

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Clean water, clean air, and a healthy place to live are basic rights. From Somerset to Baltimore County, that means taking care of the water up to and including saying "no" to data centers. Environmental justice means every county in MD-01 gets the same protection, not just the wealthy zip codes. The polluters who profit by breaking these rights have to pay for it.

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BRIEF 3.1

The Bay and the Polluters Killing It

WHAT'S HAPPENING

The Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in North America. It runs through the heart of MD-01. It is also being killed slowly by nutrient pollution that drives dead zones and harmful algal blooms, and the federal government has been treating polluters like they are too big to penalize.

The poultry runoff problem.

Industrial poultry operations are central to MD-01's economy. Perdue is the largest. They are also a documented major source of nitrogen and phosphorus runoff into the Bay. Maryland imposes nutrient management requirements, and the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) sets pollution limits across the watershed. Enforcement, in practice, relies heavily on voluntary practices and modest fines that a company Perdue's size absorbs as a routine cost of doing business while running periodic public-relations cleanup events.

The contract grower trap.

The chicken houses on the Shore are mostly owned and operated by family farmers under contract to Perdue and other integrators. The contract structure dictates what the grower can and cannot do, including how they handle waste. Environmental liability lands on the grower's federal tax ID, not the integrator's. Federal policy has been letting the integrators set the terms while the families take the regulatory hit.

The drinking water problem.

Cecil, Kent, Harford, and Dorchester counties have documented drinking-water and stormwater concerns. Vienna in Dorchester County has had nitrate problems and aging infrastructure for years. The town's position has been that residents fund improvements first, even though EPA's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA), and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's lead-pipe replacement money exist for exactly this kind of fix.

The political mapping problem.

The previous member of Congress directed federal water funding by ZIP code along political lines, with some MD-01 communities receiving their share while others were skipped.

The Chesapeake Bay Program is itself under threat.

EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program is the federal backbone of restoration efforts. The administration has repeatedly proposed deep cuts. Funding cuts at NOAA, USGS, and EPA monitoring stations mean the data that would prove polluter accountability is being deleted in real time.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

Take Vienna, in Dorchester County. The town has had documented nitrate problems in its drinking water and aging infrastructure for years. The town's response to its residents has been that locals fund the improvements first. EPA's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's lead pipe replacement money, and USDA Rural Utilities Service grants exist for exactly this kind of fix, but federal funding has not flowed to Vienna. The same pattern shows up in towns across the district.

For people in MD-01, the Bay is the working basis of household income, commercial fishing, tourism, and the towns built around the water. When the Bay dies, those collapse together.

MY TAKE

Polluters who profit by breaking the watershed should pay for the watershed. The payment should be a condition of continuing to do business, large enough to deter the conduct. Federal water money should be allocated by documented need, regardless of how the recipient community votes.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

On polluter accountability:

- Cosponsor or introduce legislation tying federal contracts, USDA programs, and federal facility-siting eligibility to documented compliance with Clean Water Act and Chesapeake Bay TMDL obligations. Repeat or systemic violators should lose federal funding eligibility, not just pay fines. Modeled on existing federal debarment frameworks.
- Cosponsor legislation requiring major industrial-agriculture operations on Bay tributaries to publish nutrient discharge and runoff monitoring data publicly, in near-real time, the way major NPDES permit holders already do for direct discharges.
- Cosponsor legislation putting environmental responsibility where the operational control sits: with the integrator, not the contract grower.

On the Chesapeake Bay Program:

- Defend EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program funding in every appropriations cycle.
- Cosponsor legislation expanding the Bay Program's enforcement authority where states have under-delivered on the 2025 milestones.
- Defend NOAA, USGS, and EPA monitoring stations. Without water-quality monitoring data, accountability for polluters is impossible.

On drinking water and stormwater:

- Defend the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's lead service line replacement funding and require state pass-through transparency. Towns should know which jurisdictions are getting the money and which are being skipped.
- Expand USDA and EPA programs to upgrade or replace failing septic systems for low-income homeowners. Failing septic is a major Bay nutrient source on the Shore.
- Cosponsor legislation expanding PFAS testing and remediation funding for every public water system in the district. Forever chemicals are not just a Western Maryland or DOD-installation problem.

On targeted Shore funding:

- Direct USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), manure-to-energy projects, and stream buffer programs to MD-01 specifically.

In the District

A district-wide water needs assessment in the first term, working with the Maryland Department of the Environment, USGS, and the Chesapeake Bay Program. The deliverable: a public, county-by-county inventory of drinking-water and stormwater needs in MD-01. Federal money flows to whichever counties show up on the inventory.

A direct federal funding push to the worst-affected systems first. Vienna's residents are not going to be told to put their own money up before the federal government helps. The district office uses Community Project Funding requests, EPA State Revolving Fund set-asides, and USDA Rural Utilities Service grants to fund the actual fix.

A dedicated district office liaison for water and Bay issues, working with contract growers, watermen, towns, and environmental groups. The point is to keep the line of communication open.

Annual public report on every federal water dollar coming into MD-01 by county. Posted online.

Through Oversight

Public letters to EPA on TMDL enforcement against Perdue and other major Bay polluters. Use congressional inquiry power to surface aggregate compliance and violation data.

Demand committee hearings on the administration's proposed cuts to the Chesapeake Bay Program, NOAA, USGS, and EPA monitoring.

Coordinate with the Maryland Attorney General on state-federal enforcement of nutrient management requirements.

THE HONEST PART

Reversing the Bay's nutrient pollution problem requires the watershed states (Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, West Virginia, New York, plus DC) to all hit their TMDL milestones. Federal authority can push, but the underlying work happens at the state level.

Tying federal funding to Clean Water Act compliance is a real lever but takes legislation that has not yet passed. The work is keeping that legislation alive and finding bipartisan vehicles for it.

PFAS remediation is an emerging field. Federal funding is real but limited. The work is making sure MD-01 systems are in line for the funding that exists.

The Vienna fix is a pilot. If we can show federal money flowing to actual rural drinking water needs in MD-01 in the first term, the model spreads.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- Federal debarment legislation tying federal contracts and USDA programs to Clean Water Act and Chesapeake Bay TMDL compliance. To be drafted or cosponsored.
- Real-time pollution monitoring legislation for industrial agriculture operations on Bay tributaries.
- Integrator liability legislation.
- Chesapeake Bay Program reauthorization (multiple bills across recent Congresses).
- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law lead service line replacement funding (already enacted; defense fight ongoing).
- PFAS remediation funding expansion (multiple bills).

