

WASHINGTON, DC - Major funding for several projects important to Maryland's environment and economy is contained in the fiscal year 2006 Interior Appropriations Conference Report, agreed to in the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate, that was passed by the House of Representatives today. The funding will help to preserve Southern Maryland's historic tobacco barns, it will benefit the Alice Ferguson Foundation in Prince George's County, and will provide critical funds to clean up the Chesapeake Bay and the Anacostia River. The funds were all included in the bill at the request of Congressman Steny Hoyer.

"Our state benefits from an uncommonly distinctive culture and heritage," said Congressman Hoyer. "I think it is important to balance these inherent traits with the tremendous economic growth we are experiencing in our state, and particularly in Southern Maryland. Our efforts received a boost today with the passage of this Conference Report which included significant funding for a number of projects aimed at preserving our region's distinctive character.

"In particular, I was pleased to secure funds for the preservation of Southern Maryland's tobacco barns which serve as a defining character of the area's rural landscape. I also think it is critical that we educate our young people early on about our natural environment and am a strong supporter of the Alice Ferguson Foundation, which will benefit from \$200,000 in this bill.

"The Congress again committed funds to the Chesapeake Bay Program which is key to restoring this great national treasure and to improving the quality of life for the 16 million citizens who live in the watershed. I am also pleased to have secured funds for the restoration of the Anacostia River – particularly so that the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission can make wastewater infrastructure upgrades and improvements. This funding will begin to address the pollution that is dumped into the River every time our outdated sewage system overflows," Hoyer added.

Congressman Hoyer helped secure funding for the following list of programs that will benefit the state of Maryland.

Southern Maryland Tobacco Barn Restoration, \$200,000

The National Trust for Historic Preservation named the tobacco barns of Southern Maryland to its 2004 list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. For almost 400 years, wood-frame tobacco barns have

dotted the rolling fields of Southern Maryland, their shapes defining the character of the area's rural landscape and their simple construction echoing traditional timber framing methods used in England for centuries. Once essential to the process of air-curing tobacco, a mainstay crop of Maryland's agriculture since the 17th century, historic tobacco barns are now being lost at an alarming rate. Pressure from residential developments has only been aggravated by the unintended consequences of Maryland's 2001 tobacco buyout, by which farmers agreed to stop cultivating tobacco. A majority of barns now have no productive purpose, stand unused, and deteriorating. This funding will be used by Preservation Maryland to restore Southern Maryland's tobacco barns and ensure that these historic landmarks will be preserved for future generations.

Anacostia River Tidal Wetlands, \$1 million

Prior to the 1950s, the Anacostia River, and its tributaries in Prince George's County made up an extensive tidal wetland system. In the 1950s, the Army Corps straightened out the River and filled most of the wetlands for flood control, and additional commercial, industrial, and land fill activities have contributed to significant wetland loss in the basin. Prince George's County continues to face tremendous challenges of flood control, water delivery, and water treatment.

The Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Maryland State Highway Administration, Federal Highway Association, along with NOAA and Prince George's County have partnered and contributed \$6.1 million out of a total cost of \$8.1 million to restore 30 acres of tidal wetland. This funding will assist this effort to help restore the wetlands in the Anacostia River Basin.

Potomac River Basin Snakehead Program, \$175,000

Congressman Hoyer remains concerned by the recent discoveries of the Northern Snakehead in the Potomac River and its potential impact on native fish populations. The Fish and Wildlife Service has begun to identify, contain, and eradicate the species in the Potomac River watershed. This funding will be used by the Fish and Wildlife Service to investigate new ways to capture and collect snakeheads and recommend ways to prevent the spread of the fish throughout the Potomac River Basin. The Fish and Wildlife Service, working with watershed partners, will also work to determine the potential impacts the Snakehead will have on the Potomac's native fish and aquatic resources. Last year, Congressman Hoyer added language to the Omnibus Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2005 instructing the Fish and Wildlife Service to begin this investigation of the species.

