

## CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM AND WATER RESOURCES UPDATES

January 2025

### Chesapeake Bay Program

#### [Chesapeake advocates eye 2025 for new Bay recreation area](#)

*Bay Journal*

Congress did not finalize the Chesapeake National Recreation Area. Although the Senate unanimously approved the measure Dec. 18, the House did not act, pushing consideration into 2025 after the next Congress is seated. While the bill did not come up for a vote in the House, it did have bi-partisan support and advocates expressed optimism that the measure had momentum to build upon. The proposed recreation area would be managed by the National Park Service.

#### [End-of-year bills offer support for Chesapeake Bay work](#)

*Bay Journal*

Congress gave Chesapeake Bay restoration advocates a few gifts as it wrapped up its end-of-year business by renewing support for key programs, bolstering support for oyster recovery and promoting outdoor recreation and education.

#### [Shimkin stepping down as Bay Program director](#)

*Bay Journal*

Martha Shimkin, the director of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Chesapeake Bay Program Office, announced her retirement at the end of the year. Shimkin has led the office since December 2023 and has been involved in efforts to restore the Chesapeake Bay, including the "Beyond 2025" initiative to update the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals. Lee McDonnell will serve as interim director.

#### [Nearly \\$400,000 in federal funding awarded to Chesapeake Bay conservation efforts in Maryland](#)

*CBS News*

Three hundred and ninety-eight thousand dollars in federal grant funding will be awarded to five Maryland-based projects focused on environmental, cultural, and historical conservation efforts within the Chesapeake Bay watershed, U.S. Senators Chris Van Hollen, Ben Cardin, and other state leaders announced Tuesday. \$150,000 will be awarded to the Anacostia Watershed Society to expand its volunteer program.

#### [Osprey troubles not tied to menhaden, some fisheries scientists say](#)

*Bay Journal*

A widely publicized study pointing to a shortage of Atlantic menhaden as the cause of osprey nest failures in the Chesapeake Bay has come under fire from a trio of Virginia fisheries scientists. A study by the College of William & Mary's Center for Conservation Biology linked a decline in osprey reproduction to a drop in menhaden, but Virginia Institute of Marine Science researchers criticized the study's data and methods, arguing that the evidence does not clearly support this conclusion.

### [Environmental ed program adds workforce development to its goals](#)

*Bay Journal*

The article discusses an environmental education program in Virginia that is expanding its goals to include workforce development in the maritime industry. With a \$2 million grant from the Department of Defense Education Activity, the York County School Division aims to prepare students for careers in shipbuilding, aquaculture, and offshore wind, addressing a shortage of young people in these fields.

### **Water Quality, Wastewater and Stormwater**

#### [DC sues federal government over pollution in Anacostia River](#)

*NBC Washington*

The lawsuit claims that federal agencies have polluted the Anacostia River for over 150 years by using it as a dumping ground for toxic waste and chemicals. This pollution has caused significant harm to the environment and the communities living along the river, particularly poor and minority communities. The lawsuit alleges that the federal government has failed to clean up the contamination, which includes hazardous substances like carcinogenic PCBs, heavy metals, and other chemicals.

#### [The results are in: Anacostia River gets a D-plus, but that's an improvement](#)

*WTOP News*

The annual report card is in for the Anacostia River, and while the overall grade is a D-plus, there are some positives in terms of the future of the river's health. In its [2024 State of the River Report](#), The Anacostia Watershed Society said the water quality of the Anacostia is the best it's been in 10 years. Several points of measurement are showing improvement, including the amount of submerged aquatic vegetation.

### **Drinking Water, Water Supply and Drought**

#### [COG's Water Supply and Drought Report for November](#)

As part of the Metropolitan Washington Water Supply and Drought Awareness Response Plan, COG issues monthly drought reports from May- October. Potomac streamflow and groundwater levels continue to decline due to the lack of precipitation in our region. The most recent U.S. Drought monitor released on October 31 indicates that a range of abnormal, moderate, and severe drought exists in the Potomac Watershed.