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1251 et seq.).
- Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (Bay TMDL): epa.gov/chesapeake-bay-tmdl
- EPA Drinking Water State Revolving Fund: epa.gov/dwsrf
- Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA): epa.gov/wifia
- USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Reserve Program, Conservation Stewardship Program.
- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (P.L. 117-58) lead service line replacement provisions.

SOURCES

- EPA Chesapeake Bay Program: epa.gov/chesapeake-bay
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation: cbf.org
- ShoreRivers: shorerivers.org
- Waterkeepers Chesapeake: waterkeeperschesapeake.org
- Maryland Department of the Environment: mde.maryland.gov
- Choptank Riverkeeper: shorerivers.org/choptank-riverkeeper

PARTNERS

Chesapeake Bay Foundation. ShoreRivers. Waterkeepers Chesapeake. Choptank Riverkeeper. Lower Susquehanna Riverkeeper. Maryland Department of the Environment. Eastern Shore Land Conservancy. Town of Vienna. Local watershed associations across MD-01.

BRIEF 3.2

Offshore Wind Done Right

WHAT'S HAPPENING

The Maryland Offshore Wind Project, developed by US Wind in federal Lease Area OCS-A 0490 about 10 nautical miles off Ocean City, has been working through a decade-long permitting process. In December 2024, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) approved the Construction and Operations Plan, authorizing up to 114 turbines with a potential capacity of 2,200 megawatts. That is enough to power roughly 718,000 Delmarva homes. The transmission cables would make landfall in Sussex County, Delaware, with a substation near Dagsboro.

The project is now under attack from three directions.

The Ocean City lawsuit.

In October 2024, Ocean City and co-plaintiffs filed suit challenging federal approval of the project. In July 2025, a federal judge allowed five of the claims to proceed.

The Trump administration order.

In early 2025, the administration ordered the withdrawal of offshore wind leases for "further review." A Massachusetts federal court struck the order down in December 2025 as arbitrary and capricious. That ruling was a win, but the administrative posture against offshore wind continues.

The tax credit narrowing.

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (signed July 4, 2025) narrowed the federal tax credits that anchor the project's financing. The on-site construction deadlines built into the OBBBA put the project's incentives at risk. Renewable energy financing depends on federal predictability, and the OBBBA cut into that predictability.

A March 2026 Delaware Court of Chancery ruling cleared a substation permit hurdle. The project is moving forward, but it is in the legal and political crosshairs.

The benefits of the project, if it gets built, are concrete:

- Lower long-run electricity costs across the Delmarva grid.
- Supply-chain jobs at Sparrows Point and Tradepoint Atlantic.
- Mariner and welder work in Baltimore and on the Shore.
- Progress on Maryland's 50-percent renewable mandate.
- A piece of the climate response that puts steel in the water.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

For working voters in MD-01, offshore wind is two things at once: a job opportunity and a long-term electricity-cost reducer.

The construction work is union work. IBEW locals in the Aberdeen and Edgewood corridors are part of the supply chain. The Carpenters, the Operating Engineers, and the trades active at Sparrows Point and Tradepoint Atlantic stand to benefit. The mariner and welder work along the Bay is real.

For ratepayers, offshore wind reduces long-run exposure to natural gas price spikes and adds capacity that does not require new fossil-fuel infrastructure on the Shore.

For Ocean City, the visual concerns are real. A wind farm 10 nautical miles offshore is still visible on a clear day, and the town's tourism economy depends on the beach experience.

MY TAKE

I support offshore wind.

It is the right vote on the merits anyway. The project lowers electricity costs, creates union jobs in MD-01, and contributes to the state's renewable mandate. Saying that on the record, while engaging Ocean City honestly about the visual impacts, is part of the job.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

Publicly and unambiguously support the Maryland Offshore Wind Project. The benefits outweigh the visual concerns, and that statement should be on the record.

Vote against and work to repeal the OBBBA provisions that narrow offshore wind tax credits for already-approved projects. Renewable energy financing depends on federal predictability.

Cosponsor or introduce legislation creating a federal floor for community-benefits agreements on offshore renewable projects. Coastal communities that host transmission infrastructure should see contractually guaranteed benefits: lower utility bills, dedicated workforce training slots, and tourism mitigation funds where impacts are documented.

Defend BOEM's regulatory authority over offshore wind permitting against administrative interference.

Cosponsor legislation expanding the federal Investment Tax Credit and Production Tax Credit timelines for offshore wind.

In the District

Regular meetings with the Mayor of Ocean City and the Town Council. The opposition is real and deserves a hearing. Closing the door on Ocean City does not move the project forward.

Push BOEM to hold listening sessions with Ocean City and the surrounding coastal communities before, during, and after construction. Not just at the permitting stage.

Coordinate with IBEW, the Carpenters, the Operating Engineers, and the Maryland Building Trades on workforce pipeline alignment. Make sure MD-01 workers get the training slots and the union jobs that come with the project.

Coordinate with the watermen organizations on construction timing and impact mitigation in the lease area.

Through Oversight

Public letters to BOEM on community-benefit alignment for the Maryland Offshore Wind Project.

Annual public report on the project's status, including job numbers, electricity rate impacts, construction milestones, and outstanding legal challenges.

THE HONEST PART

The Ocean City lawsuit may delay the project further. The work is making sure the federal approvals are legally durable and that the litigation does not become a permanent veto.

The administration's tax credit narrowing was bad for renewable energy financing nationally. Restoring those credits requires a House majority that wants to do it. Until then, the work is keeping the existing credits intact and pushing back against further erosion.

Saying yes to offshore wind is the unpopular political choice in some MD-01 precincts. The honest pitch to Ocean City is that the project is going to be built, federal litigation is unlikely to stop it permanently, and the better move is to negotiate hard for community benefits rather than try to stop the project entirely.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- Inflation Reduction Act renewable energy provisions (Title III, energy tax credits). Already enacted; defense fight ongoing.
- One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025 (P.L. 119-21). Narrowed offshore wind tax credit timelines.
- Federal community-benefits framework legislation for offshore renewable projects. To be drafted or cosponsored.

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) offshore wind permitting authority.
- Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act.
- Investment Tax Credit and Production Tax Credit (Internal Revenue Code).

COURT CASES

- Ocean City of Maryland v. BOEM. Filed October 2024. Five claims allowed to proceed July 2025.
- Massachusetts v. Trump (D. Mass.). December 9, 2025 ruling by Judge Saris struck down administration order to withdraw offshore wind leases as arbitrary and capricious.

- Delaware Court of Chancery substation permit ruling, March 25, 2026.

