or NPDES. Under the Clean Water Act, it is unlawful to discharge any pollutant into U.S. waters without a NPDES permit. Without adequate funding, this permit process gets bogged down, resulting in business losses and reduced permit monitoring and enforcement. In FY 2023, this program provided \$12.6 million for Bay restoration.

#### ✓ Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund: \$3,250,000K (FY24 level \$1,638,861K)

Financial support for this program was substantially increased by the Infrastructure and Jobs Act through

gradually increasing capitalization grants. Additionally, the Act also increased the authorized funding level for the program each year from FY 2022 to FY 2026. The Commission requests federal funding at the authorized level for FY 2025.

This program provides low-cost financing to local communities to improve water-related infrastructure and local water quality. States have the flexibility to fund a range of projects that address their highest priority water quality needs. Using a combination of federal and state funds, state programs provide loans to eligible recipients to: construct municipal wastewater facilities; control nonpoint sources of pollution; build decentralized wastewater treatment systems; create green infrastructure projects; protect estuaries; and fund other water quality projects. In FY 2023, this program provided \$57.5 million for Bay restoration, and the enhancements from the Infrastructure and Jobs Act provided an additional \$171.1 million.

### DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR

#### U.S. Geological Survey

#### ✓ Land Management Research Program (LMRP): \$55,806K, with \$9,000K for Chesapeake Bay Activities (FY24 level \$54,806K, with \$8,000K for Chesapeake Bay Activities)

Decision makers at all levels rely on U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) science to devise and implement plans to reduce the impacts of nutrients, sediment, and toxic contaminants; improve habitat for freshwater fisheries and waterfowl; and focus land protection. USGS monitoring and analysis allow us to determine the effectiveness of our strategies.

We request a modest increase of \$1 million within the LMRP to expand and refine USGS work in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. A critical need of the partnership is to accelerate our understanding of progress towards restoration goals and outcomes, and the impacts of our management actions. This can only be done with the best science that USGS can provide. The Commission requests specific report language within the LMRP budget as follows “\$9,000,000 for

Chesapeake Bay activities and maintenance of effort in other USGS program areas that support Chesapeake Bay studies.”

## National Park Service

### ✓ Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Trails

**Program: \$6,000K** (FY24 level \$3,027K)

Through the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Trails Program, the NPS provides unique and vital assistance to state, local, and nongovernmental partners throughout the watershed to increase public access to the Bay, to support educational programming and outdoor recreation, and to foster conservation stewardship among residents and visitors. First authorized by Congress in 1998, the Program has contributed over \$30 million in technical and financial assistance across the Bay watershed. Through these efforts, the Program supports local economies through the promotion of outdoor recreation and heritage tourism.

Despite serving communities and partners across the watershed, funding for the Gateways Program has not kept up with growing demand over its 25-year history. Twenty years ago, in 2004 the Gateways Program funding was \$2.469 million — it has increased very slowly to only \$3.027 million in FY 2023. We respectfully request that this program be increased to \$6 million in the FY 2025 budget to help meet the tremendous demand for access to our natural, historic, and cultural resources in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. This request is consistent with legislation to establish a Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area, which would provide for an authorized funding level of \$6 million.

## U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

### ✓ Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense (WILD): \$15,000K

(FY24 level \$8,000K)

See Page 2 for program narrative.

### ✓ Habitat Conservation — Coastal Programs: \$14,476K

(FY24 level \$13,000K)

This is a voluntary habitat conservation program that provides technical and financial assistance, in collaboration with partners, for the benefit of

protected species and resources. The Chesapeake Bay is one of 24 priority coastal ecosystems. Funding includes support for the Chesapeake Bay Nutria Eradication Project.

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Forest Service

#### ✓ Forest Stewardship: \$15,652K

(FY24 level \$12,000K)

This is the primary Forest Service program focused on private forestland management and conservation. Priority uses include restoring riparian forest buffers, adding urban tree canopy, and protecting high-value forest.

## ALL AGENCIES

### ✓ Land and Water Conservation Fund (all agencies): \$900,000K (mandatory funding)

The LWCF is the nation’s premier land conservation program. Through locally driven projects, it provides for the permanent protection of landscapes to safeguard the rivers and streams feeding into the Bay, while supporting local economies through recreation and tourism. Each year, a handful of top-ranked projects within the Bay watershed are selected for funding.

## Energy and Water Development Subcommittee

## U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

### ✓ Construction — Chesapeake Bay Environmental Restoration and Protection: \$12,500K

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) plays a vital role in Chesapeake Bay restoration. The Corps’ Comprehensive Plan provides a strategic roadmap for investments in aquatic ecosystem restoration throughout the watershed. Under Section 510, USACE is provided an enhanced opportunity to partner with non-federal sponsors to design and construct projects.

✓ **Construction — Chesapeake Bay Oyster Recovery: \$7,500K** (FY24 level \$7,450K)

The Corps is also very active in oyster restoration. With current populations at less than one percent of historic levels, the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement targets oyster restoration as a key objective. The Commission recommends report language to support this work.

✓ **Construction — Continuing Authorities Program — Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration (Sec. 206): \$15,000K** (FY24 level \$8,000K);  
**Emergency Streambank and Shoreline Protection (Sec. 14): \$11,000K** (FY24 level \$5,000K)

These national programs provide funding for habitat restoration and for projects to reduce flood damage to public infrastructure in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

✓ **Investigations — Coordination with Other Water Resource Agencies: \$1,000K** (FY24 level \$1,000K)

The DoD and the Corps are full partners in the joint federal-state Chesapeake Bay restoration effort. This funding supports Corps staff to serve their critical role as programmatic and technical advisors to the Partnership in their areas of expertise, such as oyster restoration, wetland creation, and flood control.

