



Citizens Advisory Committee

TO THE CHESAPEAKE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

April 21, 2014

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The Honorable President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are deeply disappointed to learn that your Fiscal 2015 budget for NOAA proposes, once again, to terminate the Bay Watershed Education and Training (BWET) Program, as part of a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education reorganization effort. The Congress rejected this proposal in the Fiscal 2014 Omnibus Appropriations bill and we hope that it will do so again this year. We would like to meet with your senior domestic policy and OMB staff as soon as possible to explore ways that the BWET program can be permanently reinstated, as a vital part not only of STEM, but environmental stewardship, health and other goals as well. To contact our staff for a meeting, please call or email the coordinator, Jessica Blackburn at (804) 775-0951 or jblackburn@allianceforthebay.org.

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) to the Chesapeake Executive Council is a group of 29 citizen volunteers from all walks of life and experiences, appointed by the Governors of Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, the Mayor of the District of Columbia and by the Board of Directors of the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. Our mission is to provide a non-governmental voice and advice on Chesapeake Bay restoration policies and programs.

Congress established NOAA's BWET Program in 2002 to address a critical need in Chesapeake watershed restoration efforts – the need to prepare the next generation for the environmental challenges facing the Nation's largest estuary. This need was identified in four previous Chesapeake Bay agreements or directives and reaffirmed in the Strategy for Protecting and Restoring the Chesapeake Bay Watershed required under your own Chesapeake Executive Order #13508. Its continued critical importance is underscored in the proposed new Chesapeake Watershed Agreement which is expected to be signed by your EPA Administration, the Governors of the six watershed states, the Mayor of the District of Columbia and the Chairman of the Chesapeake Bay Commission in June 2014.

In the past twelve years, since funding was first appropriated for the BWET Program, the program has proved to be a tremendous success enabling State and local education and natural resource agencies and their non-profit partners to provide K-12 environmental and outdoor experiential education opportunities to 423,000 students and training for more than 15,000 teachers. The competitive grants made available through NOAA's BWET Program have helped to: increase student interest and achievement in STEM subjects; get kids outside moving and learning in nature; enrich the educational experiences of students in underserved communities; prepare students for careers in science and the emerging green jobs economy; and promote environmental stewardship. These are



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all stated goals of your Administration as reflected in the America's Great Outdoors Initiative, the First-Lady's Let's Move campaign, minority youth and other initiatives.

The modest \$25 million in Federal funding made available in NOAA's Chesapeake BWET Program from FY 03 – FY 13 -- an average of \$2.5 million annually -- has leveraged more than \$18 million in matching support, far exceeding the leverage of many, if not most, federal programs. No other Federal program provides this level of support or helps to achieve as many important goals for K -12 students in the Chesapeake Watershed as NOAA's BWET Program. Indeed, the three agencies to which NOAA's BWET activities would be consolidated under your Fiscal 2015 budget plan -- the U.S. Department of Education, the National Science Foundation and the Smithsonian -- have little, if any, experience in the broad range of services delivered by NOAA's BWET program. Unlike most federal agencies, the Department of Education does not even have a formal agreement or actively support and participate in the Chesapeake watershed restoration Program. Secretary Duncan's Green Schools Initiative provides no financial support, only recognition, to State and local education agencies for their environmental education efforts.

Rather than terminate a program that is already achieving not only STEM engagement and educational results, but advancing other priorities as well, wouldn't it make sense to build upon the success of NOAA's BWET Program and provide more robust funding for the program – not only here in the Chesapeake, both in the other watersheds across the country? There are more than 3.5 million K-12 students in the Chesapeake watershed who should be served with environmental experiential education opportunities under the Bay Agreement, but the resources available are simply insufficient to do so. NOAA's BWET Program is a critical part of the solution. How does your Administration intend to meet its education and stewardship responsibilities and commitments under the Chesapeake Bay Agreement and Executive Order 13508 when it proposes to gut a program that provides the primary and critical support for those activities? These are questions that we would like to discuss further with your senior staff and to explore ways in which the BWET program can be reinstated not only in FY 15, but in future years as well.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



R. John Dawes
Chair, Citizens Advisory Committee

cc: Chesapeake Executive Council
NOAA Administrator Kathy Sullivan
Congressional Chesapeake Bay Watershed Task Force



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