

Testimony of William C. Baker
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Before the

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Resources
Subcommittee on Fisheries and Oceans

Regarding

H.R. 1428 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Reauthorization Act

April 22, 2005

On behalf of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF), I would like to thank House Resources Committee Chairman Richard Pombo and Subcommittee Chairman Wayne Gilchrest and all the members of the subcommittee for this opportunity to present testimony in strong support of HR 1428, to re-authorize appropriations for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. I would also like to thank Congressman Gilchrest for his consistent and long-standing support for the Chesapeake Bay. I am honored to be before you today.

I am William Baker, President of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF). CBF, with more than 116,000 members, is the largest and only regional not-for-profit conservation organization existing solely to restore the Chesapeake Bay, North America's largest estuary. Since 1967, CBF's motto, *Save the Bay*®, has defined our charge to the 16 million people in the 64,000 square mile, six-state watershed of the Chesapeake Bay. CBF's mission is to protect and restore the health of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, including the abundance and diversity of its living resources. Our two principal goals are to improve water quality by reducing nitrogen pollution and to train Bay constituents to take an effective role in restoring and protecting its natural resources. Through building the momentum for commitment at the national, state and local levels for investment in proven Bay-saving strategies, including large-scale restoration action, CBF intends to ensure the future of this national treasure.

Pollution has degraded water quality in the Chesapeake Bay for decades, limiting progress toward restoring key components of the ecosystem, including underwater grasses and populations of oysters and blue crabs. Much of this pollution comes from agriculture. But, I must emphasize, farmers are not intentional polluters. Agriculture by its very nature is a "leaky" enterprise.

In order to improve the health of the Chesapeake Bay, and meet Bay restoration goals, scientists estimate that pollution from agriculture must be reduced by over 50 percent by the year 2010. To help achieve the 2010 water quality goals, CBF has been working with farmers, landowners, conservation districts, natural resource agencies and others to implement federal pollution reduction programs, such as the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to install cover crops and establish riparian buffers.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) has been a critical resource for funding these efforts to work with willing individuals. NFWF's support has enabled CBF to provide technical assistance to landowners wishing to implement best management practices on their land. For example, NFWF funding has resulted in a partnership program by which CBF has dramatically expanded and improved the efficiency of CREP implementation in the Shenandoah River watershed in Virginia. Through a contract employee, who is a farmer himself, we are spreading the word to other farmers about the importance of conservation practices and the impact they have on improving water quality and farm health. Our work is building on the efforts of local conservation districts and natural resource professionals and has greatly increased the number of landowners voluntarily engaging in habitat restoration.

NFWF's successful development and maintenance of public-private partnerships to strategically support conservation and restoration projects is remarkable. From its inception in 1984, NFWF has awarded over 7,000 grants and leveraged \$305 million in federal funds with \$525 million of non-federal and matching contributions. NFWF has a unique ability to pool and leverage resources to make the limited federal funding more accessible to local organizations. In doing so, NFWF has re-granted funds from the following federal agencies: Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service, Environmental Protection Agency, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, among others.

CBF has been the grateful recipient of NFWF grants since 1990 for a total of \$650,000, matched by approximately \$1,000,000 that we have raised from our members and partners. These grants have supported the development of innovative techniques and programs to restore oyster reefs, underwater grasses, wetlands, and riparian buffers. For

example, with contributions from NFWF in 2002, CBF partnered with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the University of Maryland to restore a two-acre, sanctuary oyster reef in the lower Patuxent River. Citizens and students were trained to grow native oysters in their homes or schools through CBF's nationally recognized *Citizen Oyster Gardening* and *Student Oyster Corps* programs. During the first year of the program, over 64 residents, 27 teachers and 390 students delivered approximately 48,000 native oysters to the reef, in addition to the 4.6 million stocked by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Through 2004, citizens and students have planted over 350,000 adult oysters on the reef. This site has been one of the longest running sites in Maryland and has served as a highly valuable mechanism for direct citizen contribution to reef restoration. To this day, the University of Maryland regularly uses underwater video of this site to compare an unrestored oyster bar to this oyster reef as a dramatic example of reef restoration. Data has been gathered documenting the high diversity of life around the restored reef community.

Not only has NFWF supported CBF directly, but they also have supported numerous groups within the watershed that CBF recognizes as strategic allies. CBF typically provides either technical assistance to watershed or conservation organizations, donates trees for planting projects or contributes financial resources. Without the indirect support from NFWF, CBF would not be able to provide this type of leadership within the Bay watershed.

For the aforementioned reasons, I strongly urge you to re-authorize the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. NFWF has a strong history of leveraging federal funds and their pooling of resources provides easier access to the limited federal funding. Their unique approach provides critical funding for restoration and protection activities.