SOURCES

- BOEM Maryland Offshore Wind Project page: boem.gov/renewable-energy/state-activities/maryland
- US Wind project page: uswindinc.com
- Maryland Energy Administration: energy.maryland.gov
- Maryland Public Service Commission: psc.state.md.us

PARTNERS

US Wind. IBEW Local 24 (Baltimore region). The Carpenters Mid-Atlantic Regional Council. Operating Engineers Local 37. Maryland Building Trades. Maryland Energy Administration. Maryland Sea Grant. Chesapeake Climate Action Network. Climate XChange Maryland.

BRIEF 3.3

Climate, FEMA, and Crisfield

WHAT'S HAPPENING

MD-01 is the most water-defined congressional district in Maryland, with the Atlantic Ocean on its eastern coast, the Chesapeake Bay running through its middle, and eight tidal rivers (Pocomoke, Nanticoke, Wicomico, Choptank, Chester, Sassafras, Susquehanna, Patapsco) plus extensive inland swamps and tidal flats defining the rest of the geography. Many of the district's drinking water systems run on pipes laid before the New Deal. Climate change here looks like the tide pulling at Crisfield's foundations 90 days a year.

Crisfield and BRIC.

In April 2025, FEMA announced it was terminating the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program and clawing back grants already awarded. Crisfield had been awarded \$36 million in July 2024. It was the highest-scoring BRIC project in the country in fiscal year 2023. That grant was nine times the town's entire annual budget. Twenty states, including Maryland, sued. In December 2025, a federal judge ruled the termination unlawful. In March 2026, FEMA reopened BRIC applications for fiscal years 2024 and 2025. But Crisfield's original obligation is still in limbo. The second phase of the project (another \$36 million for which the city had applied) has not been restored.

Other Bay-region BRIC projects are in similar limbo: \$16 million for Cambridge flood mitigation; \$32 million for Patapsco Middle Branch wetlands restoration in South Baltimore (of which \$26 million was rescinded before the December 2025 ruling); and Maryland's 31 dropped FY24 BRIC applications totaling roughly \$70 million.

FEMA staffing and posture.

The administration has cut staffing and floated proposals to dissolve or shrink FEMA entirely, framing the agency as broken to justify the cuts. A federal disaster response capability that is failing should be repaired and rebuilt rather than dissolved.

The Western Maryland disaster declaration denial.

In May 2025, Western Maryland floods produced more than \$33 million in validated FEMA damages, nearly three times the state's qualifying threshold. The administration denied the disaster declaration. Maryland appealed; Maryland was denied again. While that disaster sits in MD-06, the precedent threatens every part of MD-01 the next time we have a hurricane, a derecho, or a major coastal storm.

Climate science under attack.

The administration has cut staffing at NOAA, the National Weather Service, EPA, USGS, and the Chesapeake Bay Program. Forecasting, hurricane track modeling, marine forecasting, and Sea Grant research are not optional services for a district like ours. Andy Harris voted with the administration on every relevant cut.

The math.

BRIC projects, on average, return six to eight dollars in avoided disaster costs for every dollar spent. Restoring the funding pays for itself many times over.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

The Mayor of Crisfield, Darlene Taylor, and the Greater Crisfield Action Coalition spent years securing the BRIC grant. Crisfield floods 90 days a year now. The grant was supposed to be the start of building the seawall and pump infrastructure that keeps the town habitable. It is sitting in administrative limbo while the water keeps rising. The Mayor of Cambridge is in the same position with the \$16 million Cambridge flood mitigation award. South Baltimore is in the same position with the Patapsco wetlands restoration. Every coastal community in MD-01 with property near a tidal river is downstream of these decisions. Without NOAA forecasting, the next hurricane lands without proper warning. Without the Chesapeake Bay Program, the watershed restoration falls apart (see Brief 3.1). Without USGS and EPA monitoring, the polluter accountability data goes dark.

This is what happens when a federal government decides climate adaptation is optional.

MY TAKE

The towns on the Bay and the rivers of MD-01 cannot save themselves. The math does not work for a town of three thousand people to fund its own seawall, which is what federal disaster mitigation is for. Without it, Crisfield disappears.

OUR PLAN***In Congress*****On Crisfield and BRIC:**

- Restore Crisfield's full \$36 million BRIC obligation, and fight for the full Southern and Northern Crisfield Flood Mitigation Project, not phase one alone.
- Cosponsor legislation to harden BRIC against future administrative termination. The program was created during the first Trump administration through the Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018. Statutory protection should require congressional approval for any program-wide rescission.
- Restore Cambridge's \$16 million flood mitigation funding, the \$32 million Patapsco Middle Branch wetlands restoration, and Maryland's 31 dropped FY24 BRIC applications.

On FEMA:

- Defend FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund in every appropriations cycle.
- Oppose the administration's effort to dissolve or shrink FEMA.
- Push for Senate-confirmed FEMA leadership.

On disaster declarations:

- Cosponsor legislation requiring objective criteria and congressional review of disaster declaration denials. Federal disaster declarations cannot be politicized.
- Restore the Western Maryland disaster declaration if possible, and use the precedent fight to protect MD-01's eligibility for future events.

On climate science:

- Defend NOAA and National Weather Service staffing in every appropriations cycle. We need our forecasting and marine services.
- Defend the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program funding (cross-reference Brief 3.1).
- Defend USGS and EPA water-quality monitoring stations.
- Defend Sea Grant reauthorization.
- Defend NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge funding.

On coastal resilience:

- Direct NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge funding, Coastal Zone Management Act funding, and BRIC funding to Smith Island, Deal Island, Hooper's Island, Tilghman, Crisfield, Cambridge, Salisbury's riverfront, and the Susquehanna communities at the same time, not as a competition between them.

In the District

A district office liaison for FEMA, BRIC, and disaster mitigation issues. Helps Crisfield, Cambridge, Salisbury, Smith Island, Deal Island, Hooper's Island, Tilghman, and other communities navigate FEMA grant applications, Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funding, and Pre-Disaster Mitigation funding.

A constituent-services partnership with the Greater Crisfield Action Coalition and Mayor Taylor's office to track BRIC obligation status, push federal release of held funds, and identify additional federal mitigation funding streams.

Annual public report on every FEMA, BRIC, NOAA, and EPA dollar coming into MD-01 by county. Posted online.

A rapid-response disaster declaration support function in the district office. When a storm hits MD-01, the office is ready to coordinate FEMA paperwork for the affected jurisdictions and to push for proper disaster declaration support.

Through Oversight

Public letters to FEMA on the status of held BRIC obligations, including Crisfield's.

Demand committee hearings on the administration's FEMA dissolution proposals and disaster declaration denials.

Coordinate with the Maryland Attorney General on the BRIC litigation and any future FEMA-related litigation affecting MD-01.

