



CHESAPEAKE BAY  
FOUNDATION  
Saving a National Treasure

# 2024 Legislative Priority

## Whole Watershed Act



## CONTEXT

### Maryland is not on track to meet its 2025 Chesapeake Bay Restoration Goals

- Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response (CESR) Report, released May 2023, written by 100 scientists from across the watershed recommends how to adapt and alter efforts for improved results, including:
  1. greater focus on shallow waters, their habitats, and how people interact with the resource, and
  2. better targeting of interventions.
- As Maryland's representatives on the multi-state Chesapeake Bay Commission, Senator Sarah Elfreth and Delegate Sarah Love have learned from the innovative new practices in neighboring states, including a rapid delisting program in Central Pennsylvania that has shown success.
- Maryland's restoration structure currently does not prioritize the coordination of multiple Best Management Practices (BMPs) for watershed restoration. Cheaper, more effective BMPs may not be pursued because of difficulties with permitting, and coordination.

**Random Acts of Restoration” approach leads to big investments without big results.**

## WHAT THE WWA DOES:

- **Prioritizes \$20M** in state funding toward five whole watershed restoration projects for five years.
- **Focuses on watersheds** that present opportunities for most significant impact on an expedited timeline. Chosen watersheds will represent different geographies and land use types and will prioritize Environmental Justice communities.
- Requires practices that provide multiple co-benefits to support the health of the **whole watershed and community**.
- **Establishes a State Management Team** consisting of multiple state agencies, local experts, and others to select projects, monitor and support progress, and expedite permitting.
- **Creates a new certification** for developers and contractors who complete restoration projects to uphold standards and ensure quality.



The Chesapeake Bay watershed is 64,000-square miles and consists of six states and the District of Columbia.