

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 17, 2017

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Commerce, Justice, Science, and
Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
142 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Commerce, Justice, Science, and
Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Energy and Water Development
Appropriations Subcommittee
142 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
Energy and Water Development
Appropriations Subcommittee
188 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
129 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Subcommittee
190 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Shelby, Alexander and Murkowski, and Hoeven, and Ranking Members
Shaheen, Feinstein, Udall, and Merkley:

As Senators from the six-state Chesapeake Bay watershed region, we have a strong interest in maintaining and restoring clean water throughout the region. We write you because we are particularly concerned that the President's Fiscal Year 2018 Budget Blueprint proposes a drastic decrease across federal agency partners' budgets for programs that benefit the Chesapeake Bay region. Cutting the overall funding to the Bay will reverse the improvements to water quality in our region that our states have worked to attain in a bipartisan, cooperative manner for decades.

We thank the Subcommittee for your continued leadership in providing the support necessary to achieve clean water, both in the Chesapeake Bay itself and its source water. As you develop spending priorities for Fiscal Year 2018, we urge you to continue your strong support for ongoing efforts to achieve clean water in our region and our nation.

More than 11 million people in our region obtain their drinking water directly from the rivers and streams that flow through our cities, farms, and towns, and eventually into the Chesapeake Bay. The Bay watershed states are investing in efforts to restore clean, safe water to the Chesapeake and its tributaries. But their efforts cannot succeed without strong and sustained federal support.

There are a number of programs administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that we urge you to continue funding at least at the same level as enacted in Fiscal Year 2016.

EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program. The Program coordinates Chesapeake Bay watershed restoration and conservation efforts throughout our region. The majority of its funds are passed through to the states and local communities for on-the-ground restoration projects. We urge you to reject the Chesapeake Bay Program elimination in the President's FY2018 Budget Blueprint. The Program was funded at \$73 million in FY2016;¹ we strongly urge at least continued funding at that level. Additionally, we urge you to continue directing EPA to provide at least \$6 million for the Small Watershed Grants and at least \$6 million for the Nutrient and Sediment Removal Grants, as enacted in FY2016. These two grant programs are critical for local restoration efforts and leverage, on average, three times more non-federal money for each project. As our region's waters improve, more and not fewer people want to utilize the many ecological, cultural, and historic resources the Chesapeake Bay has to offer.

State and Tribal Assistance Grants, Clean Water State Revolving Fund. A key federal program for our region, as well as for the rest of the nation, is the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF). This program is critical to the 1,779 local governments throughout the Chesapeake region. Investments in water and wastewater infrastructure provide significant economic benefits to our communities. Each dollar leverages another \$2.62 in economic output in other industries, and each job created in this sector creates 3.68 jobs in the national economy.

State and Tribal Assistance Grants, Nonpoint Source Implementation Grants (CWA 319). Our states are implementing agricultural, urban, and residential best management practices with the support of Section 319(h) grants. States also provide significant project management and technical assistance to local stakeholders to install these practices. The President's FY2018 Budget Blueprint provides EPA Categorical Grants with \$597 million, "a \$482 million reduction below 2017 annualized CR levels"—a 45% reduction—but does not specify which of those grants will be eliminated or substantially reduced. We are concerned that applying an across-the-board 45% cut would reduce State and Tribal Assistance Grants for Nonpoint Source

¹ FY2016 enacted levels are used as proxies for FY2017 levels—which served as the basis for the funding provided in the two continuing resolutions (P.L. 114-223 and P.L. 114-254), each subject to its own rescission—because the "2017 annualized CR level" referenced in the Blueprint does not include final program amounts under P.L. 114-254.

Implementation Grants from a \$231 million FY2016 enacted level to \$126 million in FY2018. We urge you to support at least the same funding level enacted in FY2016.

Pollution Control Grants (CWA 106). These grants help states in the Bay watershed manage the federal water pollution permit program, or NPDES. Under the Clean Water Act, it is unlawful to discharge any pollutant into US waters without a NPDES permit. Without sufficient funding, this permit process gets bogged down, resulting in business losses and reduced permit monitoring and enforcement. An effective permit program is the backbone of the Bay watershed cleanup. A potential 45% cut in Categorical Grants would reduce funding for Pollution Control Grants from a \$165 million FY2016 enacted level to \$91 million in FY2018. We urge you to support at least the same funding level enacted in FY2016.

