



Local governments working together for a better metropolitan region

January 11, 2006

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The Honorable Paul Sarbanes
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Wayne T. Gilchrest
2245 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Sarbanes and Congressman Gilchrest:

I am writing on behalf of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) and its 19 member local jurisdictions to express our support for your bills to reauthorize the Chesapeake Bay Program (S. 1490 and H.R. 4126). In particular, we endorse your efforts to raise the authorization for the Bay Program to \$50 million and to strengthen the requirements for implementation planning and reporting by the Bay Program partners. A lack of implementation plans with measurable goals and clear accountability for implementation is presently a major shortcoming of the Tributary Strategy approach adopted by each of the Bay states.

Local governments in the Metropolitan Washington region have endorsed four basic principles for effectively achieving the Bay Program's goals, namely: (1) the value of relying on voluntary actions as opposed to regulatory actions; (2) the importance of equity of effort; (3) the need for accurate, adequately documented scientific information; and (4) the critical value of local government voice. Your proposed legislation to reauthorize the Bay Program is consistent with and builds upon these principles.

We support the provisions in H.R. 4126 that recognize the important role of local governments in achieving the Chesapeake Bay Agreement nutrient and sediment reduction goals. However, considering that most implementation actions occur at the local level, we encourage you to increase the authorization for small watershed grants to local governments and NGOs to at least \$16.5 million – 33% of the total Bay Program funds authorized each year. In addition, we recommend increasing the cap on small watershed grants to \$1 million – a substantial increase over the present \$50,000 limit. Local governments and non-profit organizations are being asked to play an increasingly important role in the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort. More needs to be done to give these critical organizations the funding and tools necessary to carry out their roles in the Bay restoration partnership.

Thank you for your leadership in keeping the Bay restoration effort on track. We look forward to working with you and other members of Congress to insure that the clean water needs of the Metropolitan Washington region and the Chesapeake Bay are met.

Sincerely,

Jay Fiset, Member
Arlington County Board
and Chair, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
Board of Directors