



THE CHESAPEAKE BAY LAND AND WATER INITIATIVE



2016 – 2017 Grant Program: Funded Project Summaries

The Chesapeake Bay Land and Water Initiative (Initiative) is a partnership between the Chesapeake Bay Funders Network and the Land Trust Alliance. The Initiative's competitive grant program makes strategic, targeted investments in land trusts, watershed groups and other conservation partners to accelerate permanent land conservation and stewardship on conserved land with a meaningful impact on water quality. Watersheds where grant funding is prioritized include the Upper and Lower Susquehanna, the Juniata, the Shenandoah and Upper Potomac, the Rapidan/Rappahannock, and Eastern Shore watersheds.

The Initiative invested in seven projects during its pilot round of grantmaking in 2016-2017, including projects to plan, prioritize and implement new land conservation and restoration projects, and to strengthen partnerships on the ground in priority watersheds.

EASTERN SHORE WATERSHEDS

Eastern Shore Land Conservancy*, \$15,000 for Healthy Waters, Thriving Farms Project

Eastern Shore Land Conservancy will incorporate water quality into its stewardship of protected lands, using farm and forest Best Management Practices (BMPs) to guide monitoring visits and landowner education. The project calls for a survey of easement landowners, a ranking system to identify problem areas and prioritize solutions and training land staff to become certified Technical Service Providers with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. The Healthy Waters/Thriving Farms model will be shared with other partners in the region.

Lower Shore Land Trust, \$15,000 for Prioritization of Conservation Lands Using Targeted Mapping

Lower Shore Land Trust will expand its existing land conservation prioritization tool to identify the most efficient, high-priority properties for water quality and wildlife habitat in its three-county service area. Originally developed for the Wicomico River and tributaries, the tool will highlight conservation, restoration and enhancement projects to deliver high-impact water quality and wildlife habitat gains and engage new partnerships in conservation planning. Results will help the land trust set protection goals for the next 2-10 years and share important findings with key land protection and wildlife conservation partners on the Eastern Shore.

Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust*, \$15,000 for Riparian Buffer Improvement Assessment

This project will improve water quality on Chesapeake Bay tributaries by expanding and improving riparian buffers on permanently protected private lands. VES Land Trust will use GIS and science-based tools to identify 10 high-impact properties, assess landowner interest, consider the best way to update and strengthen existing conservation easements, select the native plants most suited for buffers and apply this information to plan for a pilot project. The pilot project plan will provide a framework for and build capacity to engage with local partners and outline the strategies and cost per acre needed to increase productive riparian buffers in the region.

SHENANDOAH WATERSHED

Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation, \$25,000 for Shenandoah Futures Conservation Collaborative

The Shenandoah Futures Conservation Collaborative will bring together partners in the Shenandoah Valley to prioritize and accelerate conservation of lands most important for water quality, prime farm soils and historic battlefields. The Collaborative will use new conservation resource data layers to identify important

lands, measure existing capacity and determine outreach and resources needed for a strategic landowner program in two Valley counties. This project builds on the foundation of a previous partnership around organizational capacity and will, over time, engage other conservation groups to help address strategic land conservation needs in the region.

UPPER POTOMAC WATERSHED

West Virginia Rivers Coalition, \$20,000 for Private Lands, Public Waters: A West Virginia Conservation Collaborative

A new state policy that requires local governments to develop source water protection plans inspired project partners West Virginia Rivers Coalition, a watershed protection group, and the West Virginia Land Trust* to develop a model initiative that ensures land conservation is an integral focus of such plans. These partners will develop a science-based action plan, engaging diverse stakeholders in Jefferson County, where the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers meet. This stronger, more diverse constituency—and this new partnership between watershed protection and land conservation groups—will help champion policy, funding and other resources needed to ensure cleaner water for local communities and the Chesapeake Bay.

JUNIATA WATERSHED

Western Pennsylvania Conservancy*, \$25,000 for Building Local Partnerships to Increase Land and Water Protection in the Juniata River Watershed

A local, agricultural land trust (Centre County Farmland Trust, or CCFT) and a strong regional land trust (Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, or WPC) are developing a new partnership to increase capacity in the Juniata watershed, where there is enormous opportunity for more land protection and stewardship on conserved lands to enhance water quality. This project leverages each organization's unique strengths, combining WPC's broad experience with land and water conservation tools, including science-based GIS and decision-making, with CCFT's knowledge of the local landscape and community. With the input of local watershed groups, county conservation districts and other technical experts, the partners will identify priority lands using water quality as a filter, conduct outreach to landowners and increase the pace of both land conservation and stewardship that improves water quality in the Little Juniata watershed.

MULTIPLE WATERSHEDS

Virginia's United Land Trusts, \$25,000 for Virginia Land & Water Initiative – Enhance Water Quality Stewardship on Protected Lands

Virginia's United Land Trusts (VaULT), the statewide land trust association, seeks to rally the state's land trust community to use new data to increase water quality provisions on protected private lands. VaULT will facilitate access for partners in the Shenandoah Valley and on the Eastern Shore to the new Virginia Outdoors Foundation searchable database of more than 4,400 conservation easements dating back nearly 40 years. The partners will assess protected properties, identifying opportunities to positively impact water quality, and then develop outreach strategies and tools needed to improve conservation in the Commonwealth.

We are grateful for support of the Land and Water Initiative by members of the Chesapeake Bay Funders Network and for the project support of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Chesapeake Bay Program's Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction grants program, which supports efforts within the Chesapeake Bay watershed to accelerate nutrient and sediment reductions with innovative, sustainable, and cost-effective approaches.

The views and conclusions contained in this document are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing the opinions or policies of the U.S. Government or the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and its funding sources. Mention of trade names or commercial products does not constitute their endorsement by the U.S. Government, or the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation or its funding sources.



* Indicates land trusts accredited by the independent Land Trust Accreditation Commission