#### [ICPRB's Water Supply Outlook for December](#)

Due to the persistence of below-average precipitation, the publication period for the Water Supply Outlook has been extended into December, a month not covered by the ICPRB's Low-Flow Outlook model. Currently, the basin is grappling with a range of dry conditions, with 33.29% classified as abnormally dry (D0), 28.40% as moderate drought (D1), and 30.12% as severe drought (D2), as indicated by the U.S. Drought Monitor report released on November 30.

### [Why the U.S. has gotten so dry, so fast — and what could reverse it](#)

*Washington Post*

It may sound counterintuitive, but this year's hyperactive hurricane season may have helped fuel the drought across the United States. The United States has been like a patch of drought in an otherwise waterlogged world over the past several months. And it may take flooding rainfall to reverse the long-standing dryness. More than 30 states experienced rainfall deficits of more than eight inches over the last six months.

### [River Report: Year in Review](#)

*Potomac News Reservoir*

If you are one of those who typically only look at the graphs in our weekly River Reports, we have a lot of eye candy for you this week as we look at the year in review. As Ian Livingston of the [Washington Post](#) notes, the year "will be remembered for persistent and record-breaking warmth, recurrent drought, and several significant weather events..."

### [Be Salt Smart: New Webpage for Tips](#)

*Prince William Water*

With winter weather on the horizon, Prince William Water has a new webpage dedicated to promoting "Salt Smarts" this winter. The online resource is designed to provide residents and businesses with the latest information on how to use salt safely and effectively for deicing during the colder months, while minimizing its environmental impact.

### ['Snow and prayers': Richmond begins new year by coping with a water crisis](#)

*The Richmonder*

The article from discusses how Richmond is coping with a water crisis that began at the start of the new year. The crisis was triggered by a winter storm that caused failures at a water treatment plant, leading to a significant loss of water supply for residents. The article highlights the challenges faced by the community and the efforts being made to restore water services and ensure public safety.

## **PFAS**

### [Study points to farmland as possible source of PFAS in fish](#)

*Bay Journal*

A study found that PFAS, also known as "forever chemicals," are accumulating in smallmouth bass, particularly in areas near farmland. Researchers suspect that PFAS are entering waterways from pesticides, biosolids used as fertilizer, and livestock manure, raising concerns about the potential health risks to humans and the environment

### [As many as 23M Americans exposed to toxic 'forever chemicals' via treated wastewater: Study](#)

*The Hill*

Nearly 7 percent of Americans may be exposed to hazardous levels of "forever chemicals" through treated municipal wastewater, a new study has found. These approximately 23 million people may be consuming these toxic compounds, also known as per- and

polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), in their drinking water, according to the study, published on Monday in the [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#).

### [Maryland sues maker of Gore-Tex, alleging decades of pollution](#)

*The Washington Post*

Maryland is suing the maker of Gore-Tex, the material used in popular waterproof fabrics, alleging the company knew for decades that substances used in its manufacture posed significant health risks in the Cecil County area but failed to notify the state or nearby communities about the dangers.

## **Climate and Energy**

### [Bay state lawmakers tackle wide range of 'green' bills](#)

*Bay Journal*

In state capitals across the Chesapeake Bay region this year, lawmakers are expected to grapple with renewable energy — how to produce more of it and how to pay for it. The article discusses various environmental bills being considered by lawmakers in Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania.

### [Will nuclear power make a comeback in the Bay region?](#)

*Bay Journal*

The fight against climate change and huge demands for more electricity, much of it from data center growth to support artificial intelligence, are fueling renewed interest in nuclear power in several Chesapeake Bay drainage states. The rekindled appetite for nuclear power comes after decades of disinterest and opposition to expanding the power source in the country.

### [Report confirms: Data centers in Virginia pose enormous power demands](#)

*Bay Journal*

If the data center industry continues to grow at an unconstrained pace in Virginia, the state will struggle to supply enough power to meet local energy demands. And ratepayers will help foot the bill for the new infrastructure the industry's buildout requires. The report found that Northern Virginia hosts the largest data center market in the world, consuming more power than any other region. The exponential growth of AI data centers is driving a massive increase in energy demand, which could lead to higher electricity costs for residents. The report suggests policy changes to ensure the industry takes on more risk for creating additional power generation infrastructure.