Annual oversight letter to NOAA, EPA, USGS, and the National Weather Service requesting MD-01-specific staffing data and service delivery metrics.

THE HONEST PART

Crisfield's BRIC obligation depends on FEMA disbursing the funds. The federal court ruled the termination unlawful, but FEMA still has to release the money. Pressure has to stay on the agency.

Restoring the broader BRIC pipeline depends on appropriations. Without a House majority that wants to fund disaster mitigation at the BRIC scale, the work is preventing further cuts and keeping the legislation ready.

The Western Maryland disaster declaration denial cannot be reversed retroactively without administrative cooperation. The precedent fight matters more than the individual denial at this point.

NOAA, EPA, USGS, and Chesapeake Bay Program staffing cuts are administrative. Reversing them requires either administrative cooperation or new appropriations. The work is keeping the agencies alive and credible until conditions change.

The towns on the Bay cannot save themselves alone. Federal funding is the only sustainable path. Any plan that pretends otherwise is misleading constituents.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018 (DRRA) (P.L. 115-254). Created BRIC; needs statutory hardening against rescission.
- BRIC reauthorization and statutory protection legislation. To be cosponsored or introduced.
- Disaster declaration objective criteria legislation.
- Sea Grant reauthorization (recurring).

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act) (42 U.S.C. § 5121 et seq.).
- FEMA Disaster Relief Fund.
- NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge.
- Coastal Zone Management Act.
- BRIC program (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities).

COURT CASES

- Multi-state suit challenging FEMA's BRIC termination (federal district court ruling December 2025).

SOURCES

- FEMA BRIC program: [fema.gov/grants/mitigation/building-resilient-infrastructure-communities](https://www.fema.gov/grants/mitigation/building-resilient-infrastructure-communities)
- Crisfield BRIC project documentation (FEMA grant award announcement, July 2024).
- Maryland Department of Emergency Management: mdem.maryland.gov
- NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge: coast.noaa.gov/funding/climate-resilience-regional-challenge.html
- Maryland Sea Grant: mdsg.umd.edu

PARTNERS

City of Crisfield (Mayor Darlene Taylor). City of Cambridge. Greater Crisfield Action Coalition. Smith Island and Deal Island advocacy groups. Hooper's Island residents. Tilghman Watermen's Association. Eastern Shore Land Conservancy. Maryland Department of Emergency Management. Maryland Department of the Environment. Maryland Sea Grant.

BRIEF 3.4

Watermen: A Trade Worth Saving

WHAT'S HAPPENING

From the 1800s through the early 1970s, Black watermen were central to the Chesapeake Bay's seafood industry. Some of the very first Black Americans legally classified as citizens, sixty-seven years before the Emancipation Proclamation, were sailors carrying federal Seamen's Protection Certificates. At the height of the skipjack era, according to fifteen years of research by Vincent Leggett of the Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation, at least one in ten Bay boats had a Black captain. Black-owned seafood companies (Coulbourne and Jewett in St. Michaels, Bellevue Seafood Company in Bellevue, the Crisfield packing houses with their majority-Black crab pickers) supplied much of what the country ate.

That tradition has all but disappeared. Black watermen captains in active commercial work on the Maryland side of the Bay can today be counted on a hand or two. The decline has many drivers.

The oyster collapse.

The Chesapeake oyster harvest fell from roughly six million bushels in 1880 to under one hundred thousand annually now. Disease, overharvest, and water quality decline (see Brief 3.1) all contributed.

Capital costs.

Consolidation in the seafood industry priced family operations out. The boats, the licenses, the dockside facilities, and the working capital all cost more than they used to.

Civil Rights-era outmigration.

As employment opportunities opened in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and DC after the Civil Rights Movement, the Black workforce on the Bay thinned. The trade did not pass to the next generation in the same numbers it had before.

The license structure.

This piece gets less attention than it should. Maryland's commercial waterman license allocation effectively transfers licenses through family inheritance. New entrants without a relative willing to put a license in a will face barriers that fall hardest on Black families whose generational connection to the trade was already severed by the economic pressures listed above.

The result is a working Bay fishery with almost no Black captains, almost no Black-owned packing houses, and a pipeline that does not reach the families that used to be central to the trade.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

Bellevue, in Talbot County, was settled in the aftermath of the Civil War and became a center of Black waterman life on the Eastern Shore. Black-owned seafood operations there (W.A. Turner and Sons from 1945 to 1996, and Bellevue Seafood Company from 1964 to 1998) were the heart of the community for much of the twentieth century. The packing houses in

Crisfield were staffed by Black women who picked the crabs that the seafood industry built its profits on. St. Michaels, Tilghman, Smith Island, Deal Island, and Rock Hall all had Black watermen working the same waters as their white counterparts.

The waters have not changed. The trade is still economically viable for someone with the capital and the access. What stops Black participation now is federal and state policy that determines who can buy in.

A young man in Crisfield whose grandfather worked the packing houses cannot get a commercial waterman license without a relative in the trade willing to pass one down. A young woman in Cambridge who has the skills and the desire to start an oyster aquaculture business cannot get the startup capital from a conventional bank. A Black-owned seafood restaurant in Salisbury or Easton struggles to source local Bay product because the supply chain is locked into a small number of consolidated operators.

The Bay industry is still working and still needs labor. The pipeline of families who used to fill those jobs has been broken by federal and state policy.

MY TAKE

The Bay is the heritage of every family on its shores, Black families included. The fishery has historically excluded Black watermen through inheritance rules and capital barriers. The federal government has tools that can help open it back up, and that work is what environmental justice and economic justice mean for the Eastern Shore.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

Direct federal grant funding to Black waterman entry programs through NOAA Sea Grant, USDA Rural Development, the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), and the Small Business Administration (SBA). Fund licensing assistance, mentorship, and capital programs for new and returning Black watermen and women. Specifically include older entrants, not just youth. Many of those most ready to come back to the trade are in their forties and fifties.

Direct dedicated federal grant funding to minority-led aquaculture startups: land-based and floating leases, hatcheries, training, and certification. Imani Black's Minorities in Aquaculture has the model. Federal funding should flow to it.

Direct SBA 8(a), MBDA, USDA Value-Added Producer Grants, and CDFI lending to Black-owned seafood processors and Black-owned restaurants featuring Bay seafood. Cross-reference Brief 5.4 (Help for Small and Black-Owned Businesses) for the small business support framework.

Use federal civil-rights review authority to examine state commercial waterman license allocation patterns. License allocation is a state DNR responsibility, but federal grant conditions, federal civil-rights review, and the political weight of a sitting member of Congress can move state policy.

