

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

2 April, 2014

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

Dear Mr. President,

We write as members of Congress representing areas located within the Chesapeake Bay watershed, to thank you for your leadership on efforts to restore the Bay and other critical waters throughout our region, and to urge you to continue to act to protect tributary streams and wetlands in our watershed and across the nation.

The Chesapeake Bay is an economic engine for our region, with an estimated value in the tens of billions of dollars range, based on the fishing and shipping industries, real estate, recreation, and tourism. Its 64,000 square-mile watershed includes 111,000 miles of creeks, streams, and rivers, nine major tributaries, and 1.7 million acres of wetlands.

To safeguard these assets, Congress passed the Clean Water Act in 1972. The law is the nation's primary tool to protect streams, ponds, wetlands, and larger waters from pollution, and to clean up waterways that are too polluted to provide the services on which we all depend. However, the Act today is broken, and you have an opportunity now to significantly improve how it works.

In 2001 and 2006, Supreme Court decisions, along with subsequent agency policy guidelines, called into question the status of upstream tributaries and wetlands and jeopardized critical water resources and fish and wildlife habitat. Legal uncertainty about what the law protects has denied pollution protections under the Act to approximately 20 percent of the 110 million acres of wetlands in the continental U.S. It has also thrown into question protections for thousands of streams around the country; this affects 28 percent of the stream miles in the District of Columbia, 11 percent in Delaware, 19 percent in Maryland, 11 percent in New York, 25 percent in Pennsylvania, 30 percent in Virginia, and 36 percent in West Virginia. These wetlands and streams are critical to the health of the Bay, filtering the nutrients that have created dead zones, replenishing groundwater, and reducing the risk of flood.

These court rulings have created confusion, undermining efforts to protect our drinking water supplies. The streams in question feed into the public drinking water systems of more than 117 million Americans. Across the six states that contribute to the Bay watershed, more than 26 million residents get at least some drinking water from supplies dependent on these at-risk resources.

We applaud efforts by the US Environmental Protection Agency and the US Army Corps of Engineers to publicly issue the proposed "waters of the US" rule to clarify what is covered by the Clean Water Act. The proposed rule provides needed certainty with respect to the waters covered by the Act's pollution prevention and cleanup programs, and will protect those waters that the science shows have important effects on downstream waterways and the Chesapeake Bay. After the period of public comment, we urge you to expedite the finalization of a clear, practical standard, and restore safeguards to protect the Bay and our constituents in the region.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this critical matter and for your administration's commitment to the Bay and the waters that feed it.

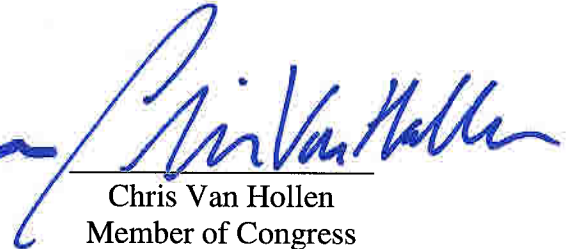
Sincerely,



Matt Cartwright
Member of Congress



James P. Moran
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress



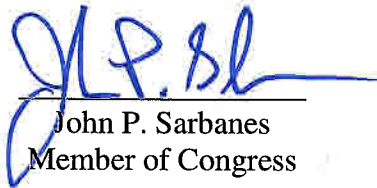
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



C.A. Dutch Ruppertsberger
Member of Congress



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress



Donna F. Edwards
Member of Congress