### [It's official: 2024 will be D.C.'s warmest year on record](#)

*Washington Post*

With 2024 mostly in the rearview, another year enters the weather books — one that will be remembered for persistent and record-breaking warmth, recurrent drought, and several significant weather events including [a tornado outbreak](#) on June 5 in Maryland. And it's now official: Cooler December weather couldn't keep the year from becoming the city's warmest on record.

### [Fairfax environmental council worried about data centers' impact on local water supply](#)

*FFX Now*

Northern Virginia's [wary embrace of data centers](#) could have major long-term impacts on both water consumption and wastewater treatment across the region, the Fairfax County Environmental Quality Advisory Council (EQAC) says in its [annual report for 2024](#). The [134-page document](#) offers a status update and recommendations on environmental issues, including land use, air and water quality, transportation, waste management, climate change and ecological conservation.

### [Scientists make groundbreaking discovery that could give potable water to billions of people: 'This new strategy ... will provide additional access'](#)

*TCD*

Finding a way to make the desalination of ocean water efficient enough so it can be broadly useful is something of a holy grail in the scientific community. And now, researchers from the University of South Australia and China [have said](#) they've made a breakthrough that has the potential to make desalination cheap and efficient. By adding commonly found clay minerals into a solar-powered desalination process, they found that seawater evaporates much faster than pure water, potentially providing additional access to massive amounts of clean water for billions of people.

## **Food, Forestry and Agriculture**

### [Pennsylvania to get nearly \\$1 billion in federal funds for climate-smart ag practices](#)

*Bay Journal*

Nearly \$1 billion in federal funds are heading to Pennsylvania's agriculture community and researchers to increase the use of farming practices that fight climate change while encouraging consumers to reward the effort by seeking out "climate-smart" products. The climate-smart agricultural practices include reducing emissions from dairy farms and improving conservation in hemp production. The grants aim to promote sustainable farming and market climate-smart products.

### [VA protects almost 7,000 acres in Chesapeake Bay watershed](#)

*Bay Journal*

Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin announced [\\$14.4 million for land conservation grants](#) on Nov. 27, much of it awarded to locations in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The funds from the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation will go toward 28 projects across the state. Within the 11,200 acres of protected land, about 62% are in the Bay watershed.

### [VA to Pay Farmers for Pollution Cuts in New Pilot Program](#)

*Chesapeake Bay Magazine*

A new program to fight farm runoff in Virginia may offer farmers the strongest motivation yet to take action against pollution. The \$20 million pilot program doesn't just offer financial incentives for environmentally responsible farming practices—it gives out payments to farmers based on how much nitrogen and phosphorus they stop from reaching the Bay.

### [D.C. area on alert after bird flu detected in poultry in Maryland, Delaware](#)

*Washington Post*

The article discusses the recent detection of bird flu in the D.C. area, specifically in poultry in Maryland and Delaware. It highlights the concerns raised by the positive cases found in wild birds and poultry in Delaware's Kent County and on Maryland's Eastern Shore. The article also mentions safety warnings issued to the public regarding the handling of poultry and the potential risks associated with the bird flu outbreak

### [Ag to get greater voice in Chesapeake Bay cleanup effort](#)

*Bay Journal*

The article from Bay Journal discusses the increasing involvement of the agricultural sector in the Chesapeake Bay cleanup effort. For 40 years, the Bay region has struggled to sufficiently reduce nutrient pollution from farms, and the reasons for this are complex. The article explores these challenges and emphasizes the importance of giving agriculture a greater voice in the restoration process.

### **Upcoming Meetings and Events**

CBPC: March 21

[Winter Salt Awareness Week](#) is coming up January 27-31. Join national and regional webinars and in-person events to learn more about what is being done on this important issue. ICPRB and partners will be speaking on regional efforts at 2:30pm on January 29.

### **COG Staff Contacts**

Heidi Bonnaffon, [hbonnaffon@mwkog.org](mailto:hbonnaffon@mwkog.org)

Caitlin Bolton: [cbolton@mwkog.org](mailto:cbolton@mwkog.org)

Katie Dyer: [kdyer@mwkog.org](mailto:kdyer@mwkog.org)

Christine Howard, [cdhoward@mwkog.org](mailto:cdhoward@mwkog.org)

Lindsay Smith (Food and Agriculture), [lsmith@mwkog.org](mailto:lsmith@mwkog.org)