

# 2021 CONSERVATION COMMUNITY BUDGET PRIORITIES

Funding to protect our natural resources is a priority for the conservation community, with a focus on a financial commitment to accelerate Chesapeake Bay clean up goals, investments in land conservation programs, and funding increases to the Department of Environmental Quality and the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

We applaud Governor Northam for investing \$733 million in natural resources. By allocating the resources needed to ensure every Virginian has access to clean air, clean water, and our natural landscapes, Virginia can remain a backstop to federal inaction and become a leader in natural resources protection.

Virginia Conservation Network and the conservation community has taken positions on the following budget amendments:

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## **BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES**

**SUPPORT 144#23H** deposits \$1 million each year from the general fund to the Clean School Bus Grant Fund proposed in House Bill 1140. The proposed fund would be used for: (i) awarding grants from the Fund on a competitive basis to school boards for, (a) the complete replacement of existing diesel school buses with electric school buses no later than 2030, (b) the implementation of recharging infrastructure or other infrastructure needed to charge or maintain such electric school buses, and (c) workforce development and training to support the maintenance, charging, and operation of such electric school buses, and (ii) developing education outreach to promote the Program.

**SUPPORT 373#5H** provides seed money, up to \$10 million, to the Virginia Shoreline Resiliency Fund for pre-flood disaster mitigation projects. Since inception in 2016, this program has yet to receive any funding for risk reduction projects, leaving homes, businesses, and communities vulnerable to flooding.

**SUPPORT 373#7S** provides seed money, up to \$10 million, to the Virginia Shoreline Resiliency Fund for pre-flood disaster mitigation projects. Since its inception in 2016, this program has yet to receive any funding for risk reduction projects, leaving homes, businesses, and communities vulnerable to flooding.

**SUPPORT 373#9H** provides seed money, up to \$10 million, to the Virginia Shoreline Resiliency Fund for pre-flood disaster mitigation projects. Since its inception in 2016, this program has yet to receive any funding for risk reduction projects, leaving homes, businesses, and communities vulnerable to flooding.

**SUPPORT 373#10S** provides seed money, up to \$10 million, to the Virginia Shoreline Resiliency Fund for pre-flood disaster mitigation projects. Since its inception in 2016, this program has yet to receive any funding for risk reduction projects, leaving homes, businesses, and communities vulnerable to flooding.

**SUPPORT 443#1S** provides funding for the Commonwealth Corridor Study through the Department of Rail and Public Transportation.



**SUPPORT 443#4H** provides funding for the Commonwealth Corridor Study through the Department of Rail and Public Transportation.

## **CONSERVING VIRGINIA'S NATURAL LANDSCAPES**

**SUPPORT C-40#1H** removes language restricting the Department of Conservation and Recreation from initiating or accepting new land for use as a State Park without approval by the General Assembly. Given land can only be acquired from willing sellers, such language unduly hinders the Department's ability to acquire important tracts of land when they become available.

**SUPPORT C-41#1H** removes language restricting the Department of Conservation and Recreation from initiating or accepting new land for use as a Natural Area Preserve without approval by the General Assembly. Given land can only be acquired from willing sellers, such language unduly hinders the Department's ability to acquire important tracts of land when they become available.

**SUPPORT 97#2H** provides an additional \$2.75 million for the Farmland Preservation Fund. It represents full funding (at a minimum) for the Office of Farmland Preservation's Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program in FY21 and FY22. The Farmland Preservation Fund is historically underfunded, more so than any of the conservation grant programs. Virginia needs to keep its commitment to working farms and forestland by providing full grant funding to localities with certified farmland preservation programs. The program requires localities to match dollar for dollar the amount granted to them by the Commonwealth.

**SUPPORT 97#3H** provides an additional \$2.75 million for the Farmland Preservation Fund. It represents full funding (at a minimum) for the Office of Farmland Preservation's Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program in FY21 and FY22. The Farmland preservation Fund is historically underfunded, more so than any of the conservation grant programs. Virginia needs to keep its commitment to working farms and forestland by providing full grant funding to localities with certified farmland preservation programs. The program requires localities to match dollar for dollar the amount granted to them by the Commonwealth.

**SUPPORT 373#1H** provides an additional \$1.5 million from the general fund in the first year for the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program.

**SUPPORT 373#3S** provides \$1.5 million general fund in the first year for the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program, to provide additional support for current program needs.

**SUPPORT 373#1IS** provides an additional \$1.5 million general fund in the first year for the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program.

**OPPOSE 374#12H** redirects \$15.5 million each year from the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation. We strongly support the Governor's proposed \$20 million each year for the VLCF and oppose any reductions to the Fund.

**SUPPORT 374#1S** removes language restricting the Department of Conservation and Recreation from initiating or accepting new land for use as a State Park or Natural Area Preserve without approval by the General Assembly. Given land can only be acquired from willing sellers, such language unduly hinders the Department's ability to acquire important tracts of land when they become available.

**SUPPORT 374#2H** removes language restricting the Department of Conservation and Recreation from initiating or accepting new land for use as a State Park or Natural Area Preserve without approval by the General Assembly. Given land can only be acquired from willing sellers, such language unduly hinders the Department's ability to acquire important tracts of land when they become available.