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

### **NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION**

#### **National Marine Fisheries Service**

✓ **Habitat Conservation and Restoration (HCR): \$61,500K** (FY24 level \$56,184K)

NOAA's Chesapeake Bay Office is budgeted within HCR. In FY 2023, this program provided \$5.7 million to support critical fisheries efforts, such as population assessment, restoration, and habitat

improvement. Critical species such as oysters, blue crabs, striped bass, and menhaden have huge social and economic importance. The Commission supports report language to specifically fund enhanced oyster restoration efforts within the Chesapeake Bay at \$3.5 million and an increase in funding to \$7.3 million to support this effort and fisheries science more generally.

✓ **Regional Councils and Fisheries Commissions: \$46,297K** (FY24 level \$44,297K)

Regional fishery coordination is critical to the stewardship and sustainable harvest of our migratory fisheries, both commercial and recreational. Working with state representatives from the executive and legislative branches, policy and management plans are crafted based on the best science and stakeholder engagement.

#### **Office of Education**

✓ **Bay-Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Regional Programs: \$12,000K** (FY24 level \$8,700K)

NOAA's B-WET is an environmental education program that promotes locally based STEM learning for K-12 students and teachers. B-WET provides competitive grants to encourage capacity building and partnerships. In FY 2023, this program provided \$2.8 million towards Chesapeake stewardship and environmental literacy. We request an increase to \$3 million for the Chesapeake given the success of this program.

#### **Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research**

✓ **National Sea Grant College Program: \$163,700K (includes Aquaculture Research Program)** (FY24 level \$94,000K)

The Sea Grant program works to enhance the practical use and conservation of coastal and marine resources to create a sustainable economy and environment. Within the Bay watershed, priorities include research to support sustainable fisheries and aquaculture. In FY 2023, this program provided \$6 million towards Bay restoration. This request is consistent with that of the Sea Grant Association.

## Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA, and Related Agencies Subcommittee

### U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

- ✓ **Rural Development — Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program: +\$5,000K** (FY24 level +\$3,000K)

See page 2 for details.

- ✓ **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) — Conservation Operations: \$1,200,000K** (FY24 level \$914,899K)

Conservation technical assistance (CTA) is the foundation of NRCS's ability to deliver effective conservation. By collaborating with agricultural producers to prepare and implement conservation plans, sediment and nutrient loads to our waterways are directly reduced.

In the jurisdictional Phase III Watershed Implementation Plans, over 80 percent of the pollutant load reductions are planned to come from the agricultural sector. This can only happen with increased CTA. The Commission also supports targeted, enhanced CTA to the Susquehanna River basin and other high-impact agricultural basins in the Bay watershed. Funding enhancements to Farm Bill programs in the Inflation Reduction Act make this request even more timely.

- ✓ **NRCS and Farm Service Agency (FSA): Full funding of mandatory conservation programs authorized in 2018 Farm Bill**

Farm Bill programs provide the financial backbone of the region's agricultural conservation efforts. In FY 2023, \$97.2 million was programmed for cost-share assistance to Bay watershed farmers. These dollars are critical to achieving the pollution reductions necessary to achieve clean water throughout the watershed. Core programs include the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

## Defense Subcommittee

### DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

- ✓ **Office of the Secretary — Military Installation Resilience Project Acceleration Program (new): \$30,000K**

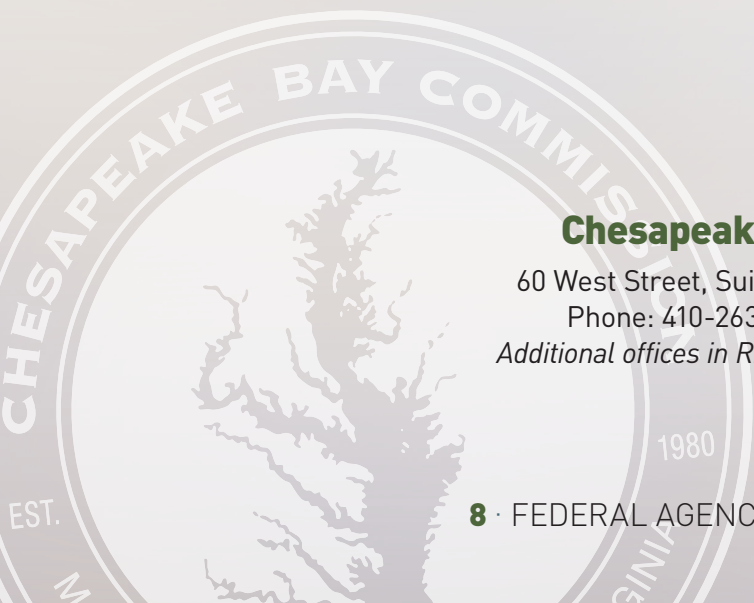
See page 2 for details.

- ✓ **Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program (REPI): \$200,000K** (FY24 level \$200,000K)

The REPI Program is the Department of Defense's key tool to protect the military's mission to avoid encroachment and land-use conflicts near installations. It provides funding for conservation easements to buffer the off-base impacts of military activities, such as flight or ordnance training. There are 14 installations with active REPI partnerships located in the Chesapeake Bay watershed; these land conservation efforts also help us meet our nutrient reduction goals.

### In Conclusion

Congress has shown tremendous support for the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort, resulting in significant progress towards meeting our mutual goal of a healthy Chesapeake Bay. The Commission's FY 2025 funding recommendations will allow us to continue and enhance our progress. Watershed restoration can be achieved through the collaborative will, strength, and determination of federal, state, and local governments, their legislatures, and the public.



## **Chesapeake Bay Commission**

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*Additional offices in Richmond, VA and Harrisburg, PA*