**State Budget Priorities for Clean Water**

In December, Governor Glenn Youngkin presented his budget recommendations in advance of the upcoming Virginia General Assembly session that begins on January 10. CBF will be working diligently to support these budget proposals and other initiatives that advance clean-water goals.

CBF supports Governor Youngkin’s recommendation to allocate more than $200 million for the Virginia Agriculture Cost-Share Program, which helps pay farmers for installing practices like fencing cattle out of streams, planting streamside trees and grasses, and many others.

Many of Virginia’s sewage treatment facilities have made important progress in nutrient reductions in recent years, but some facilities are lagging behind. An appropriation of $200 million will expedite completion of these important projects. CBF is also asking legislators to support $50 million for the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund, which provides matching grants to localities for projects that reduce polluted runoff.

With the revenue from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) in a state of flux, legislators should allocate at least $200 million to the Community Flood Preparedness Fund (CFPF) to support climate and flood resilience efforts. CFPF’s commitment to prioritizing nature-based solutions allows Virginia to protect our communities as well as our water quality.

Freshwater mussels benefit streams and rivers by filtering water and removing pollutants. These valuable organisms have shown rapid decline, but legislators can help mussel populations by allocating $400,000 to the Department of Wildlife Resources to continue freshwater mussel restoration, and $2 million for expanding and improving the Harrison Lake mussel hatchery.

CBF urges legislators to allocate funding for the Community Flood Preparedness Fund, to support climate and flood resilience efforts.

CBF urges legislators to support the increased funding of $7.5 million for oyster replenishment and restoration efforts, supporting an oyster industry that has experienced a 52 percent increase in dockside value since 2013. Additionally, we request $150,000 to capitalize the oyster shell recycling fund, which will boost the number of shells available for restoration projects by incentivizing the recycling of shells for use in oyster restoration projects.

CBF also urges legislators to include $2 million to fund research on Atlantic menhaden suggested by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science. This research is more important than ever for the Chesapeake Bay region, as the population has suffered from low menhaden recruitment for over 20 years.

CBF also supports $1.6 million in funding so students have opportunities to participate in field trips that improve their environmental literacy and to help school districts integrate environmental education into their curricula by providing resources and training.

You can help us advocate for clean-water funding. Visit [cbf.org/VASession](http://cbf.org/VASession) for more information and ways to contact your representatives.

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**From the Desk of Chris Moore**

**VIRGINIA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

The dead zone in the Chesapeake Bay in 2023 was the smallest since monitoring began in 1985, according to data released this November by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Old Dominion University, and Virginia Institute of Marine Science.

The dead zone appears annually in parts of the Bay and its tidal rivers during warmer months, creating areas where oxygen levels are so low that the water cannot support fish, blue crabs, oysters, and other aquatic life. The dead zone is caused by algal blooms that are fueled by nitrogen and phosphorus pollution. These cloud the water and cause damage, mainly during the warmer months.

The extent of each year’s dead zone is dependent on several factors, including how much nitrogen and phosphorus pollution enters waterways. High precipitation can contribute to the dead zone because it leads to more polluted runoff washing into rivers and streams. Precipitation was below average for most of 2023.

While the smaller dead zone this year is a promising sign, we must remember the major challenges that lie ahead. The mere existence of a dead zone is cause for alarm, and a sign that we must still dramatically reduce pollution flowing into the Bay.
CBF and Faith Communities Plant Trees

Using funds from a grant awarded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, CBF hosted a tree planting event in December at Union Presbyterian Seminary’s Yaupon Place Park, located on Richmond’s northside. Volunteers joined us to plant 49 trees. These are just some of 300 trees we will plant on Richmond city property under this project.

Additional grant activities include working with local churches to remove pavement, install stormwater practices, and plant trees and native plants. Major partners include Virginia Interfaith Power & Light, the City of Richmond, Groundwork RVA, the Virginia Department of Forestry, Southside ReLeaf, and the Richmond ToolBank. This current work expands on our urban restoration efforts in Richmond neighborhoods and with local faith institutions.

CBF’s Priorities for the 2024 Legislative Session

In addition to the budget items featured on the first page, CBF is also advocating for legislation that supports the Bay and Virginia’s rivers and streams.

Many local governments desire to expand their tree canopy to cost-effectively reduce flooding, manage stormwater, and reduce the health impacts of urban heat islands and air pollution to their residents. CBF supports legislation that establishes a floor, not a ceiling, on tree replacement requirements. CBF also supports legislation that expands the opportunities for localities to establish tree canopy funds when a developer cannot replace the required percentage of trees on the parcel being developed.

Passing the Forest Conservation Act will allow Virginia to determine a baseline of how many acres of the Commonwealth’s forests are healthy as well as where opportunities exist to reconnect forest fragments. CBF also urges legislators to direct the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to study the loss of forest and urban tree canopy due to road construction, determine what acreage under VDOT purview can be planted, and charge VDOT with creating a restoration plan to replace trees lost in road construction.

Virginia code allows property associations to restrict the use of low-impact landscaping. Homeowners living in community associations should have the option to install conservation landscaping to improve water quality, provide wildlife habitat, and mitigate climate change, and we urge legislators to enable homeowners to plant gardens and yards with trees and shrubs that provide benefits for pollinators and clean water.

CBF urges the General Assembly to prohibit the sale and use of toxic pavement sealants as a cost-effective way to limit pollution and protect public health. This type of sealant typically contains about 1,000 times more polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) than sealant products with an asphalt base. PAHs are known to cause cancer, birth defects, and mutations to aquatic life.

Join us to learn more at our General Assembly Preview on January 9, then join us in Richmond on January 30 to lobby your legislator on these clean-water issues.

Chris Moore Named CBF’s Virginia Executive Director

Effective December 4, Chris Moore became CBF’s newest Virginia Executive Director!

If Chris’ name seems familiar, it is because he has worked at CBF for 18 years, most recently as the Senior Regional Ecosystem Scientist guiding CBF’s fisheries work among many other efforts.

His work also includes a wide range of activities such as water quality monitoring, on-the-ground restoration, regulatory development, and working with elected officials through all levels of government to garner legislative support to ensure enhancement of the Bay watershed.

Chris received his undergraduate degree in Environmental Studies in 1997 from Randolph–Macon College and received his master’s degree in Environmental Science and Public Policy from George Mason University. He is also a U.S. Coast Guard Licensed Captain.

CBF in the Community

ADVOCACY

Virginia General Assembly Preview Webinar

Tuesday, January 9, 6:30–8:00 p.m.

The Virginia General Assembly is gearing up for another fast-paced legislative session. Join us to learn about the policies we are advocating for during the 2024 session, and what you can do to support our efforts. Visit events.cbf.org/calendar/event/471 to register for the webinar.

Clean Water Lobby Day

Tuesday, January 30, 7:45 a.m.–1:30 p.m.

St. Paul’s Episcopal Church
815 E. Grace Street, Richmond

Join CBF and our partners for a lobby day. Learn about clean-water issues then meet with your elected representative at the General Assembly. Register today at vcvna.org/2024-water-conservation-lobby-day.