



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION
Saving a National Treasure

**Statement of Kim Coble,
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Prepared for a hearing on S. 1514,

the Hunting Heritage and Environmental Legacy Preservation (HELP) for Wildlife Act,

United States Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works

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Chairman Barrasso, Ranking Member Carper, and distinguished members of the Environment and Public Works Committee, I am Kim Coble, Vice President for Environmental Protection and Restoration for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF). On behalf of CBF's board, staff, and members, thank you for inviting me to participate in today's hearing.

Sportsmen and Anglers are some of the best conservationists. At CBF we have over 240,000 members and are proud to count many sportsmen and anglers among them. This year we are celebrating our 50th year. Sportsmen and anglers were among our founders. Restoring fish and wildlife habitat has been central to our work from Day One. Our members generously support our work on farms, along rivers and streams, and in the Bay, to plant underwater grasses and trees, build streamside buffers, and restore and build oyster reefs as well as our advocacy to restore and maintain our valuable fisheries.

In my testimony, I hope to show you why fish and wildlife habitat and restoration matters so much to our members and how the programs in this bill manage to deliver so much value.

Today, you are sitting in the middle of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, which feeds the greatest estuary in our nation. The Chesapeake Bay watershed spans 6 states and Washington D.C., over 64,000 square miles, and sustains more than 3,600 species of plants and animals. Imagine for a moment what this means. The hardwood forests of the Appalachian mountains to the saltwater marshes of the Chesapeake Bay provide food, protection and nesting areas to many species. Scores of healthy Bald Eagles feed and breed at the Conowingo Dam, shad spawn in our rivers in numbers we haven't seen in decades, stripers and migrating birds draw anglers and bird watchers from around the world to our contests and festivals. We are surrounded by astonishing lands and waters and the abundant and extraordinary life that depends on it.

Data from the outdoors industry underscore how important these lands and waters are to sportsmen, anglers and other outdoor lovers in our region. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, annual consumer spending on outdoor recreation is \$644 Billion. In Maryland, West Virginia and Delaware alone, the 2012 outdoor recreation economy generated a total of 206,000 direct jobs; \$21.1 Billion in consumer spending and provided in wages and salaries a total of \$5.9 B. In this context, it is easy to understand why the six Chesapeake Bay States have been working together under a formal voluntary agreement since 1983 to restore the Chesapeake Bay watershed. In fact, the first three goals of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Agreement of which the governors of the six states signed, are to protect, restore and enhance fisheries and vital habitats, and achieve water quality necessary to support living resources.

Chesapeake Bay Foundation strongly supports the conservation programs included in the HELP for Wildlife Act. These programs work with our Sportsmen and angling communities to deliver highly valued conservation impact in alignment with the Chesapeake Bay Agreement and they help drive our robust outdoors economy. There is one point that I cannot overstate: Each program is an excellent steward of taxpayer investments. Each program leverages investments from local groups like the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and local and state government – investments that often more than *double* federal investments.

I will start with the **Chesapeake Bay Program**. This program provides critical support for the Chesapeake Bay Agreement through several conservation grant programs that invest in fisheries and habitat restoration. The majority of funds are invested in projects that support state goals and are matched dollar for dollar with local investments. For example, in FY16, \$29M was invested through three of the Bay Program grant programs and raised an additional \$29M in local conservation investments. This resulted in on the ground investment of \$58M. By increasing the authorized funding level for the Bay Program in this bill, it will be possible to leverage more local investments in fish and habitat conservation.

The **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)**, also extended by this bill, administers two of the Chesapeake Bay Program conservation grant programs through their Chesapeake Stewardship Fund. Leaders at NFWF use science to drive their investments in land and water habitat conservation projects to ensure they achieve maximum impact across the landscape while supporting local priorities. One recent example is Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Virginia and Upper Potomac Farm Stewardship Program in Virginia, Maryland and West Virginia. By

working with farmers to adopt agricultural best management practices, such as rotational grazing, stream exclusion, and wetland and riparian buffer restoration, we help them improve water quality, increase productivity of farming operations, and enhance wildlife habitat – and help Bay States to meet their Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals. In this example, NFWF and NRCS invested \$398,740 which leveraged an additional \$311,222 to engage 64 landowners and reduce 3,960 pounds of nitrogen, 1,419 pounds of phosphorus and 169 tons of sediment from local rivers, streams and the bay.