Defend the USDA Section 2501 Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program, which extends to fishery operators (cross-reference Brief 3.5).

In the District

A district office liaison for the Bay seafood industry, with a specific focus on Black waterman entry, minority-led aquaculture, and Black-owned seafood businesses.

A standing seat at the Maryland Department of Natural Resources table on commercial waterman license allocation. Working with DNR, the General Assembly, and waterman organizations until the path to entry is open to families that lost it.

Annual public report on federal seafood industry funding flowing to MD-01, broken out by recipient demographics where data is available.

Specific outreach to Vincent Leggett's Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation, Imani Black's Minorities in Aquaculture, the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Watermen Project, and the Tilghman Watermen's Association. The point is to keep the conversation open and the funding flowing.

Through Oversight

Public letters to NOAA Sea Grant, USDA Rural Development, and SBA on grant allocation patterns affecting Black watermen and minority-led aquaculture in Maryland.

Coordinate with the Maryland Attorney General and the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights on license allocation patterns at DNR.

THE HONEST PART

Reopening the commercial waterman license structure is a state DNR fight. A federal representative cannot change it by fiat. What federal pressure, federal grant conditioning, and federal civil-rights review can do is push the state to act. That is real but bounded.

Aquaculture is the most viable single piece in the near term. The capital threshold is lower than wild harvest, the federal funding streams exist, and the model has been demonstrated. The work is making sure MD-01 is at the front of the line for the funding.

The oyster harvest is unlikely to return to 1880 levels. The Bay restoration work in Brief 3.1 is the larger fight. Without water quality, no waterman trade survives, regardless of who holds the license.

Black-owned seafood businesses face the same capital access problems Black-owned businesses face generally (see Brief 5.4). Federal small business support is a real lever, but it requires the right administrative posture at SBA and MBDA.

RECEIPTS

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- NOAA Sea Grant: seagrants.noaa.gov
- USDA Rural Development: rd.usda.gov
- Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA): mbda.gov

- SBA 8(a) Business Development Program: sba.gov/federal-contracting/contracting-assistance-programs/8a-business-development-program
- USDA Value-Added Producer Grant program.
- USDA Section 2501 Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program.
- Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund: cdfifund.gov

SOURCES

- Vincent Leggett, Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation: blacksofthechesapeake.org
- Imani Black, Minorities in Aquaculture: mianpo.org
- National Trust for Historic Preservation, Watermen Project (Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania).
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Commercial Waterman Licensing: dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/Pages/commercial/index.aspx
- Maryland Sea Grant: mdsg.umd.edu

PARTNERS

Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation. Minorities in Aquaculture. National Trust for Historic Preservation Watermen Project. Tilghman Watermen's Association. Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Maryland Sea Grant. NAACP Maryland State Conference.

BRIEF 3.5

Family Farms in the Future

WHAT'S HAPPENING

MD-01 farmers are not having a good year.

The tariff problem.

Tariffs imposed by the current administration have raised input costs (fertilizer, equipment, parts) while collapsing key export markets. Soybean, corn, dairy, and grain prices have moved against MD-01 producers. Farm bankruptcies are up. Many MD-01 farmers voted for the policies that are now squeezing them. When you sit down and talk to them, most are looking for a federal trade and agricultural policy that lets their farms run profitably without an annual bailout backstop. Andy Harris voted for every tariff package and every USDA cut.

Black farmer land loss.

Black farmers nationally and on the Shore have lost land at a rate sharply higher than white farmers. The legacy is decades of USDA discrimination and heir-property challenges. The Pigford and Pigford II settlements were supposed to address some of this. Many MD-01 Black farming families never received what they were owed.

Food deserts.

Food deserts cover much of Wicomico, Somerset, and Dorchester counties. Entire census tracts have no full-service grocery store within reasonable distance. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (P.L. 119-21, signed July 4, 2025) made the food access situation significantly worse. The new law narrows SNAP eligibility (the parental caregiver exemption for adults caring for children was tightened from "children under 18" to "children under 14"), excludes refugees, asylees, and trafficking survivors from SNAP eligibility, and shifts the federal share of state SNAP administrative costs from 50 percent to 25 percent starting in FY2027. The Congressional Budget Office scored the OBBBA SNAP changes at \$69 billion in cuts over ten years.

SNAP at farm stands.

SNAP benefits, while widely available at supermarkets, are unevenly accepted at farmers markets and produce stands. The infrastructure (EBT processing equipment, partnerships with farmers, federal program enrollment) is uneven across MD-01.

The climate-smart agriculture rollback.

The Inflation Reduction Act funded climate-smart agriculture practices (cover cropping, no-till, nutrient management). On Delmarva specifically, those practices also reduce Bay nutrient runoff (cross-reference Brief 3.1). Subsequent legislation has clawed back much of that funding.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

A poultry contract grower in Wicomico County is paying forty percent more for feed than she paid two years ago. The tariff packages raised the cost of every input she buys. Her per-bird payment from the integrator is unchanged. She voted in 2024 expecting a different outcome. She is facing bankruptcy in 2026. Federal agricultural policy is the difference between her staying on the land and not.

MY TAKE

A federal government that says it cares about rural America but votes for tariffs that bankrupt rural farmers is lying about which one it cares about. The fix MD-01 farmers want is federal trade and agricultural policy that stops crushing their input costs and export markets. Bailout cycles only paper over the damage from bad trade policy.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

On tariffs and trade:

- Vote against and work to repeal the tariff packages squeezing MD-01 farmers.
- Cosponsor legislation requiring Congressional approval for emergency tariff actions, reasserting the authority that has drifted to the executive branch over decades.

On USDA programs:

- Defend the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the Farm Service Agency, and Rural Development against further cuts.
- Direct USDA funding to MD-01 producers proactively.
- Restore the climate-smart agriculture investments from the Inflation Reduction Act. These were direct payments to farmers practicing cover cropping, no-till, and nutrient management. On Delmarva, they also addressed Bay nutrient runoff.

On Black farmers and heir property:

- Defend and expand the USDA Section 2501 Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program. It is the federal vehicle for Black farmer support and has been narrowed and challenged.
- Cosponsor legislation expanding USDA's Heirs' Property Relending Program, which provides capital to clear title on heir property and lets families access USDA programs. This is one of the most important Black-farmer policies almost no one talks about.
- Pursue federal review of unprocessed and disputed Pigford and Pigford II claims affecting MD-01 families.

- Direct USDA Microloan, FSA Beginning Farmer, and Value-Added Producer Grants with set-asides for socially disadvantaged farmers, proactively to MD-01 producers.

