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Biden–Harris Administration announces \$206 million to selectees to protect and restore Chesapeake Bay through community partnerships



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PHILADELPHIA (March 27, 2024) – Today, in Arlington, Virginia, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Chesapeake Bay Trust have been awarded approximately \$206 million in grants to fund local projects and technical assistance to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay over the next four years and advance environmental justice.

EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program announced the grant awards which include \$96 million in funding through President Biden's Investing in America agenda. Thanks to this historic boost in funding, today's announcement marks the most significant single contribution to the Chesapeake Bay Program. This funding announcement is part of the President's broader effort to protect ecosystems, create good-paying jobs, and expand economic opportunity.

- **The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has been selected to receive \$193 million** to administer the [Small Watershed Grant](#)  and [Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction](#)  programs. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is dedicated to sustaining, restoring, and enhancing the nation's fish, wildlife, plants and habitats for current and future generations. The funding for these grants is provided by an **\$83 million** investment from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the remaining **\$110 million** was provided by regular appropriations. Examples of projects these investments will fund include installing three green stormwater infrastructure practices to intercept

stormwater runoff, building capacity for community-led urban tree canopy planting projects, and the collection of native seed stocks for nurseries.

- **The Chesapeake Bay Trust has been selected receive \$13 million** to administer a new Community Capacity Building grant program under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Created by the Maryland General Assembly in 1985, the Chesapeake Bay Trust is a non-profit grant-making organization dedicated to improving the watersheds of the Chesapeake Bay, Maryland Coastal Bays and Youghiogheny River. Through its grant programs, the Trust engages hundreds of thousands of students and volunteers in projects that have a measurable impact on the natural resources of our region.

“The Chesapeake Bay is the lifeblood of this region, supporting all those across six states and the District of Columbia who call the Chesapeake Bay watershed home – and those who visit,” **said EPA Assistant Deputy Administrator Mark Rupp**. “The funding announced today is strategically focused to support conservation projects -- and the people who will implement them – over the next four years to restore both water quality and habitat.”

“These grants reflect our continuing commitment to protect the Chesapeake Bay and preserve our nation’s environmental legacy for future generations,” **said EPA Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator Adam Ortiz**. “This historic investment by the Biden-Harris Administration enables EPA to continue to provide game-changing funding for our partners who are equally committed to preserving, protecting and enhancing the communities, people and businesses who rely on the Bay.”

“I’m thrilled to announce that thanks to the bipartisan infrastructure law, which I helped pass, \$206 million in Chesapeake Bay Program funding is being awarded to the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation and the Chesapeake Bay Trust,” **said U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA)**. “The Chesapeake Bay is one of the Commonwealth’s greatest treasures and a key part of our economy. Not only will this funding bring jobs and infrastructure investments to Virginia, but these grants will support clean water and healthy ecosystems in the Bay through various multi-year projects to protect and restore our wetlands and waterways for generations to come. That’s a win-win.”

“A healthy Chesapeake Bay is not just an environmental responsibility, it’s an economic imperative for our whole region because countless lives and livelihoods throughout the watershed depend on it,” **said U.S. Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)**. “This record investment, made possible through our passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, is crucial to reducing the flow of pollution into the Bay, protecting native wildlife habitats, and addressing environmental injustices of the past.”

“Celebrating this historic funding is not just about the present, but about securing a legacy for the future,” **said U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly (VA-11)**. “These projects will serve as guardians, ensuring that the Chesapeake Bay remains a treasure for generations to come. By investing in restoration and education initiatives, we are not only ensuring we meet our Bay pollution reduction goals, but also cultivating a sense of stewardship for the Bay that will resonate for years to come.”


“The Chesapeake Bay is a vital and diverse ecosystem that not only serves as a cultural hallmark, but also drives economic prosperity in our region,” **said U.S. Rep. Don Beyer (VA-8)**. “As we continue to face the escalating environmental challenges in a warming planet, this historic investment – much of which was funded by the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which I strongly supported in Congress –

will bolster critical efforts to preserve and restore the Bay. I thank the EPA and its partners for their collective commitment to safeguarding the resilience and vitality of the Chesapeake Bay for generations to come.”


“This federal investment to protect the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed is proof that the bipartisan infrastructure law continues to deliver for Virginia’s communities,” **said U.S. Rep. Abigail Spanberger (VA-7)**. “The Bay is vital to Virginia’s economy and environment — and one of our Commonwealth’s natural treasures. Thanks to the bipartisan infrastructure law, the NFWF and Chesapeake Bay Trust are receiving a significant investment to help preserve the Bay, improve the health of the watershed, and continue one of our region’s great success stories. I look forward to seeing this investment in action.”

“Without strong communities and strong nonprofits realizing multiple benefits from and participating in natural resources efforts, we will not be able to realize our vision of a restored watershed,” **said Jana Davis, Chesapeake Bay Trust President**. “The Bay Trust will be investing these resources in a wide range of community-based organizations and local governments, many of them historically excluded, to build their capacity to restore watersheds and improve public health.”

In August 2023, EPA announced it is seeking applications from eligible community-based organizations for funding opportunities through the EPA’s Chesapeake Bay Program Office to administer the Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grant Program, Small Watershed Grant Program, and Community Capacity Building Grant Program. Thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, these requests for applications marked the largest single investment in local assistance in the history of the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program Office.


These awards reflect EPA’s commitment to the Chesapeake Bay Program and demonstrate its focus on strengthening partnerships to restore the health and productivity of the Chesapeake Bay. Funding for these programs will empower communities to implement local programs to restore the Chesapeake Bay’s water quality while advancing President Biden’s [Justice40 Initiative](#)  which set the goal that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized by underinvestment and overburdened by pollution.

Small Watershed Grant (SWG) program

The [Small Watershed Grant \(SWG\) program](#)  funds projects within the Chesapeake Bay watershed that promote community-based efforts to protect and restore the diverse natural resources of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributary rivers and streams.

The SWG Program has provided more than \$130 million to 560 projects that have permanently protected 180,000 acres under conservation easement, restored more than 1,600 miles of riparian habitat and 14,000 acres of wetlands, and engaged more than 150,000 watershed residents in volunteer conservation and restoration efforts.

Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction program

The [Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction \(INSR\) program](#)  aims to accelerate the implementation of water quality improvements, specifically through the collaborative and coordinated

efforts of sustainable, regional-scale partnerships and networks of practitioners with a shared focus on water quality restoration and protection.

Since 2006, the INSR Program has provided more than \$150 million to 346 projects that have reduced 25 million pounds of nitrogen, four million pounds of phosphorus, and 500,000 tons of sediment across the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Community Capacity Building program

The new Community Capacity Building program aims to increase the effectiveness of community and frontline organizations working collaboratively to protect and restore rivers and local watersheds by addressing their organizational capacity needs.

Background:

The [Chesapeake Bay Program](#) [↗](#) is a regional partnership made up of federal agencies, six states, local governments, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations that lead and direct the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay and its 64,000-square-mile watershed.

Visit the EPA's website to learn more about its [support for the Chesapeake Bay](#).

Visit the EPA website to learn more about the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#) and [available funding opportunities](#).

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