

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 6893

AN ACT

To reauthorize the Chesapeake Bay Office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Chesapeake Bay Wa-
3 tershed Advancement for Training, Education, Restora-
4 tion, and Science (WATERS) Act”.

5 **SEC. 2. REAUTHORIZATION OF NATIONAL OCEANIC AND**
6 **ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION CHESA-**
7 **PEAKE BAY OFFICE.**

8 Section 307 of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
9 Administration Authorization Act of 1992 (15 U.S.C.
10 1511d) is amended—

11 (1) in subsection (a)—

12 (A) in paragraph (1), by striking “(in this
13 section” and all that follows and inserting a pe-
14 riod;

15 (B) in paragraph (2), to read as follows:

16 “(2) The Office shall be headed by a Director, who—

17 “(A) shall have knowledge and experience in re-
18 search or resource management efforts in the Chesa-
19 peake Bay; and

20 “(B) shall be responsible for the administration
21 and operation of the Office and the implementation
22 of this section.”; and

23 (C) by striking paragraph (3);

24 (2) in subsection (b)—

1 (A) in paragraph (2), by striking “Sec-
2 retary of Commerce” and inserting “Adminis-
3 trator”;

4 (B) in paragraph (3)—

5 (i) by inserting “with and represent”
6 after “coordinate”;

7 (ii) by striking “, the Chesapeake Bay
8 Regional Sea Grant Programs, and the
9 Chesapeake Bay units of the National Es-
10 tuarine Research Reserve System,” and in-
11 serting “for the Chesapeake Bay Program
12 and that relate to the Chesapeake Bay wa-
13 tershed in furtherance of such Administra-
14 tion’s coastal resource stewardship mis-
15 sion,”;

16 (iii) in subparagraph (A)—

17 (I) in clauses (vi) and (vii), by
18 striking “and” at the end; and

19 (II) by adding at the end the fol-
20 lowing:

21 “(viii) coastal hazards; and

22 “(ix) education; and”; and

23 (iv) in subparagraph (B)—

24 (I) in clause (iii), by striking
25 “and” at the end;

1 (II) in clause (iv), by inserting
2 “and” after the semicolon; and

3 (III) by adding at the end the
4 following:

5 “(v) integrated ecosystem assess-
6 ments;”;

7 (C) in paragraph (4)—

8 (i) by striking “Environmental Pro-
9 tection Agency” and inserting “Chesapeake
10 Executive Council”; and

11 (ii) by inserting before the semicolon
12 at the end the following: “as appropriate to
13 further the purposes of this section”;

14 (D) by striking paragraphs (5) and (7);

15 (E) by redesignating paragraph (6) as
16 paragraph (5); and

17 (F) by adding at the end the following:

18 “(6) perform any functions necessary to sup-
19 port the programs referred to in paragraph (3).”;

20 (3) by striking subsections (c), (d), and (e); and

21 (4) by adding at the end the following:

22 “(c) PROGRAM ACTIVITIES.—

23 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator, acting
24 through the Director, shall implement the program
25 activities authorized by this section to support the

1 activity of the Chesapeake Executive Council and to
2 further the purposes of this section.

3 “(2) ENSURING SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL
4 MERIT.—The Director shall—

5 “(A) establish and use an effective and
6 transparent mechanism to ensure that projects
7 funded under this section have undergone ap-
8 propriate peer review; and

9 “(B) provide other appropriate means to
10 determine that such projects have acceptable
11 scientific and technical merit for the purpose of
12 achieving maximum use of available funds and
13 resources to benefit the Chesapeake Bay area.

14 “(3) CONSULTATION WITH CHESAPEAKE EXEC-
15 UTIVE COUNCIL.—The Director shall, in the imple-
16 mentation of the program activities authorized under
17 this section, consult with the Chesapeake Executive
18 Council, to ensure that the activities of the Office
19 are consistent with the purposes and priorities of the
20 Chesapeake Bay Agreement and plans developed
21 pursuant to the such agreement.

