

# **Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense (Chesapeake WILD) Act of 2019**

## **Bill Summary:**

The Chesapeake WILD Act would enable the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to more fully engage in habitat restoration activities in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Except within their refuges, the FWS currently lacks express authorization to engage in watershed restoration work in the Chesapeake region. The non-regulatory bill authorizes a competitive grant program through the FWS to assist local entities with their work on the ground restoring and protecting fish and wildlife habitats throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The legislation requires a 50 percent match from the grantees and gives the agency a direct role in the restoration and protection of valuable habitats throughout the 64,000 square mile Chesapeake region.

The bill designates States (including the District of Columbia), local governments, nonprofits, and universities as eligible grantees. The watershed's upland areas would benefit from the program's support of efforts to meet benchmarks which are currently behind schedule under the Chesapeake Bay Agreement. Grants could also be used to support conservation and restoration efforts in key tidal areas and wetlands directly surrounding the Bay.

In addition to protecting native species, Chesapeake WILD will enhance ecosystem services by mitigating flooding, enhancing recreational opportunities, and improving water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. The legislation is intended to assist local partners with on-the-ground work to enhance progress toward Chesapeake Bay Watershed-wide goals on some of the following:

- Restoring riparian forest buffers
- Improving stream health
- Restoring tidal and non-tidal wetlands
- Improving fish habitat
- Expanding populations of black ducks
- Restoring and protecting eastern brook trout and their habitat
- Removing barriers to fish migration in freshwater systems

**Endorsing Organizations:** Over 100 organizations have endorsed the Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense (Chesapeake WILD) Act of 2019.

*Prepared by the office of Congressman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott.*