Anacostia Sanitary Sewer Overflow, \$500,000

The Anacostia watershed encompasses 176 square miles within suburban Maryland and the District of Columbia. It is one of the most densely populated watersheds within the Chesapeake Bay drainage basin. The watershed today is known to be a degraded urban ecosystem but was once heralded as a thriving natural and commercial resource in its earlier history. The watershed has undergone many changes through the years, mainly due to the influence of urbanization on the ecosystem. Although the once pristine watershed reflects a system that has suffered from years of environmental neglect and urbanization, major restoration efforts since 1987 are beginning to improve conditions. This funding will be used by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) to make necessary wastewater infrastructure upgrades and improvements along the Anacostia River. These upgrades will allow the identification of, and necessary upgrades to, wastewater pipes along the Anacostia River so that the habitat and ecosystem can be improved.

Port Tobacco Conservancy, \$200,000

In October 2001, high levels of harmful bacteria were found in the Port Tobacco River. Since then, the Port Tobacco River Conservancy has worked with residents, local governments, and various conservation groups to restore and protect the rivers and streams in the watershed. While the Conservancy and its partners have made some progress, the River does not meet clean water goals and is in need of special protection of its natural resources. This funding will be used for water quality and restoration projects for the Port Tobacco River and its tributaries. The Chesapeake Bay Trust, a private, non-profit grant maker working to involve citizens in the Bay's restoration, will provide matching funds for this initiative.

The Alice Ferguson Foundation/Hard Bargain Farm, \$200,000

The Alice Ferguson Foundation provides the National Park Service with a million dollar educational facility and access to specialized expertise in educational program development. The Alice Ferguson Foundation was established in 1954 as a non-profit organization chartered in the state of Maryland. Its mission is to foster environmental responsibility and to enhance the historic legacy and rural character of 330 acre Hard Bargain Farm which is visited by more than 10,000 students from the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area each year.

At the request of Congressman Hoyer, the Alice Ferguson Foundation will receive \$200,000 to allow for the renovation and expansion of the Wareham Lodge Green Building to improve teacher-training facilities, increase computer and science laboratories, and make necessary ADA accessibility improvements. To date, Congressman Hoyer has secured a total of nearly \$1 million for the Alice Ferguson Foundation.

Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network, \$1.5 million

The Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network, which includes more than 120 museums, state parks, wildlife refuges, Indian reservations, water trails and other sites in five states and the District of Columbia, was created through the vision of Senator Paul Sarbanes to enhance the experience of visitors to the Chesapeake Bay and its many roads, rivers and trails. Last year, Hoyer and Sarbanes secured \$2.5 million for the Gateways Network Grant program to enhance the enjoyment and education of visitors to those facilities and the Chesapeake Bay region.

Chesapeake Bay Programs, \$22.8 million

The Chesapeake Bay Watershed continues to face serious environmental challenges. Over the past two decades, federal, state, and local partners have worked together to produce modest restoration gains, but stronger actions must be taken to reduce the region's nutrient and sediment loads to the Bay. Due to the expansive nature of the watershed, this partnership has worked to identify both regional and national programs that are key to restoring this great national treasure and to improving the quality of life for the 16 million citizens who live in the watershed. Funding for the following two programs was included in the bill.

EPA Chesapeake Bay Program, \$20.8 million

The Chesapeake Bay Program, which is run by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), will receive \$20.8 million for a variety of restoration and water quality issues to restore the Bay to a healthy and self-sustaining ecosystem. Funding for this program is essential to the implementation of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement which outlines goals and commitments for the program to achieve over the next ten years.

EPA Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants Program, \$2 million

The Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants Program provides grants to organizations working on a local level to protect and improve watersheds in the Chesapeake Bay basin, while building citizen-based resource stewardship. The purpose of the grants program is to address the water quality and living resource needs of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. This program has proven to be an overwhelming success not only in promoting local stewardship and empowering local agencies and community groups to identify and solve local problems, but improving the Bay as a whole through the cumulative effects of these seemingly modest local efforts.

Piscataway Park, \$700,000

The Conference Report also includes \$700,000 for the National Park Service so that they can purchase 71 acres at Piscataway Park.

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