



2020 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. Over the past four years, the Initiative's competitive grant program has made 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. Several watersheds have been prioritized for grant funding, including: the Upper and Lower Susquehanna, the Juniata, the Shenandoah and Upper Potomac, the Rapidan/Rappahannock, and the Eastern Shore watersheds.

In the past four years, the Initiative's grant program has provided project support totaling more than \$650,000, awarding 27 grants to 19 projects. In 2020, the grant program focused its support on continuing to build the strategic focus and capacity of regional collaborative partnerships that combine the goals of land conservation and water quality restoration. The following projects were selected for funding in 2020.

Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley, \$30,000: *Shenandoah Valley Conservation Collaborative: Demonstrating the Value of a Partnership Approach*

Created with support from the Land and Water Initiative in 2017, the Shenandoah Valley Conservation Collaborative (SVCC) engages land trusts, watershed groups and agency partners toward shared goals in clean water restoration, cultural resource preservation and agricultural vitality. While many of the SVCC's identified landowners have already chosen to take conservation actions, others are at various stages of consideration and implementation. This grant will help the SVCC complete priority, high conservation value projects in Rockingham and Shenandoah counties for which they have already initiated strategic conversations with landowners. The SVCC aims to communicate the value of the partnership approach. After three years of collaboration, SVCC partners realize that tapping members' diverse relationships and areas of expertise leads to accelerated land protection and water quality restoration. This grant will enable the SVCC to communicate its successes to date to attract additional investment, engage new partners as the collaborative expands and advocate for public funding.

Forever Maryland Foundation, \$30,000: *Heart of Maryland Phase Two (Paddling Downstream Together)*

The Heart of Maryland Conservation Alliance (HMCA), a regional conservation partnership coordinated by Catoctin Land Trust, will accelerate conservation in Frederick and Washington counties through collaborative planning within partners' priority preservation areas. Through three work groups—conservation, funding, and communications—the HCMA will develop a strategic plan at a landscape scale. By utilizing each county's GIS mapping in addition to mapping previously funded by the Land and Water Initiative, partners will identify overlap areas where their efforts center on farmland, the Appalachian Trail, historic sites and watersheds. Then, partners will seek funding to fill the gap between conservation demand in these areas and the resources currently available to meet that demand. The communications group will focus on expanding public support for conservation, while the funding group will explore local philanthropy to support and sustain the Alliance. HCMA partners will also conduct outreach to landowners with existing preserved land to cultivate interest in best management practices for water quality.

Piedmont Environmental Council,* \$25,815: *Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Partnership*

In 2019, the Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) organized the Rappahannock-Rapidan Conservation Partnership (the Partnership) with the vision of accelerating land conservation and improving water quality in the upper Rappahannock River watershed. The Partnership comprises seven core members currently working in the watershed, including cost-share agencies, land trusts and watershed groups. Over the last year, the Partnership has completed key steps in its start-up phase, including convening and organizing the Partnership; drafting goals; coordinating communication between partners with a trained facilitator; and establishing PEC as the host partner with a dedicated staff person to increase collaborative capacity. This funding will help maintain the momentum of the Partnership as it matures, investing in building the capacity of member organizations; planning and mapping a strategic conservation vision; creating a collaborative work plan and engaging partners within and beyond the region.

Potomac Conservancy,* \$30,000: *Partnering for a Clean Potomac*

This grant will support Potomac Conservancy's primary role within the Shenandoah Valley and Safe Water Conservation Collaboratives: closing conservation easements. While Potomac Conservancy continues to support both collaboratives in land prioritization, landowner outreach, planning, and fundraising, conservation easement execution is the Conservancy's core strength and a primary goal and key need of each collaborative. Through this project, the Conservancy will engage at least three landowner leaders in outreach to 12 new landowner prospects; partner with collaborative members on effective, coordinated landowner outreach; and start three new conservation easements on priority lands

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

This grant provides support for WV Rivers to continue serving as the host partner for the Safe Water Conservation Collaborative (the Collaborative), a regional conservation partnership that uses land conservation as a strategy to protect drinking water supplies. As the Collaborative has grown over the past three years, so has the work of the host partner. This year the Collaborative will carry on with the next steps in applying its new conservation prioritization methodology, continuing with landowner outreach and education, and disseminating the Best Management Practices toolkit developed with previous Land and Water Initiative support. The Collaborative will continue to keep key stakeholders informed and engaged, cultivate new members, and facilitate an equitable process wherein all Collaborative members share equally in developing and implementing shared conservation objectives and outcomes.

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