

Washington, DC – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) today announced that the fiscal year 2008 Omnibus Appropriations bill approved by the House of Representatives this evening, includes federal funds for programs and projects that will benefit the Chesapeake Bay. The Omnibus Appropriations bill includes 11 of the 12 appropriations bills for fiscal year 2008 and will fund 14 of the 15 Cabinet departments, several independent government agencies, and the District of Columbia government. The Senate is expected to vote on the legislation this week.

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 action is required to reduce the region's nutrient and sediment loads to the Bay and restore the health of this magnificent estuary.

"This funding demonstrates recognition by the Congress of the value in supporting programs that enhance the great national treasure that is the Chesapeake Bay," **stated Congressman Hoyer.** "This investment will significantly bolster efforts at the national and regional levels to restore this treasure and ultimately improve the quality of life for the 16 million citizens who live in the watershed."

Congressman Hoyer helped secure funding for the following programs that will benefit the Chesapeake Bay.

EPA Chesapeake Bay Program - \$21 Million for a variety of restoration and water quality initiatives 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.

Chesapeake Bay Targeted Watershed Grants Program - \$8 Million for projects that expand the collective knowledge on the most innovative, sustainable, and cost-effective strategies - including market-based approaches - for reducing excess nutrient loads within specific tributaries to the Chesapeake Bay.

Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants Program - \$2 Million for 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. The Small Watershed Grants Program has been designed to encourage the development and sharing of innovative ideas among the many organizations wishing to be involved in watershed protection activities. 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.

Chesapeake Bay Oyster Recovery - \$1.97 Million

Unfortunately, due to disease, pollution, and over fishing, oyster populations in the Chesapeake Bay are only about two percent of their levels just a century ago. In the last few years, a consensus has emerged in the scientific community that in order to restore the overall health of the Chesapeake Bay, oyster restoration must be undertaken on a much larger scale. The Corps of Engineers' Oyster Recovery Project is working to create both managed harvest reserves and oyster sanctuaries, which will help create a fresh supply of oysters in the Bay. The oyster reef structures that will be created thanks to this effort will provide critical habitat and feeding grounds for other essential species and will also serve as natural filters screening out algae, sediments, and pollutants.

Chesapeake Bay Oyster Habitat Restoration - \$1.79 Million for oyster bar and native oyster aquaculture in the Chesapeake Bay. The development of oyster aquaculture is a new step for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA), but one that could be critical to a viable commercial oyster industry. Both of these objectives are part of a multi-agency, 10-year investment to restore oyster populations and the health of the Chesapeake Bay. This effort will receive \$50 million in state funding from both Maryland and Virginia over the course of the ten years.

Morgan State University Estuarine Research Center- Oyster Hatchery Economic Pilot Program - \$470,000 to develop a pilot program at Morgan State University's Estuarine Research Center in St. Leonard, Maryland to help find market-based solutions to replenish the oyster population. This vital program is a key part of the Center's two-fold effort to maintain the viability of Maryland's watermen while restoring the once plentiful oyster population in the Bay. By developing a means to produce a revenue source on a more predictable schedule, this project will help stabilize a declining industry and provide the means to stabilize the social and cultural foundation of many waterfront communities, not to mention significantly improve the overall health of the Bay.

Alliance for Coastal Technologies (ACT) - \$1.94 Million to allow ACT to expand its critically

important work in coastal resource management, marine research, and coastal equipment evaluation. Headquartered in Solomons, MD, ACT is a partnership of eight research institutions across the country, including the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, that works with NOAA to develop integrated marine observing systems and forecast systems that benefit environmental managers and all coastal users.

The legislation also includes language, which supports ACT, directing NOAA to establish a Cooperative Institute for the purpose of advancing and sustaining this essential capability which is executed on a regional basis. Furthermore, NOAA is expected to identify funds for this capability in the budget process and NOAA is encouraged to work with other federal agencies to expand both the capabilities and funding of this effort.

Chesapeake Bay Studies - \$1.92 Million to support NOAA's Chesapeake Bay Restoration efforts. The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office plays a vital role in directing research in fisheries stock assessments, multi-species ecosystem-based management, habitat restoration, and scientific data management. Funds will also be used for the Network for Education of Municipal Officials to provide grants and support to the over 1,650 local governments in the Chesapeake Bay watershed for access for improve land-use planning.

Chesapeake Bay Environmental Restoration and Protection Program - \$1.99 Million

Section 510 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1996 authorizes the establishment of a pilot program to provide environmental assistance to non-Federal interests in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. That legislation further calls for the establishment of at least one project in each of the collaborating states. Funding in the omnibus bill will enable these projects to proceed.

Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network \$1.7 Million

The National Park Service's Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network ties together more than 120 museums, state parks, wildlife refuges, Indian reservations, water trails, and other sites in five states and the District of Columbia, to enable visitors to appreciate the far-reaching role the bay has had in the culture and history of our region. The Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network grants have funded new maps, improved signs, and expanded trails that have made visits to parks, wildlife refuges, and water trails more meaningful experiences.

"I have been proud to fight to secure federal funds for the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network in each of the years since the program's inception," **stated Rep. Hoyer**. "With this funding the network can continue its quality work to make the Chesapeake Bay, and the entire region, the treasure that we know it to be today."

Harry Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology \$535,000 to encourage research and implementation of projects to balance the environmental needs of Maryland's rural communities with their agriculturally-based economies. The Harry Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology was established to convene environmental, business, and elected leaders to develop a consensus on research, education and policy programs in the agricultural and forestry sectors. The Center provides competitive grants and works to educate key officials and the public about the aesthetic, environmental and economic value of our farms, forests and other open spaces and the need to protect and enhance open space-based industries in Maryland.

Since Fiscal Year 2003, Congressman Hoyer has secured more than \$2.5 million for the Harry Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology to support vital initiatives that protect Maryland's open space, the Chesapeake Bay, and farm and forest-based enterprises which are significant contributors to Maryland's economy.

Chesapeake Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program - to educate children living throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed about the importance of sustaining our coastal environment and the Bay. The B-WET Program was established in 2002 to improve the understanding of environmental stewardship for students and teachers in the classroom. The legislation includes \$7.3 million to be distributed among B-WET programs around the nation.

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