22 “(4) INTEGRATED COASTAL OBSERVATIONS.—

23 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator,
24 acting through the Director, may collaborate
25 with scientific and academic institutions, State

1 and Federal agencies, nongovernmental organi-
2 zations, and other constituents in the Ches-
3 peake Bay watershed to support an integrated
4 observations system for the Chesapeake Bay
5 consistent with the purposes of the Integrated
6 Coastal and Ocean Observation System Act of
7 2009 (33 U.S.C. 3601 et seq.).

8 “(B) SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS.—To sup-
9 port the system referred to in subparagraph (A)
10 and provide a complete set of environmental in-
11 formation for the Chesapeake Bay, the Director
12 shall—

13 “(i) coordinate monitoring with Fed-
14 eral and State agencies in the tidal por-
15 tions of the Chesapeake Bay to understand
16 impacts of water quality on living marine
17 resources;

18 “(ii) identify new data collection needs
19 and deploy new technologies, as appro-
20 priate;

21 “(iii) collect and analyze the scientific
22 information necessary for the management
23 of living marine resources and the marine
24 habitat associated with such resources; and

1 “(iv) organize the information de-
2 scribed in clause (iii) into products that
3 are useful to policy makers, resource man-
4 agers, scientists, and the public.

5 “(C) CHESAPEAKE BAY INTERPRETIVE
6 BUOY SYSTEM.—To further the development
7 and implementation of the Chesapeake Bay In-
8 terpretive Buoy System and associated moni-
9 toring assets to improve weather and ecological
10 forecasts, monitor habitat conditions for living
11 marine resources, the Director may—

12 “(i) support the establishment and
13 implementation of the Captain John Smith
14 Chesapeake National Historic Trail;

15 “(ii) delineate key waypoints along the
16 trail and provide appropriate real-time
17 data and information for trail users;

18 “(iii) interpret data and information
19 for use by educators and students to in-
20 spire stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay;
21 and

22 “(iv) incorporate the observational
23 data from the Chesapeake Bay Interpretive
24 Buoy System into the Integrated Ocean

1 Observing System regional observing sys-
2 tem network.

3 “(5) CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED EDU-
4 CATION AND TRAINING PROGRAM.—

5 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator,
6 acting through the Director, may establish a
7 Chesapeake Bay watershed education and train-
8 ing program. The program shall—

9 “(i) continue and expand the Chesa-
10 peake Bay watershed education programs
11 offered by the Office immediately before
12 the enactment of the Chesapeake Bay Wa-
13 tershed Advancement for Training, Edu-
14 cation, Restoration, and Science
15 (WATERS) Act;

16 “(ii) improve the understanding of el-
17 ementary and secondary school students
18 and teachers of the living resources of the
19 ecosystem of the Chesapeake Bay;

20 “(iii) provide education and career
21 pathway internships; and

22 “(iv) meet the educational goals of the
23 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement.

24 “(B) GRANT PROGRAM.—The Director
25 may award grants for the purposes of this para-

graph. Grants awarded under this subparagraph may be used to support education and training projects that enhance understanding and assessment of a specific environmental problem in the Chesapeake Bay watershed or a goal of the Chesapeake Bay Program, or protect or restore living resources of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, including projects that—

“(i) provide classroom education, including the development and use of distance learning and other innovative technologies, related to the Chesapeake Bay watershed;

“(ii) provide meaningful watershed educational experiences in the Chesapeake Bay watershed;

“(iii) provide professional development for teachers related to the Chesapeake Bay watershed and the dissemination of pertinent education materials oriented to varying grade levels;

“(iv) demonstrate or disseminate environmental educational tools and materials related to the Chesapeake Bay watershed;

1 “(v) demonstrate field methods, prac-
2 tices, and techniques including assessment
3 of environmental and ecological conditions
4 and analysis of environmental problems;
5 and

6 “(vi) build the capacity of school dis-
7 tricts and their partners to deliver high
8 quality environmental education programs.

9 “(C) COORDINATION.—The Director shall
10 implement the education and training program
11 in coordination with the heads of other Federal
12 agencies, as the Director determines appro-
13 priate.

