

Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants Program

The Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants Program promotes community-based efforts to develop conservation strategies to protect and restore the diverse natural resources of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. The program provides grants to local governments and community organizations working to improve the condition of their local watersheds while building citizen-based resource stewardship. The program has been designed to encourage the sharing of innovative ideas among the many organizations wishing to be involved in watershed protection activities.

The specific objectives of the program are to:

- support communities in developing and implementing watershed management plans;
- encourage innovative, locally-based programs or projects that improve water quality and restore important habitats within the Chesapeake Bay basin;
- develop the capacity of local governments, citizens groups and other organizations to promote community based stewardship and enhance local watershed management;
- promote a greater understanding of the Chesapeake Bay and the interrelationship between the health of the Bay and the condition of local watersheds; and
- strengthen the link between communities and the Chesapeake Bay Program.

Grants are modest with a maximum level of support of \$50,000. When combined with the contributions of other partners, however, projects that make a measurable difference in communities become possible. The program is designed to help local groups gain the experience and technical expertise necessary to improve watershed protection in their communities. Over time, the combined efforts of groups throughout the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed will have a significant effect on improving the health of the Bay ecosystem and the diversity of life it supports.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation administers the Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants Program in partnership with the Chesapeake Bay Program. The program is authorized under the Clean Water Act. Primary funding is provided by the EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program Office. Additional funding is also provided by the NOAA Restoration Center. Total available funding for this year's program is approximately \$1.5 million.

In its first two years, the program received overwhelming interest throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed with nearly 300 proposals submitted. Applicants from every state within the watershed and the District of Columbia have presented quality programs worthy of support. As the Foundation expands its involvement in the Mid-Atlantic region, we hope to grow this program which has proven to be one of the most popular and far reaching grant programs focused on improving the health of an entire watershed while building the capacity of citizens to protect their natural resources into the future. Given the strong interest in this program, additional partners are being sought to increase the level of funding available to support these community-based watershed protection activities. This is a particularly good opportunity for groups that seek to leverage their investments. On average, for each dollar invested, two additional dollars in matching funds or in-kind contributions will be provided by project partners. Moreover, the program provides a great opportunity for corporate sponsors to engage their employees in volunteer projects in their communities.