



DOI U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense Program

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

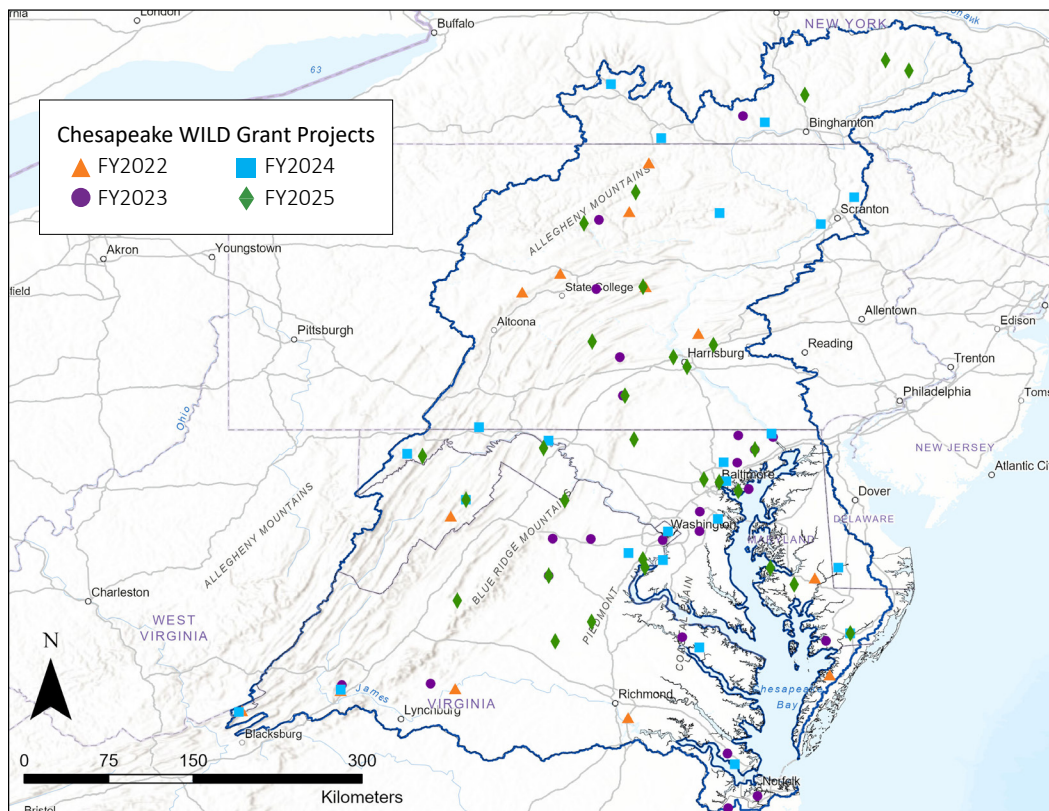
As the nation's largest estuary, the Chesapeake Bay is a source of life and livelihood. Thousands of species of fish, wildlife and plants depend upon the Bay's resources to survive, and the surrounding watershed supports more than 18 million people who live and work in the region. Many are employed in industries tied to the health of its lands and waters, like outdoor recreation, farming and fishing.

In 2020, Congress established the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense program, known as Chesapeake WILD, in response to a need for non-regulatory, partnership-driven conservation investments in the watershed. Chesapeake WILD complements state priorities and other existing initiatives by focusing on the following unmet conservation needs: restoring, conserving, and connecting habitat for fish and wildlife, and enhancing and expanding recreational access across the estuary to connect people with nature. As directed by Congress, Chesapeake WILD:

1. Implements a competitive grant program and provides grantee technical assistance and application support (Chesapeake WILD Grants)
2. Coordinates a network of partners to foster innovative grant proposals and implement on-the-ground conservation (Chesapeake WILD Roundtable)
3. Leads co-development of a watershed strategic conservation design that builds on existing work and regional conservation plans.



CHESAPEAKE WILD GRANT AWARDS 2022-2025



**\$26.4
million**

in conservation
investments

**\$34.1
million**

leveraged in
matching funds

**\$60.5
million**

total conservation
impact

Learn more about Chesapeake WILD here: fws.gov/program/chesapeake-wild, or visit nfwf.org/programs/chesapeake-bay-stewardship-fund/chesapeake-wild for the full grant slates.

COLLABORATIVE COORDINATED ACTION

Chesapeake WILD works with dozens of partners, creating opportunities to learn and implement innovative conservation strategies that will help us restore and connect a resilient landscape across the watershed. Through collaboration, we increase the efficiency and effectiveness of conservation delivery across the watershed to advance work in five shared pillars (see below).

Through competitive grants, co-administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Service directs funding to partner-led projects that address shared priorities across rural, urban and tribal communities.

Restoring and Reconnecting Habitats

Chesapeake WILD supports conservation actions across public, private, and tribal lands, improving habitat connectivity and resilience for at-risk species, with an emphasis on state priorities and Regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Expanding Recreational Opportunities

Across the six Chesapeake Bay watershed states, the outdoor recreation economy is valued at more than \$63 billion¹. Chesapeake WILD supports this economy by investing in projects that expand public access to natural spaces through educational programming, hunting, fishing, and more.

Improving Water Quality

Chesapeake WILD improves water quality by investing in rain gardens, tree plantings and voluntary conservation practices on agricultural lands, benefiting both local communities and wildlife.

Working with Partners

Chesapeake WILD funds a variety of organizations and their partners to restore natural habitats and build capacity for conservation actions on public, private, and tribal lands.

¹ [Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2019.](#)



CHESAPEAKE WILD PILLARS



Pillar 1

Restore, conserve and connect fish and wildlife habitat



Pillar 2

Improve water quality for fish, wildlife and people



Pillar 3

Align the power of nature to adapt to changing landscapes



Pillar 4

Expand access to nature and outdoor recreation for all Americans



Pillar 5

Build partnership capacity to collaborate and coordinate actions

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Top to bottom: Salt marsh sparrow/USFWS; High School students birdwatching at Masonville Cove in Maryland/ Chesapeake Bay Program; Graduate and undergraduate students snorkel in a shallow creek, identifying and assessing freshwater mussel populations/SUNY Oneonta.