14 “(6) COASTAL AND LIVING RESOURCES MAN-
15 AGEMENT AND HABITAT PROGRAM.—

16 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator,
17 acting through the Director, may establish a
18 Chesapeake Bay Coastal Living Resources Man-
19 agement and Habitat Program to support co-
20 ordinated management, protection, character-
21 ization, and restoration of priority Chesapeake
22 Bay habitats and living resources, including
23 oysters, blue crabs, salt marshes, submerged
24 aquatic vegetation, and economically and eco-

1 logically important fish species such as striped
2 bass and menhaden.

3 “(B) ACTIVITIES.—Under the Chesapeake
4 Bay Coastal Living Resources Management and
5 Habitat Program, the Director may carry out
6 or enter into grants, contracts, and cooperative
7 agreements and provide technical assistance to
8 support—

9 “(i) native oyster research and res-
10 toration;

11 “(ii) fish and shellfish aquaculture
12 that is carried out in accordance with a
13 valid Federal or State permit;

14 “(iii) establishment of submerged
15 aquatic vegetation restoration programs;

16 “(iv) the development of programs
17 that restore, protect, and build the resil-
18 ience of critical coastal habitats and com-
19 munities;

20 “(v) habitat mapping, characteriza-
21 tion, and assessment techniques necessary
22 to identify, assess, and monitor Ches-
23 apeake Bay conditions and restoration ac-
24 tions;

1 “(vi) application and transfer of ap-
2 plied scientific research and ecosystem
3 management tools to fisheries and habitat
4 managers;

5 “(vii) collection, synthesis, and shar-
6 ing of information to inform and influence
7 coastal and living resource management
8 issues;

9 “(viii) ecologically and economically
10 important fish and shellfish research; and

11 “(ix) other activities that the director
12 determines are appropriate to carry out
13 the purposes of such program.

14 “(d) DELEGATION.—

15 “(1) AUTHORITY.—The Administrator shall del-
16 egate to the Director such authority as may be nec-
17 essary to carry out this section.

18 “(2) STAFF.—The Administrator shall assign
19 to the Director appropriate staff representing exper-
20 tise that covers the breadth of the duties of the Of-
21 fice.

22 “(e) REPORTS.—

23 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator, acting
24 through the Director, shall submit a biennial report
25 to the Committee on Natural Resources of the

1 House of Representatives, the Committee on Com-
2 merce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate,
3 and the Secretary of Commerce on the activities of
4 the Office and on progress made in protecting and
5 restoring the living resources and habitat of the
6 Chesapeake Bay.

7 “(2) ACTION PLAN.—Each such report shall in-
8 clude an action plan for the 2-year period following
9 submission of the report, consisting of—

10 “(A) a list of recommended research, moni-
11 toring, and data collection activities necessary
12 to continue implementation of the strategy
13 under subsection (b)(2); and

14 “(B) recommendations to integrate Na-
15 tional Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
16 activities with the activities of the partners in
17 the Chesapeake Bay Program to meet the com-
18 mitments of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement
19 and subsequent agreements.

20 “(f) AGREEMENTS.—The Administrator, acting
21 through the Director, may enter into and perform such
22 contracts, leases, grants, or cooperative agreements as
23 may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this Act.

24 “(g) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

1 “(1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term ‘Adminis-
2 trator’ means the Administrator of the National
3 Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

4 “(2) CHESAPEAKE BAY AGREEMENT; CHESA-
5 PEAKE BAY ECOSYSTEM; CHESAPEAKE BAY PRO-
6 GRAM; CHESAPEAKE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.—The
7 terms ‘Chesapeake Bay Agreement’, ‘Chesapeake
8 Bay ecosystem’, ‘Chesapeake Bay Program’, and
9 ‘Chesapeake Executive Council’ have the meanings
10 given those terms in section 117(a) of the Federal
11 Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1267(a)).

12 “(3) DIRECTOR.—The term ‘Director’ means
13 the Director of the Office.

14 “(4) OFFICE.—The term ‘Office’ means the
15 Chesapeake Bay Office established under this sec-
16 tion.”.

Passed the House of Representatives September 14,
2026.

Attest:

Clerk.

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