**SUPPORT 374#7H** directs the Department of Conservation and Recreation to study the creation of a new state park from the existing Brandy Station and Cedar Mountain battlefield properties in Culpeper County.

**SUPPORT 374#7S** directs the Department of Conservation and Recreation to study the creation of a new state park from the existing Brandy Station and Cedar Mountain battlefield properties in Culpeper County.

**SUPPORT 374#12S** directs the Department of Conservation and Recreation to study the creation of a new state park from the existing Brandy Station and Cedar Mountain battlefield properties in Culpeper County.

**SUPPORT 385#1H** increases the general appropriation for the Battlefield Preservation Fund by \$1 million each year, to a total of \$2 million per year.

**SUPPORT 385#4S** provides an additional \$1 million general fund in each year to the Virginia Battlefield Preservation Fund.

**SUPPORT 385#15H** increases the general appropriation for the Battlefield Preservation Fund by \$3 million each year, to a total of \$4 million per year.

## **PROTECTING COMMUNITIES FROM TOXICS**

**SUPPORT 76#1H** provides \$650,000 in each year from the general fund to support the related lab services associated with a medical monitoring program for residents living within a 2-3 mile radius of coal ash site.

**SUPPORT 145#14H** provides \$6 million each year from the general fund to assist school divisions in complying with the provisions in House Bill 797. The bill requires each local school board to submit its plan to test and remediate certain potable water sources and report the results of any such test to the Department of Health. The bill also requires local school boards to take all necessary steps to notify parents if testing results indicate lead contamination that exceeds the maximum contaminant level goals set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

**SUPPORT 301#5H** provides \$944,216 each year from the general fund to support the medical monitoring for residents living within a two to three mile radius of a coal ash site. A companion amendment in Item 76 provides for the cost of the Division of Consolidated Labs to manage the collection and analysis of samples.

**SUPPORT 376#1H** provides \$210,000 each year and two positions pursuant to House Bill 1136, which would require the Department of Environmental Quality to annually update and publish a Virginia Nonfederally Managed Hazardous Waste Site Inventory. This amendment is a placeholder until a final fiscal impact statement for the bill can be produced.

## **POWERING VIRGINIA WITH CLEAN ENERGY**

**SUPPORT 124#1H** provides \$10 million from the general fund each year for the Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy to implement the Virginia Brownfield and Coal Mine Renewable Energy Grant.

**SUPPORT 125#6H** funds the Virginia Energy and Economy Transition Council, consisting of 30 members, to develop plans to assist regions in the Commonwealth in transitioning from the use of fossil fuel energy to renewable energy by 2050

## **RESTORING VIRGINIA'S WATERS**

**SUPPORT 373#5H** adds an additional \$46.6 million from the general fund in the first year and \$55.8 million from the general fund in the second year for an increased deposit to the Natural Resources Commitment Fund to provide full funding based on the 2019 Needs Assessment for agriculture best management practices cost share funding and technical assistance.

**SUPPORT 373#6H** provides an additional \$170,000 from the general fund in each year to expand the scope of Chesapeake Bay educational programs focused on the environmental literacy of Virginia's youngest citizens. The goal of the environmental literacy program is for every student in the region to graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary to act responsibly to protect and restore their local watershed.

**SUPPORT 373#6S** adds an additional \$46.6 million general fund in the first year and \$55.8 million general fund in the second year for an increased deposit to the Natural Resources Commitment Fund in order to provide full funding based on the 2019 Needs Assessment for agriculture best management practices cost share funding and technical assistance.



**SUPPORT 373#7H** provides \$4.55 million from the general fund in each year for base technical assistance support to Soil and Water Conservation Districts, representing a 13 percent level of technical assistance funding for a \$35 million agricultural best management practices cost-share program.

**SUPPORT 373#9S** provides an additional \$170,000 general fund in each year to expand the scope of Chesapeake Bay educational programs focused on the environmental literacy of Virginia's children. The goal of the environmental literacy program is for every student in the region to graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary to act responsibly to protect and restore their local watershed.

**SUPPORT 373#13S** provides \$4.55 million general fund each year for base technical assistance support to Soil and Water Conservation Districts, representing a 13 percent level of technical assistance funding for a \$35 million agricultural best management practices cost-share program.

**OPPOSE 377#5S** directs DEQ to review and identify an alternative point source implementation approach for the Chesapeake Bay TMDL than the regulation stated in Initiative 52 of the Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan. The review would consider technical data on the performance of prior Water Quality Improvement Fund grant recipients, and consider if there is a technical basis to update the Plan and decrease Water Quality Improvement Fund appropriations through 2025.

**OPPOSE 377#5H** directs DEQ to review and identify an alternative point source implementation approach for the Chesapeake Bay TMDL than the regulation stated in Initiative 52 of the Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan. The review would consider technical data on the performance of prior Water Quality Improvement Fund grant recipients, and consider if there is a technical basis to update the Plan and decrease Water Quality Improvement Fund appropriations through 2025.

## CONTACT INFORMATION



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Learn more about the conservation  
community's top priorities:  
[vcnva.org/our-common-agenda](https://vcnva.org/our-common-agenda)