



CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION

CHESAPEAKE CONSERVANCY



*At the Federal Level:*

## **Chesapeake Bay Commission plans to seek Federal funds for state's conservation work**

Federal funding has been an invaluable component of the states' land preservation accomplishments to date. This includes funding for Federal units such as the national parks, forests and wildlife refuges, as well as grants to state and local governments and nonprofit organizations. If we are to achieve the federal goal of permanently preserving from development 2 million additional acres by 2025, it will be important to expand Federal funds available for land conservation in the watershed.

During the 112th Congress (2011-2012), the Commission will call for full funding of the **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)**, with states receiving an equitable share. In recent years, the LWCF has received varied levels of appropriations; generally well below the authorized \$900 million. The CBC will also work with Congressional Delegation members to restore the tradition of allocating half of the LWCF appropriations to the states. In recent years, as little as 10 percent has gone to the states, with the remainder supporting the federal agencies. Finally, the Commission will pursue a dedicated allocation from the Secretary's Discretionary Account to the Chesapeake Bay. This would provide valuable support to private land conservation efforts through qualified conservation organizations.

Continuing its work of 2010, the Commission will pursue a Department of Interior **Treasured Landscape or Blueways Program** to support the region's public-private effort to support a Great Rivers initiative. The establishment of a grant program, housed within the Department of Interior and modeled after the successful EPA Stewardship Grants Initiative administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will provide needed federal financial support to the states and NGOs responsible for land conservation.

Another opportunity will come with the reauthorization of the Farm Bill in either 2011 or 2012 and Representatives Tim Holden (D-PA) and Robert Goodlatte (R-VA) have a critical leadership role to play. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's **Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP)** established under the Farm Bill is a particularly important program for working lands in the Bay because it funds easements to permanently protect farms. The Commission will call for a streamlining of the FRPP, clarifying that FRPP funds are to be used as grants to partners, and not for property acquisitions by USDA. CBC will also ask the Congress to allow USDA to expand the use of FRPP funds to support farmland conservation programs rather than exclusively funding individual easements. These changes will significantly reduce delays and appraisal costs and eliminate the need for USDA to co-hold easements. As a streamlining alternative, USDA could

make all funds for the region available to an experienced fund administrator for distribution and record-keeping.