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June 8, 2015

The Honorable Molly Ward
Secretary of Natural Resources
Commonwealth of Virginia

Dear Secretary Ward:

Thank you very much for agreeing to meet with the Virginia delegation to the Local Government Advisory Committee to the Chesapeake Bay Executive Council on June 24.

We are appreciative of your efforts to engage local government officials as partners as the Commonwealth strives to improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. By supporting the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund and the Water Quality Improvement Fund; convening the Chesapeake Bay Stakeholder Advisory Group; and your service as Chair, Principals' Staff Committee, you and others in the Administration have demonstrated a commitment to "acknowledge, support and embrace local governments and other local entities in watershed restoration and protection activities" as specified under the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement.

As members of the Local Government Advisory Committee, we frequently discuss ways in which federal, state and local partners can work more effectively to achieve the water quality improvement goals of the Watershed Agreement. Success of the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership depends substantially upon how well local governments are equipped to improve water quality, including effective stormwater management, upgrading the capability of wastewater treatment plants to minimize nutrient discharge, and working with the agricultural community to minimize runoff from farming activities.

Through our discussions, the following priorities have been identified:

1. Uninterrupted Long-term Funding

Strategies to improve water quality will require implementation over multiple decades with local governments in lead roles. To be successful, local governments will require robust and reliable financial assistance from state and federal sources.



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Your support is requested to ensure:

- Funding in the Governor's proposed budget for the next biennium of at least \$50 million each year for Water Quality Improvement, the minimum recommended on an annual basis by *Virginia Forever*.
- Uninterrupted funding for Virginia's Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF), an important source of funding for capital improvements to urban stormwater systems.
- Robust funding for the highly important agricultural cost-share program which supports best management practices to reduce runoff from farming activities.

2. Federal Government Engagement

To perform many of the functions necessary to improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, we believe it essential for the federal government to bear an equitable share of the financial burden. We recognize the extent to which the federal government can provide this funding depends on Congressional appropriations and believe it imperative that congressional delegations from Watershed states are fully informed about the fiscal impacts of the Chesapeake Bay TMDL upon local governments. We further believe it vital that members of the Chesapeake Bay Executive Council join local governments as partners to advocate for substantial federal funding to supplement state and local investment. More than ten years ago, a Blue Ribbon Panel appointed by the Chesapeake Bay Executive Council estimated an overall cost of just over \$27 billion associated with Chesapeake Bay Cleanup efforts. The lion-share of these costs are being incurred by local governments. To our knowledge, the recommendations of this Panel never received serious consideration, nor has there been any attempt to update this estimate.

Your support is requested in this effort.

3. Communication Process

In order to keep local governments informed of state-level activities associated with the management of Virginia's Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP), local governments would benefit from regularized communications, perhaps in the form of written status reports issued on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. These reports would complement quarterly meetings held by the Chesapeake Bay Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG.) Contents could include a summary of ongoing communications between Virginia and the Environmental Protection Agency regarding the progress of WIP implementation; overall progress in meeting Chesapeake Bay Program objectives associated with the two-year benchmarks for improving water quality; training program opportunities; replicable local program models; applications of technical innovations, and other matters. The reports could be submitted to statewide organizations (VACo, VML, Planning District Commissions) which could serve as conduits for distributing the information to member localities.



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States and localities face enormous challenges in achieving the water quality improvement goals of the Chesapeake Program. We agree that protecting the health of our environment and our people, and providing for long-term economic prosperity for the Commonwealth, is in all of our best interest. We look forward to meeting with you on June 24. Your willingness to discuss these issues with us is highly appreciated.

We look forward to continuing our work with you.

Sincerely,



Ruby A. Brabo
Dahlgren District Supervisor
King George County

cc: LGAC Membership and File



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