

Instructions for Preparing Your Letter

Elements of an effective letter:

- Decide who you are writing to: if you are writing to your Senators, Rep., and/or House Appropriations Committee.
- Focus: Support funding for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and ask for full federal funding of the Chesapeake Bay Program. Be brief and clearly state the issue specific concern and your position.
- Do some research, and thank your Senator or Representative if he/she has previously been a supported the Chesapeake Bay Program. [NOTE: You can actually download and view your Congressional delegation's voting record on environmental issues at <http://scorecard.lcv.org/>].
- Be original and speak from the heart; if possible describe a personal experience or story on the subject, or include in opening the general topic you're writing about.
- Include 1-2 talking points, in your own words, to support the main message (see page 1).
- Include a specific action request(s). "I urge you to..."
- **Include the date, your name and full address.**

Sample Letter for Fully Funding the EPA & Chesapeake Bay Program

Personalize your letter. Do not put individual letters in a sealed envelope.

TODAY'S DATE

[Your full address or below your name]

Three addressee options:

House Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives, Cannon H-305
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable _____
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable _____
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator/or Representative/or House Appropriations Committee: _____,

I am a Unitarian Universalist from (optional name of congregation city/state), guided by my faith (as a person of conscience) to believe that responsible stewardship calls us to take care of the earth for our generation and those to come. I believe we have an obligation to protect the web of life and the human rights of all people to clean air, clean water, and a livable climate. I hold a reverence for life and respect for the interdependent web of all existence. I support the important work of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and urge you to reject efforts to cut funding to the Chesapeake Bay Program.

[Note: All VA and MD senators, Rep. Norton and most VA and MD members of Congress support the funding say, **Thank you for your support of the Chesapeake Bay Program.**] The Chesapeake Bay is one of the world's greatest treasures that has suffered significantly from human behavior and pollution. Since the establishment of the Chesapeake Bay Program in 1983 it has made significant accomplishments to restore and protect the Bay. After many years of restoration efforts, trends are leading to a healthier Bay but there's still much to do that requires funding at the federal level.

[Insert personal experience, story, or pick 1-2 talking points, in your own words, to support the main message.]

I urge you to [(if addressed to Sen./Rep.) speak up and] support full funding of the Chesapeake Bay Program.

PERSONALIZED - WRAP UP SENTENCE (Thank you for your consideration of my [concerns/story]. I look forward to your response. etc.)

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME (alternatively include your full address below your name)

Background and Talking Points on Funding the Chesapeake Bay Program

Issue: The President's Fiscal Year 2018 Budget Blueprint (President's budget to be released around May 5) significantly reduces the EPA budget, cutting vital programs including the reported significant reduction in funding for the Chesapeake Bay Program. **The President's budget is reported to reduce the Program funding from its 2016 level of \$73M to \$5M** and returns responsibility for funding to local environmental efforts. Local jurisdictions are not able to bear this cost.

ASK: (see sample letter on page 2) your elected officials to: **Fully fund the Chesapeake Bay Program.**

Background: Managed by the US Environmental Protection Agency, the Chesapeake Bay Program is a regional partnership that leads, directs and monitors the efforts of the Chesapeake Bay restoration and protection. Bay Program partners include federal (represented by the EPA) and state agencies, local governments, non-profit organizations and academic institutions. It provides scientific research on the health of the Bay, and provides grants to states, local governments and community groups to help reduce pollution and provide cleanup efforts. The Bay **encompasses parts of six states—Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia—and the entire District of Columbia.** The Chesapeake Bay Commission is a tri-state legislative body of Pennsylvania, Virginia and Maryland.

NOTE: All VA, and MD senators, Rep. Norton and most VA and MD members of Congress support the funding. We want to thank them and urge them to speak up on this issue. If writing the House Appropriations Committee, urge full funding.

Talking Points and Facts:

- **Without coordinated efforts and grants funding, the Bay could revert to a national disgrace with poor water quality, unhealthy fish and shellfish and waterborne diseases that threaten human health.** The Chesapeake Bay region is the largest estuary in the United States and federal funds are necessary to coordinate efforts across multiple jurisdictions and provide grants to support jobs to continue efforts to restore and protect the Bay.
- **The Chesapeake Bay's land-to-water ratio is 14:1: the largest of any coastal water body in the world.** This is why our actions on land have such a big impact on the Bay's health.
- **A healthy Bay ensures a healthy economy. The Bay provides revenue-generating recreational and tourism opportunities. Without adequate funds the fishing and tourism industries are at risk.** Program grants have funded projects to restore oyster reefs, protect oyster beds, help reduce polluted runoff, support water quality monitoring and create habitat for animals.
- **More progress must be made to reduce agricultural runoff, the largest source of pollution to the Bay.** The runoff contributes roughly 40 percent of the nitrogen and 50 percent of the phosphorus entering the Chesapeake Bay.
- **The Chesapeake and its rivers and streams remain out of balance.** Urban and suburban polluted runoff is the only major source of nitrogen pollution still growing in the Bay as a result of water runoff from streets, parking lots, and building rooftops, which ultimately ends up in the Chesapeake Bay.
- **The Program is successful, bipartisan, non-controversial—and it's a critical part of the Bay restoration efforts that are helping crab and oyster populations rebound, shrinking the Bay's dead zone, and allowing Bay grasses to thrive.**
- **Cuts to the vital work of the Program could reverse years of hard-won progress,** and threaten clean water for the more than 18 million people and 3,600 species of plants and animals who call the Chesapeake Bay watershed home. The Chesapeake watershed stretches across 64,000 square miles.
- **Programs and efforts to save the Bay need to move forward,** perhaps at a faster pace, or issues of polluted water, human health risks, and declining economic benefits will continue.