On food access and food deserts:

- Cosponsor the Healthy Food Financing Initiative reauthorization (H.R. 3506) and push for expansion to fund grocery stores, food cooperatives, and farmers market infrastructure in MD-01 food deserts.
- Cosponsor expansion and full funding of USDA's Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP), which doubles SNAP dollars when used to buy fresh produce.
- Direct federal grants to fund EBT processing equipment for every farmers market and farm stand in MD-01 that wants to accept SNAP.
- Cosponsor legislation reversing the OBBBA SNAP narrowing, including the caregiver exemption tightening, the non-citizen exclusion, and the state administrative cost shift.
- Cosponsor expansion of USDA's Local Agriculture Market Program to fund mobile farmers markets and rural produce delivery, especially partnered with churches and senior centers in food-desert communities.

On the future of MD-01 agriculture:

- Cosponsor crop diversification grants. MD-01 is over-concentrated in poultry and grain. Federal support for diversification (specialty crops, regenerative agriculture, hemp, value-added processing) reduces risk for farmers and integrator dependence.
- Cosponsor legislation treating aquaculture as agriculture for federal program eligibility (cross-reference Brief 3.4).

In the District

A district office liaison for agriculture, with a specific focus on small farmer support, Black farmer support, and food access. Helps constituents navigate USDA programs, FSA loans, EQIP applications, and Pigford claims.

Application clinics across MD-01 counties, rotating through Cecil, Harford, Talbot, Caroline, Queen Anne's, Kent, Wicomico, Somerset, Dorchester, and Worcester. Walk farmers through USDA programs in person.

Specific outreach to Black farming families on heir property issues, working with the National Black Farmers Association and the Federation of Southern Cooperatives.

Specific outreach to MD-01 farmers markets, food cooperatives, and church-based food access programs to expand SNAP acceptance and GusNIP doubling.

Annual public report on federal agriculture funding flowing to MD-01, by program and by county. Posted online.

Through Oversight

Public letters to USDA on Section 2501 program funding, Heirs' Property Relending Program implementation, and Pigford claim review.

Demand committee hearings on the tariff impact on rural America, including specific testimony from MD-01 farmers.

Coordinate with the Maryland Attorney General and the Maryland Department of Agriculture on enforcement of agricultural fair-dealing laws.

THE HONEST PART

Reversing the tariff regime requires either administrative cooperation or new legislation that has not yet passed. Until either happens, the work is making sure MD-01 farmers know who voted for the tariffs and who is fighting against them.

The OBBBA SNAP narrowing is law (P.L. 119-21). Reversing it requires a House majority that wants to. Until then, the work is preventing further erosion and supporting the state and nonprofit infrastructure that fills the gaps. Maryland's General Assembly will face the FY2027 administrative cost shift directly. Federal pressure can help; state leadership has to backstop.

USDA program direction depends on the Secretary of Agriculture and the administration. Federal pressure can move some grant flow toward MD-01, but the broader USDA posture is set by the White House.

The Pigford settlements are decades old. Federal review of unprocessed claims is a real lever but bounded.

Food deserts in Wicomico, Somerset, and Dorchester are not solvable by any single federal program. The fix is layered: grocery stores, farmers markets, mobile produce, SNAP acceptance, federal support for local food systems, and state Department of Health partnership. The work is all of it at once.

RECEIPTS

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- USDA Section 2501 program: [usda.gov/topics/farming/socially-disadvantaged-farmers-and-ranchers](https://www.usda.gov/topics/farming/socially-disadvantaged-farmers-and-ranchers)
- USDA Heirs' Property Relending Program: fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/heirs-property-relending-program
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).
- USDA Microloan, FSA Beginning Farmer, Value-Added Producer Grants.
- Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP).
- Healthy Food Financing Initiative.
- USDA Local Agriculture Market Program.
- USDA Farm Service Agency.
- USDA Rural Development.

SETTLEMENTS

- Pigford v. Glickman (1999) and Pigford II (2010). Discrimination against Black farmers by USDA.

SOURCES

- USDA Farm Service Agency: fsa.usda.gov
- USDA Risk Management Agency: rma.usda.gov
- USDA Food Access Research Atlas: ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas

- Maryland Department of Agriculture: mda.maryland.gov
- Maryland Farm Bureau: mdfarmbureau.com
- National Black Farmers Association: blackfarmers.org
- Federation of Southern Cooperatives: federation.coop

PARTNERS

Maryland Farm Bureau. National Black Farmers Association. Federation of Southern Cooperatives. Future Harvest CASA (Mid-Atlantic regenerative agriculture). Maryland Department of Agriculture. UMES Extension. Salisbury University food systems initiatives. Eastern Shore food banks (Maryland Food Bank Eastern Shore branch).

BRIEF 3.6

The Land Worth Keeping

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Conservation funding is one of the few policy areas where rural Republicans and Democrats usually agree. Hunters, anglers, farmers, and land trusts share the same federal and state programs, and those programs have had bipartisan support in normal times. The current MD-01 fight is whether the funding survives at all. Several of those programs are under pressure at the same time.

The Chesapeake Bay Program funding cliff.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL, P.L. 117-58, 2021) dedicated \$238 million over five years to EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program, on top of baseline appropriations. Fiscal year 2026 is the fifth and final year. The BIL Bay authorization expires September 30, 2026. Without congressional action before that date, the supplemental Bay funding stream ends. The Bay Program is the federal coordinating mechanism for watershed restoration across six states and the District of Columbia. Without that supplemental funding, the cost shifts back onto states that have already cut their own conservation budgets.

National Wildlife Refuge staffing collapse.

The Chesapeake Marshlands National Wildlife Refuge Complex is the federal agency umbrella for Blackwater (Dorchester), Eastern Neck (Kent), Martin (Smith Island), and Susquehanna (Cecil). In 2025 the complex went from 23 staff to 11. All 11 are stationed at Blackwater HQ. Eastern Neck, Martin, and Susquehanna have zero on-site staff. Blackwater crew members drive a four-hour round trip to Eastern Neck for routine maintenance. Across the Atlantic Coast, Assateague Island National Seashore had zero lifeguards in 2025. National Park Service permanent staff is down 24 percent since January 2025. All of these cuts were administrative actions; Congress has not blocked them.

Maryland Program Open Space cuts.

Program Open Space (POS) is the state's main land conservation funding stream, paid for by the 0.5 percent real estate transfer tax. In the 2025 General Assembly session, \$100 million was diverted from POS over four years (FY2026 through FY2029), and POS was the only state special fund taking cuts of that size in that span. The Maryland Department of Legislative Services initially recommended a 100 percent elimination of land preservation funding through 2029, before public pressure forced a partial reversal. The estimated impact is roughly 20,000 acres statewide that would have been permanently protected and now will not be. Most of that loss falls on the Eastern Shore, where the easement queue is longest.

