



THE CHESAPEAKE BAY LAND AND WATER INITIATIVE



2019 Grant Program: Funded Project Summaries

Launched in 2016, 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 we prioritize grant funding include the Upper and Lower Susquehanna, the Juniata, the Shenandoah and Upper Potomac, the Rapidan/Rappahannock, and the Eastern Shore watersheds.

In the past three years, the Initiative's grant program has provided project support totaling \$508,000. The Initiative has awarded 22 grants to 18 projects, focusing support on efforts to plan, prioritize and implement new land conservation and restoration projects and to strengthen on-the-ground partnerships and collaboration in priority watersheds. The following projects were selected for funding in 2019.

ClearWater Conservancy,* \$20,000 for *Strategic Land and Water Conservation in the Upper Spruce Creek Watershed*

ClearWater Conservancy's project will set the stage for watershed-scale conservation and restoration actions in Pennsylvania's Upper Spruce Creek watershed. Using strategic conservation planning, CWC will identify key locations to restore degraded streams, protect high quality reaches, and connect important habitats. Proposed activities include: compiling water quality data on stream conditions, working with partners to execute an effective outreach campaign to private landowners, and initiating land conservation efforts to maximize water quality and stream protection and improvement. Project outcomes will include a prioritization strategy for riparian conservation, outreach events to engage riparian landowners in stream restoration and land preservation activities, and at least one new conservation easement to provide enhanced protection for high quality streams and/or riparian buffer protection. In addition to enhancing the strategic focus of CWC's work, this project will substantially expand partnerships with other NGOs and local agencies.

Harford Land Trust, \$20,000 for *Strategic Conservation Action Plan and Implementation*

Harford Land Trust will develop and implement action plans to preserve target areas in Harford County, Maryland. These target areas were identified in 2018 with Land and Water Initiative funding for strategic conservation mapping. HLT will refine its current mapping to incorporate data from the County's Green Infrastructure Plan and the Chesapeake Bay 2025 Growth Model and analyze areas of overlap/departure from key County documents (Harford Master Plan, Green Infrastructure Plan, and Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan). They will review results with agency and other partners including Harford County Planning & Zoning, the Manor Conservancy, the MD Environmental Trust, and MD Department of Natural Resources and identify priority areas not sufficiently addressed by other programs and/or where HLT is best positioned to work. Finally, they will identify 20 priority properties—half of these selected for contributions to water quality protection/improvements—and develop and begin implementing action plan(s) for these target areas and properties. Overall, this project will ensure that HLT's work is focused on the most important locations for water quality, reduce organizational overlap to efficiently protect more land, deepen relationships with partners, and make a stronger case for funding for priority projects.

Northern Virginia Conservation Trust,* \$15,000 for *Expanding Work with Fairfax Water*

This project will grow a new partnership between Northern Virginia Conservation Trust (NVCT) and Fairfax Water—providing an example for how land trusts can prioritize high value lands and waters to conserve through engagement with water utilities. The Occoquan River (a tributary of the Potomac River) is a key water source for Fairfax Water's customer population of approximately 2 million people, and the Occoquan Reservoir watershed is Fairfax Water's top priority for conservation. The Chesapeake Conservancy's Conservation Innovation Center will provide NVCT an in-depth

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GIS analysis of the highest value lands for permanent conservation in the Occoquan watershed, including high-resolution parcel level data on lands and a dynamic weighting system for 10-15 factors that impact water quality. With this data in hand, NVCT land conservation staff will create targeted, strategic approaches to reach these priority parcel landowners to discuss the potential for permanent conservation of those lands. NVCT will substantially expand its pipeline of high value conservation prospects in the Occoquan watershed through this project.

Piedmont Environmental Council,* \$27,500 for Rappahannock-Rapidan Conservation Partnership

PEC will organize a Rappahannock-Rapidan Conservation Partnership (Partnership) comprising organizations with diverse priorities, constituencies and resources for conserving land and improving water quality. The Partnership will be guided by a Steering Committee including representatives from the major agencies with cost-share programs for best management practices and riparian buffers. In the short term, this project will help coordinate conservation and restoration efforts across a broad landscape and set the stage to pursue USDA Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) funding or another mechanism to provide the resources needed to implement the new partnership's shared priorities. The project's long-term goal is to establish a continuous conservation landscape connecting the Blue Ridge to the Chesapeake Bay. This will preserve significant land and water resources with best management practices and link existing public conservation anchors of Shenandoah National Park, the Rappahannock National Wildlife Refuge, and the Rapidan, C.F. Phelps, and Kelly's Ford Wildlife Management Areas across a landscape of well-managed private lands.

Potomac Conservancy,* \$30,000 for Picking Up the Pace of Potomac Headwaters Conservation

The Picking Up the Pace project will accelerate progress on the land conservation priorities of the Shenandoah Valley Conservation Collaborative and Eastern Panhandle Safe Water Conservation Collaborative. Both groups are building meaningful partnerships for strategic watershed conservation but require additional land conservation capacity. This project will provide these collaboratives with a new organizational partner, Potomac Conservancy, which is already experienced in targeted, water-focused conservation planning. Potomac Conservancy has a decade-long record of targeting lands for water conservation, and it will apply its conservation planning, landowner outreach, and conservation easement expertise to help these new partners realize a collective goal of healthy lands and clean waters in the Potomac River headwaters.

West Virginia Rivers Coalition, \$30,000 for Private Lands, Public Waters: A West Virginia Conservation Collaborative

This project builds on the momentum for watershed-based conservation catalyzed by the Initiative's previous support for the WV Safe Water Conservation Collaborative (the Collaborative)—a network bringing together land trusts, watershed groups, water utilities, and state/local agencies. In the third year of the project, the West Virginia Rivers Coalition (WVRC) will focus on mobilizing the Collaborative by finalizing a conservation plan to protect zones and parcels most important for safe drinking water; conducting landowner outreach on opportunities for easements and, for already-eased lands, adoption of best management practices for water quality; providing overall coordination and supporting emerging leadership of the Collaborative to advance implementation of a five-year action plan; promoting source water protection policies that accelerate land conservation to benefit water quality; and building the field for land conservation that benefits water quality beyond the project's geographical scope through sharing "lessons learned" with other regions and partnerships.

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.

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