

Chesapeake Bay Commission Federal Agency Budget Request — Fiscal Year 2027

With the support of Congress and the Chesapeake Bay’s Congressional Delegation, the Chesapeake Bay Program remains one of the most ambitious and successful watershed restoration efforts, backed by a state-led, federally supported, and locally driven partnership. A refreshed *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement* is now in place to guide the next 15 years of our partnership. As Congress begins deliberations on the FY 2027 federal budget, the Chesapeake Bay Commission offers this report identifying the federal funding needed for continued success.



The Commission’s Top Budget Priorities

1. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

- Geographic Programs - Chesapeake Bay: \$96,000K (FY26 level \$93,000K)

This funding maintains the nucleus of the federal-state partnership to restore the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Most of the funding supports grants to state and local governments as well as nongovernmental partners for projects that achieve water quality and living resource improvements. The requested increase would sustain the coordinated science and monitoring efforts that drive restoration and provide critical support as the Program marks a new chapter of partnership with the watershed’s tribal nations.

2. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) - Conservation Operations: \$1,050,000K (FY26 level \$850,000K)

Conservation technical assistance (CTA) is the foundation of NRCS’s ability to support the viability of local farms and deliver effective conservation programs that reduce sediment and nutrient loads to local waterways in collaboration with agricultural producers. CTA funding in FY24 and FY25 held steady at \$915M but experienced a \$65M cut in FY26. Bay states are counting on voluntary agricultural conservation practices to meet their watershed implementation plans. That is only possible through the sound expertise and trusted relationships provided by sustained CTA.

3. U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

- Biological Threats and Invasive Species Research Program: +\$1,000K and Report Language: \$1,000,000 to coordinate an adaptive invasive catfish research framework for the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

Since the introduction of blue and flathead catfish to the Chesapeake Bay region, their population and range have rapidly expanded, posing a threat to native and economically important fisheries. These invasive species warrant research to recommend population reduction targets, identify effective methods for removal, and limit ecological impacts. As a respected, non-regulatory partner, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) is well-placed to coordinate research efforts for invasive catfish in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries in full partnership with the relevant state and federal agencies.

4. U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

- Land Management Research Program (LMRP): +\$1,000K, with \$9,000K for Chesapeake Bay Activities (FY26 level \$50,000K, with \$8,000K for Chesapeake Bay Activities)

Decision makers at all levels rely on 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. A modest increase of \$1 million within the LMRP would help USGS improve monitoring and accelerate our understanding of the effectiveness of our strategies and overall progress towards restoration goals. The Commission requests specific report language within the LMRP budget: “\$9,000,000 for Chesapeake Bay activities and maintenance of effort in other USGS program areas that support Chesapeake Bay studies.”

5. U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

- Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense (WILD): \$15,000K (FY26 level \$8,000K)

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

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. The only legislative branch member of the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership, we work to advance policy at all levels of government to revitalize and protect the Chesapeake Bay watershed and provide cleaner water, healthier fisheries, and greater economic and environmental resilience.



FY 2027 Budget Request, Line-by-Line

Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

- **Geographic Programs — Chesapeake Bay: \$96,000K (FY26 level \$93,000K)**

See Top Budget Priorities (Page 1) for program narrative.

- **Nonpoint Source (Sec. 319) Grants: \$182,000K (FY26 level \$175,250K)**

Section 319 grants are a key resource in the effort to improve and protect our nation's waters. This program provides funding to states to address impaired waterways as identified by the requirements of the Clean Water Act. Based on data from the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership, in the Chesapeake region 32% of the stream miles are "unhealthy."

- **Pollution Control (Sec. 106) Grants: \$237,000K (FY26 level \$226,435K)**

Under the Clean Water Act, it is unlawful to discharge any pollutant into U.S. waters without a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System, or NPDES, permit. This national program helps states in the Chesapeake Bay watershed manage NPDES. Without adequate funding, this permit process gets bogged down, resulting in business losses and reduced permit monitoring and enforcement.

- **Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund: \$3,250,000K (FY26 level \$1,638,861K)**

This program provides low-cost financing to local communities to improve water-related infrastructure and local water quality. 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.

DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR

U.S. Geological Survey

- **Land Management Research Program (LMRP): +\$1,000K, with \$9,000K for Chesapeake Bay Activities (FY26 level \$50,000K, with \$8,000K for Chesapeake Bay Activities)**

See Top Budget Priorities (Page 1) for program narrative.

- **Biological Threats and Invasive Species Research Program: +\$1,000K with Report Language**

See Top Budget Priorities (Page 1) for program narrative.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

- **Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense (WILD): \$15,000K (FY26 level \$8,000K)**

See Top Budget Priorities (Page 1) for program narrative.

- **Habitat Conservation — Coastal Programs: \$13,000K (FY26 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.

National Park Service

- **Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Trails Program: \$3,027K (FY26 level \$3,027K)**

Through the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Trails Program, the National Park Service (NPS) provides unique and vital assistance to state, local, and non-governmental partners throughout the watershed to increase public access to the Bay, promote educational programming and outdoor recreation, support local economies, and foster conservation stewardship among residents and visitors. Funding for the Gateways Program, however, has not kept up with growing demand over time. In 2004, Gateways Program funding was \$2.469 million.

Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement

- **Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Reclamation Program: \$166,975K (FY26 level \$166,975K) with Report Language**

AML reclamation projects address the hazards posed by abandoned mines, including poor water quality for local communities. Funding levels take into consideration historic coal production, crucial for watershed states like Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, and Maryland, which have an unmet need of \$9.2 billion according to the AML inventory system. Recent cuts to AML funding may delay progress on projects throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. We urge you to include level annual funding for AML, including \$134 million for economic revitalization with continued priority to Appalachian states with the highest amount of unfunded Priority 1 and Priority 2 AML sites, as well as report language retaining all supplemental AML funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Multi-Agency

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

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (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.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

- **Forest Stewardship: \$12,000K (FY26 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.

Energy and Water Development

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

- **Construction - Chesapeake Bay Environmental Restoration and Protection: \$14,350K**

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

- **Construction - Chesapeake Bay Oyster Recovery: \$7,500K with Report Language**

The Corps is very active in oyster restoration, a key objective of the Chesapeake Bay Program. The Commission recommends report language to support this work: *"The Committee is supportive of the Corps' work on the Chesapeake Bay Oyster Recovery program and urges the Corps to include appropriate funding in future budget submissions for these efforts."*

- **Investigations - Coordination with Other Water Resource Agencies: \$2,000K (FY26 level \$900K)**

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.

- **Investigations – Planning Assistance to States: \$5,000K (FY26 level \$5,000K)**
- **Investigations – Flood Plain Management Services: \$15,000K (FY26 level \$15,000K)**

These national programs provide technical assistance in the areas of flood risk management, ecosystem restoration, and navigation, as well as water supply and water resilience.

Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

National Marine Fisheries Service

- **Habitat Conservation and Restoration (HCR): \$57,864K (FY26 level \$57,864K) with Report Language**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Chesapeake Bay Office is budgeted within HCR to support critical fisheries efforts, such as population assessment, restoration, and habitat improvement. Iconic species such as oysters, blue crabs, striped bass, and menhaden are of great social and economic importance to the Bay. The Commission supports report language to specifically fund enhanced oyster restoration efforts within the Chesapeake Bay at \$3.25 million (the FY26 level).

- **Regional Councils and Fisheries Commissions: \$45,000K (FY26 level \$45,000K)**

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: \$8,700K (FY26 level \$8,700K)**

NOAA's B-WET program 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.

Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research

- **National Sea Grant College Program: \$120,378K (FY26 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. This request is consistent with that of the Sea Grant Association.

Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA, and Related Agencies

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

- **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) - Conservation Operations: \$1,050,000K (FY26 level \$850,000K)**

See Top Budget Priorities (Page 1) for program narrative.

- **NRCS and Farm Service Agency (FSA): Full Funding of Mandatory Farm Bill Conservation Programs**

Farm Bill programs provide the financial backbone of the region's agricultural conservation efforts. 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).

- **National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA): Funding at authorized level for Higher Education Challenge Grants and Secondary and 2-year Post-Secondary Education Grants**

Funding these grants and fellowships at the authorized level would help make more resources available for workforce development at 2-year and 4-year institutions to train new conservation technical assistance providers.

Defense Subcommittee

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

- **Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program (REPI): \$220,000K (FY26 level \$220,000K)**

The REPI Program protects mission readiness funding for conservation easements to avoid encroachment and land-use conflicts near installations and buffer the off-base impacts of military activities, such as flight or ordnance training. Tens of thousands of acres have been protected within the Bay watershed through REPI projects and the three sentinel landscape partnership coalitions in place to strengthen military readiness, conserve natural resources, bolster agricultural and forestry economies and increase public access to outdoor recreation.

FY 2027 Budget Request Summary

Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

- EPA | Geographic Programs - Chesapeake Bay: \$96,000K
- EPA | Nonpoint Source (Sec. 319) Grants: \$182,000K
- EPA | Pollution Control (Sec. 106) Grants: \$237,000K
- EPA | Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund: \$3,250,000K
- DOI-USGS | Land Management Research Program: +\$1,000K, with \$9,000K for Chesapeake Bay Activities
- DOI-USGS | Biological Threats and Invasive Species Research Program: +\$1,000K & Report Language
- DOI-USFWS | Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense (WILD): \$15,000K
- DOI-USFWS | Habitat Conservation - Coastal Programs: \$13,000K
- DOI-NPS | Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Trails Program: \$3,027K
- DOI-OSMRE | Abandoned Mine Land Program: \$166,975K & Report Language
- DOI | Land and Water Conservation Fund (all agencies): \$900,000K (mandatory funding)
- USDA-Forest Service | Forest Stewardship Program: \$12,000K

Energy and Water Development

- USACE-Construction | Chesapeake Bay Environmental Restoration and Protection: \$14,350K
- USACE-Construction | Chesapeake Bay Oyster Recovery: \$7,500K & Report Language
- USACE-Investigations | Coordination with Other Water Resource Agencies: \$2,000K
- USACE-Investigations | Planning Assistance to States: \$5,000K
- USACE-Investigations | Flood Plain Management Services: \$15,000K

Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

- NOAA-NMFS | Habitat Conservation and Restoration: \$57,864K & Report Language
- NOAA-NMFS | Regional Councils and Fisheries Commissions: \$45,000K
- NOAA-Office of Education | B-WET Regional Programs: \$8,700K
- NOAA-Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research | National Sea Grant College Program: \$120,378K

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

- USDA-NRCS | Conservation Operations: \$1,050,000K
- USDA-NRCS/FSA | Full Funding of Mandatory Farm Bill Conservation Programs
- USDA-NIFA | Funding at authorized level for Higher Education Challenge Grants and Secondary and 2-year Post-Secondary Education Grants

Defense

- DOD | Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program: \$220,000K



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