The Bay Restoration Fund split and sunset.

Maryland's Bay Restoration Fund (BRF, the "flush tax" on water bills) sunsets in 2030 absent legislative action. The septic-tier portion of BRF is split roughly 60 percent for septic system upgrades and 40 percent for cover crops. The federal cover-crop side of that math runs through USDA NRCS programs, including EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) and CSP

(Conservation Stewardship Program). When the federal share for cover crops is unstable, Maryland's state budget has to absorb more of the cost out of BRF, which limits what BRF can do for septic upgrades, watershed monitoring, and other priorities. Federal cover-crop reliability is therefore a Maryland Bay-restoration funding question.

Blue catfish and the MAWS Act.

Blue catfish are an invasive species in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. They prey on native species (rockfish, blue crabs, white perch) and disrupt the food web. Watermen want to harvest them at scale, but blue catfish are the only fish species inspected by the USDA rather than the FDA, a regulatory anomaly created by 2008 and 2014 Farm Bill provisions originally designed to protect domestic farm-raised catfish from imports. The USDA inspection regime imposes facility, equipment, and reporting requirements that other fish processors do not face, which has crippled the human-consumption market for wild-caught Bay blue catfish. The MAWS Act (Mitigation Action and Watermen Support Act, H.R. 4294, sponsored by Rep. Sarah Elfreth and Rep. Rob Wittman) passed the House on March 16, 2026 and is now in the Senate. The MAWS Act creates a NOAA grant program for blue catfish processing aimed at the pet food and animal feed market. That helps with disposal, but the underlying inspection-transfer fix that watermen need (move blue catfish back to FDA inspection so processors can scale to human consumption) is a separate fight that has not yet passed.

Baltimore County's Urban-Rural Demarcation Line.

The Urban-Rural Demarcation Line (URDL) has been Baltimore County's main land-use boundary since 1967. Inside the line, county water and sewer service is available and development is concentrated. Outside the line is rural, with conservation easements and agricultural preservation as the dominant land use. The county's official preservation goal is 80,000 acres. The current preserved figure is approximately 72,217 acres. Closing that 7,800-acre gap requires sustained federal cost-share funding through NRCS-ACEP (the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program), the USDA Forest Legacy Program, Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) state-side grants, and Farm Bill Title II conservation programs. The same federal levers that protect the Eastern Shore protect the URDL.

Andy Harris's record.

Andy Harris chairs the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA, and Related Agencies, the subcommittee that writes federal funding for USDA NRCS conservation programs. From that seat, his FY25 and FY26 subcommittee marks reduced funding for the working-lands programs (NRCS-ACEP, EQIP, and CSP) below the administration's requested levels, even though Eastern Shore and Harford family farmers rely on those programs for easements and cover-crop assistance. In 2021 he voted against the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law that put \$238 million into the Chesapeake Bay Program. In 2020 he opposed permanent full funding for LWCF (the Great American Outdoors Act), the program that builds boat ramps, fishing piers, and wildlife management areas across the district. His lifetime League of Conservation Voters score is 2 percent. His 2025 score is zero.

WHAT THIS MEANS AT HOME

A Kent County farmer with a 100-acre family farm has been on the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) easement waiting list for two years. In exchange for a permanent restriction keeping the property in agriculture, the easement would pay her roughly the development value of the land, giving her capital while keeping a working farm next to

her neighbors' working farms. The Eastern Shore Land Conservancy and the county ag preservation office have her application scored and ready to fund.

What's missing is the funding. Maryland Program Open Space, which feeds the easement programs, just lost \$100 million over four years. The Eastern Shore is at the front of the queue because the development pressure is highest here, but the queue is now longer than the available money will reach. If federal NRCS-ACEP cost-share is reduced (as the FY26 administration budget proposes), her easement either does not get funded or gets pushed back another two years. By then her neighbors have sold to a developer. The same pattern is repeating across Caroline, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Wicomico, Worcester, and Harford counties. Federal funding is the difference between a permanently working Eastern Shore (and the rest of the district) and one that has been carved into half-acre lots a decade from now.

MY TAKE

Conservation programs in MD-01 fund things rural voters depend on regardless of party: boat ramps, duck blinds, farm easements, the federal cost-share that keeps farms in the family. Other rural Republicans in Congress vote for these programs. Andy Harris doesn't. Defending them is baseline work for any representative of MD-01.

OUR PLAN

In Congress

On the BIL Chesapeake Bay funding cliff:

- Cosponsor and push for full reauthorization of the BIL Chesapeake Bay Program funding stream before the September 30, 2026 cliff. A ramp-down or extension is acceptable as a fallback.
- Defend the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program baseline appropriation in every appropriations cycle.

On National Wildlife Refuges:

- Defend U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service appropriations. Restore staffing at the Chesapeake Marshlands NWR Complex, with on-site staff returned to Eastern Neck, Martin, and Susquehanna.
- Defend NPS appropriations for Assateague Island National Seashore so the seashore is fully staffed during peak season.
- Cosponsor legislation that protects refuge and seashore staffing levels from administrative attrition.

On working lands easements:

- Defend Farm Bill Title II conservation programs (CRP, EQIP, CSP, ACEP) in every appropriations cycle.
- Push to fully fund the NRCS-ACEP queue. The federal cost-share is what makes Maryland Rural Legacy and MALPF easements close on the Eastern Shore.
- Defend the USDA Forest Legacy Program. Maryland uses it for forest easements in the Pocomoke, Nanticoke, and Choptank watersheds.

On public lands and access:

- Cosponsor full and permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Block any further administrative diversion of LWCF dollars away from conservation and recreation.
- Defend Pittman-Robertson (Wildlife Restoration) and Dingell-Johnson (Sport Fish Restoration) excise tax dollars. These are hunter-and-angler dollars that build boat ramps, fishing piers, and wildlife management areas across MD-01.
- Defend the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail. Gateway sites in Chestertown, Cambridge, Tilghman, and Crisfield are MD-01 economic anchors.

On the blue catfish processing fight:

- Cosponsor the MAWS Act in the Senate to keep it moving toward enactment. The pet food and animal feed processing channel reduces some of the immediate harvest backlog.
- Cosponsor separate legislation to transfer blue catfish (Siluriformes) inspection from USDA back to FDA. Watermen and processors have been asking for this fix; the pet food channel alone does not open the human consumption market that drives the harvest pressure that protects native species.