There are also a number of programs administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Department of Agriculture that we urge you to continue funding at least at the same level enacted in Fiscal Year 2016.

Land and Water Conservation Fund. The Land and Water Conservation Fund, including the *Rivers of the Chesapeake* initiative, helps protect large-scale landscapes throughout the Bay watershed. By working with willing sellers to acquire or place under easement high priority lands throughout the watershed, agencies can enhance habitat connectivity for the protection of rare and endangered species, preserve the scenic integrity of National Trails, preserve land associated with Civil War battlefields and American Indian heritage, protect forests important for Bay water quality, and enhance public access to waterways. The 12% cut, if applied across-the-board, would reduce funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund from a \$450 million FY2016 enacted level—\$126 million in USDA programs and \$324 in DOI programs—to \$396 million in FY2018. We urge you to support at least the same funding level enacted in FY2016.

Natural Programs. Each year, more and more people want to utilize the unique resources of the Chesapeake Bay, and the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office works to increase public access and the use of ecological, cultural and historic resources of the region. A 12% cut applied across the board would reduce funding for the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Trails (\$2 million FY2016 enacted level to \$1.76 million in FY2018); Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail (\$386,000 FY2016 enacted level to \$339,680 in FY2018); Star Spangled Banner National Historic Trail (\$490,000 FY2016 enacted level to \$431,200 in FY2018); and support for coordinating these programs through the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office (\$479,000 FY2016 enacted level to \$421,520 in FY2018). We urge you to support at least the same funding levels enacted in FY2016.

Finally, the Army Corps of Engineers provides critical support to the Bay cleanup effort. We urge you to support at least the same funding level enacted in Fiscal Year 2016.

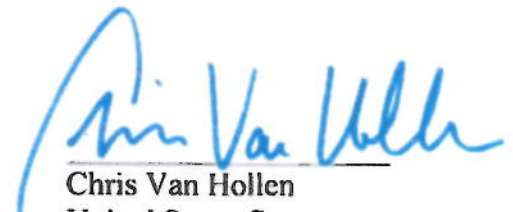
Environmental Restoration. The Chesapeake Bay Oyster Recovery Project has helped construct and seed new oyster reefs, which increase the oyster population and improve water clarity as those oysters filter water when they feed. The Army Corps' efforts advance the goal of restoring oyster populations in 20 Bay tributaries by 2025, and play an important role in meeting


state water quality goals in the Chesapeake Bay Clean Water Blueprint through strong partnerships with the states. The FY2016 enacted level was \$479 million for the Army Corps' Environmental Restoration account, which provides \$2 million in funding for the Chesapeake Bay Oyster Recovery Project. If the Army Corps' overall budget is cut by \$1 billion—a 16.67% cut—it could reduce the Chesapeake Bay Oyster Recovery Program from \$2 million to \$1.7 million. We urge you to support at least the same funding level enacted in FY2016.

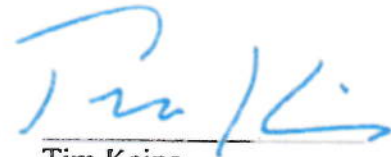
The Chesapeake Bay is the nation's largest estuary. Its watershed encompasses 64,000 square miles and is home to nearly 18 million Americans. Restoration of the Chesapeake ecosystem is a high-priority goal for the people of this region, one that for year after year unites us like no other objective. The federal partnership has been proven to provide the engine to unite efforts across the states to effectively address this long-term challenge. We hold continuing this partnership as the priority for the region. Thank you again for your continuing support for our states' priorities.

Sincerely,

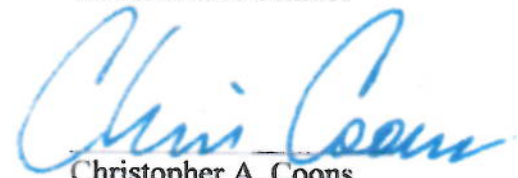

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

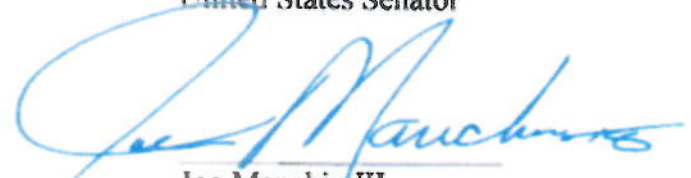

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