



November 6, 2023

The Honorable Joe Manchin III
The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
The Honorable Alex Mooney
The Honorable Carol Miller

RE: Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act

The undersigned West Virginia member organizations of the Choose Clean Water Coalition write to make you aware of our strong support for the efforts to designate a Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA). West Virginia Rivers Coalition serves as the Choose Clean Water Coalition Lead in West Virginia, bringing together member groups working to protect West Virginia waters, including those that flow into the Chesapeake Bay. Together, we urge you to consider cosponsoring H.R. 5045/S. 2620, the Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area Act.

Promoting and expanding public access to the tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay, such as the Potomac, Shenandoah, James, Cacapon and Lost rivers, and many others, are long-standing priorities for the Coalition and our member groups. We appreciate that the legislation does not just focus on the Bay and tidal areas, but clearly states any “significant natural, recreational, historical, and cultural resource” anywhere within the 64,000 square mile six-state Chesapeake watershed could be considered for inclusion in the CNRA. We believe West Virginia has a critical role to play, and local benefits to be gained, in protecting the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The Chesapeake Bay watershed is a vast and diverse landscape with a population of almost 19 million residents. This legislation recognizes the ecological, cultural, and historic diversity of the region and we support providing and expanding opportunities for recreational access to water in underserved communities, both urban and rural, throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. This bill will help to move those efforts forward. We also support the inclusion of the National Park Service’s existing Chesapeake Gateways Program which has been providing public access in the entire

Chesapeake Watershed, including in West Virginia, since its initial creation by Congress in 1998.

We strongly support efforts to create a Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area Act (CNRA) and we appreciate the opportunity to add our voices from the headwaters of the Potomac and James rivers, and beyond. Thank you for the opportunity to relate our support this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Blue Ridge Watershed Coalition
Cacapon Institute
Canaan Valley Institute
Friends of the Cacapon River
National Parks Conservation Association
Potomac Conservancy
Potomac Valley Audubon Society
Save Our Soils
Sierra Club, West Virginia Chapter
Sleepy Creek Watershed Association
Sweet Springs Resort Park Foundation Inc.
Sweet Springs Watershed Association
The Downstream Project
Upper Potomac Riverkeeper
West Virginia Citizens Action Group
West Virginia Highlands Conservancy
West Virginia Land Trust
West Virginia Rivers Coalition