

CBF issues statement on Congressional efforts to derail the blueprint

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(Annapolis, MD) -- Kim Coble, Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) Vice President for Environmental Protection and Restoration, issued this statement following the passage of Congressman Goodlatte's amendment to H.R. 3354, the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act 2018. The amendment would undermine the historic federal-state Chesapeake Bay Program partnership by prohibiting the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from spending money to enforce pollution limits set to restore local rivers, streams, and the Chesapeake Bay.

Background

In the Chesapeake Bay region, Bay watershed states have been working together for over forty years to clean the Chesapeake Bay. In 1983, a formal federal-state partnership was established and coordinated through the Chesapeake Executive Council. This Council includes the governors of each state, the Mayor of the District of Columbia, the Chesapeake Bay Commission (representing state legislative bodies), and the EPA Administrator. In 2009, after several failed watershed agreements, EPA agreed to provide scientific leadership and oversight for a new cleanup plan: the Chesapeake Clean Water Blueprint.

Under this plan, states develop and implement their own pollution reduction plans simultaneously and EPA tracks publicly assess their progress and provides assurance that all states are fulfilling their commitments. States reaffirmed their commitment to this approach by signing the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Agreement and including this statement: "The Partnership's experience with watershed restoration and protection efforts has shown that measurable results, coupled with firm accountability, yield the most significant results."

Congressman Goodlatte's amendment would keep EPA from using any funds to provide this "firm accountability" if a state fails to meet its pollution-reduction goals set under the Blueprint. This accountability is what sets it apart from any previous federal-state Bay cleanup effort. Without it, if one state does not implement their plan in good faith, the work and investments of all other states is in jeopardy.

Ms. Coble said:

"The Chesapeake Clean Water Blueprint is working. Bay grasses are up, the dead zone is getting smaller, and oysters are beginning to rebound."

The Chesapeake Bay Blueprint is a consensus agreement among the watershed States and EPA to meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act and restore the Bay after years of failed attempts. However, only EPA has the ability to enforce the agreement in the event that a state fails to meet its commitments. By suspending this backup enforcement authority, the Goodlatte Amendment threatens the viability of the Blueprint.

"CBF will work with the Bay region's Senators to ensure that the Goodlatte amendment is not included in their appropriations legislation."

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Andy Harris (R-MD), C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD), John Sarbanes (D-MD), Anthony Brown (D-MD), Steny Hoyer (D-MD), John Delaney (D-MD), Jamie Raskin (D-MD), Robert Wittman (R-VA), Scott Taylor (R-VA), Robert Scott (D-VA), A. Donald McEachin (D-VA), Don Beyer (D-VA), Barbara Comstock (R-VA), Gerald Connelly (D-VA), Patrick Meehan (R-PA), Matt Cartwright (D-PA), Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE); John Faso (R-NY); Erik Paulsen (R-MN), Christopher Smith (R-NJ), David Joyce (R-OH), Leonard Lance (R-NJ), Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ), Tom MacArthur (R-NJ), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA).

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