Likewise, the **National Fish Habitat Partnership** supports locally-led fish habitat efforts. By codifying this partnership, this bill will be securing the federal partnership for this effort led by local stewards. The Chesapeake Bay is part of the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership, a 16 state collaborative effort to accelerate the conservation of habitat for native Atlantic coastal, estuarine-dependent, and diadromous fishes. As a member of this partnership, CBF is proud to join resource managers, scientists and professionals representing 33 different state, federal, tribal, non-governmental and other entities. The Partnership stretches from Maine to the Florida Keys, and from the headwaters of coastally draining rivers to the edge of the continental shelf, with a focus in estuarine environments. In the Chesapeake Bay watershed, the Partnership supports stewardship activities that are helping to address regional habitat priorities, such as the fisheries and habitat goals of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement. For example, an important recent project on the James River in Virginia restored spawning habitat for Atlantic Sturgeon as well as American shad, herring, and striped bass, by installing hard substrate. It was driven by local project partners, working in collaboration with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and US Fish and Wildlife Service.

The **North American Wetlands Conservation Act** (NAWCA) provides matching grants to organizations and individuals who have developed partnerships to carry out wetlands conservation projects in the United States, Canada, and Mexico for the benefit of wetlands-associated migratory birds and other wildlife. The program provides critical support for the Chesapeake Bay Agreement by leveraging local investment to help achieve the goal to restore, enhance and protect a network of land and water habitats to support fish and wildlife. By 2025, Bay states aim to create or reestablish 85,000 acres of tidal and nontidal wetlands and enhance the function of an additional 150,000 acres of degraded wetlands. CBF has partnered with Ducks Unlimited for years to implement NAWCA wetlands conservation projects in the Bay watershed. But to demonstrate the kind of leveraging the program can deliver, I want to describe a NAWCA-supported project in Anne Arundel County, Maryland. With a \$1M grant, the program leveraged an additional \$9.2M investment from the Conservation Fund and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to acquire, restore and enhance 304 acres on a largely undeveloped peninsula on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay with more than three miles of bay frontage. The Maryland Department of Resources holds a conservation easement on the property, which is a staging and wintering area for waterfowl, a valuable breeding and stopover site for songbirds, a rookery site for herons, and a nesting site for bald eagles. The land's tidal marshes, hardwood swamps, and woodlands provide critical habitat for 18 breeding and wintering species of concern and 12 migrant species of concern. The land will be permanently protected for wildlife.

In coordination with programs like NAWCA, the **Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act**, supports habitat conservation along the entire flyway for neotropical birds that migrate through the watershed. The Chesapeake Bay is home to many national wildlife refuges. As a midway point on the Atlantic flyway, the Chesapeake Bay is a significant draw for birders and ecotourists, particularly on the Delmarva Peninsula. The Eastern Shore Birding and Wildlife Festival will hold its 25th event this year, drawing 43 percent of attendants from out of state.

And finally, the **Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails network and Grants Program** support local initiatives to connect outdoor lovers to the watershed's natural resources.

Expanding physical access to the Bay and its tributaries through existing and new local, state and federal parks, refuges, reserves, trails and partner sites is a goal of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Agreement and this program directly supports state and local efforts. The Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails network is a system of over 170 sites located within the watershed with varied cultural and natural sites on water and land. The program is valuable to our members and communities and we fully support it's extension.

I hope I have drawn a picture for you today of how much our members, our sportsmen and anglers and as a result, our local and state governments, value fish and wildlife and the critical federal partnership the programs in this bill provide. These programs directly support local programs and are aligned with and support the state-led Chesapeake Bay Agreement. The fact is, fish and wildlife know no state boundaries. For this reason, federal partnership through programs that work with our Sportsmen and angling communities, impact local priorities and

maintain our robust outdoors economy is very important and your leadership is greatly appreciated.