On wildlife and habitat:

- Defend U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service migratory bird programs. The Eastern Shore is the spine of the Atlantic Flyway between Delaware Bay and the Carolinas.
- Defend NOAA Habitat Conservation funding. Fund Audubon's "Marshes for Tomorrow" and similar salt marsh restoration work that responds to the Eastern Shore marsh drowning crisis.
- Defend the Endangered Species Act against narrowing. The Northeastern Beach Tiger Beetle, Bog Turtle, Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon, and Red Knot all have MD-01 habitat.

On Baltimore County URDL preservation:

- Direct NRCS-ACEP-ALE federal cost-share funding to Baltimore County ag easements within the URDL preservation areas.
- Direct USDA Forest Legacy funding to Baltimore County forest easements (relevant to the North County forests).
- Direct LWCF state-side grants to parks and recreation acquisitions inside the URDL.

In the District

A district office liaison for conservation issues, working with the partner stack: Maryland League of Conservation Voters, Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, Lower Shore Land Trust (Salisbury), Chesapeake Conservancy, Audubon Maryland-DC, Sierra Club Lower Eastern Shore Group, Harford Land Trust, the Baltimore County Land Trust Coalition, and Valleys Planning Council. The liaison helps landowners navigate NRCS, MALPF, MARBIDCO Next Generation Farmland Acquisition, and Rural Legacy applications, and tracks federal grant opportunities for MD-01 land trusts.

A standing relationship with the Friends of Blackwater NWR, the Friends of Eastern Neck NWR, and similar refuge volunteer groups. These groups have been carrying more of the on-site work as paid staff vacancies have grown.

Outreach to hunter and angler organizations across MD-01 (Ducks Unlimited, the Maryland chapter of Trout Unlimited, the Maryland Sportsmen's Association, county-level hunting and fishing clubs). Federal conservation funding includes the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson excise taxes paid on guns, ammunition, fishing rods, and outboard motors. That money builds the boat ramps, fishing piers, and wildlife management areas these groups use. Defending federal conservation funding is defending hunter and angler funding.

Annual public report on federal conservation funding flowing into MD-01 by program and county (NRCS, USFWS, NPS, NOAA, USDA Forest Legacy). Posted online.

Through Oversight

Public letters to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on staffing levels at the Chesapeake Marshlands NWR Complex, with specific reference to Eastern Neck, Martin, and Susquehanna.

Public letters to the National Park Service on Assateague Island National Seashore staffing and visitor services.

Demand committee hearings on the FY26 Interior-Environment Appropriations bill, with specific reference to the LWCF reduction proposal.

Coordinate with the Maryland Attorney General and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources on federal conservation grant flow to Maryland and on enforcement of federal land-management obligations.

THE HONEST PART

Reauthorizing the BIL Chesapeake Bay funding before September 30, 2026 requires either a clean reauthorization vote (unlikely in the current Congress) or attaching the Bay funding to the broader surface transportation reauthorization package (more realistic but politically complicated). Either way the fight is now, in this Congress.

National Wildlife Refuge staffing reductions were administrative actions. Reversing them requires either administrative cooperation or sustained appropriations pressure tied to specific staffing levels. Federal courts have intervened on probationary terminations but have not addressed the broader staffing reductions.

Maryland Program Open Space cuts are state decisions, and a federal representative cannot reverse them by fiat. What federal legislation can do is fully fund the NRCS-ACEP cost-share so that fewer state dollars are needed per easement, which lets Maryland's reduced POS budget reach more acres.

The MAWS Act has passed the House. Senate passage is plausible but not guaranteed. Moving blue catfish inspection from USDA back to FDA is a separate fight that has not yet passed; it faces opposition from the catfish farming lobby that wanted the USDA inspection regime in the first place. That is the harder fight.

LWCF permanent funding (the Great American Outdoors Act, signed 2020) is being undermined administratively. Defending it has become an annual appropriations fight.

Conservation has a bipartisan coalition in normal times. With Andy Harris as the MD-01 vote, that coalition has not been available here. Part of the case to voters is that this is one of the few policy areas where they can have a representative who builds the kind of cross-party coalitions other rural members of Congress already build on conservation.

RECEIPTS

BILLS

- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL / Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act), Public Law 117-58, 2021. Chesapeake Bay Program \$238M over five years. Authorization expires September 30, 2026.
- MAWS Act (Mitigation Action and Watermen Support Act, H.R. 4294). Sponsors: Rep. Sarah Elfreth (D-MD-03), Rep. Rob Wittman (R-VA-01). Passed House March 16, 2026. Now in Senate.
- Blue catfish FDA inspection transfer legislation (multiple bills across recent Congresses). To be confirmed and cosponsored.
- Land and Water Conservation Fund permanent funding (Great American Outdoors Act, P.L. 116-152, signed 2020). Defense legislation to block administrative diversion.
- Farm Bill Title II conservation programs (CRP, EQIP, CSP, ACEP) reauthorization. Current extension through September 30, 2026.
- USDA Forest Legacy Program (annual appropriations).
- Endangered Species Act defense legislation (multiple bills against narrowing).

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- EPA Chesapeake Bay Program. Federal coordination of Bay restoration across MD, VA, PA, DE, WV, NY, DC.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wildlife Refuge System.
- National Park Service.
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS): Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP-ALE for ag, ACEP-WRE for wetlands), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).
- USDA Forest Service: Forest Legacy Program.
- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).
- Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. § 669 et seq.).
- Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. § 777 et seq.).
- Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (Duck Stamp).
- Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. § 1531 et seq.).

MARYLAND AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- Maryland Program Open Space (POS). 0.5% real estate transfer tax.
- Maryland Rural Legacy Program. Created 1997.
- Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF). Created 1977.
- MARBIDCO Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program.
- Maryland Bay Restoration Fund (BRF). Septic-tier 60% septic upgrades / 40% cover crops. Sunsets 2030 absent legislative action.
- Baltimore County Urban-Rural Demarcation Line (URDL). Established 1967.

SOURCES

- LCV Member of Congress page, Andy Harris: lcv.org/moc/andy-harris
- Funding Landscape on IJJA cliff: fundinglandscape.com/answers/infrastructure-ijja-funding-2026
- Transportation For America on IJJA reauthorization: t4america.org
- EPA Chesapeake Bay Program: epa.gov/chesapeake-bay-program-cbp
- Friends of Blackwater NWR on staff cuts: friendsofblackwater.org/staff-cuts-blackwater-nwr
- Star Democrat on Eastern Neck staffing: stardem.com

- Harford Land Trust on POS cuts: harfordlandtrust.org/program-open-space-2026
- Eastern Shore Land Conservancy on POS cuts: eslc.org/md-budget-cuts-target-land-conservation
- Maryland Department of the Environment Bay Restoration Fund: mde.maryland.gov/programs/water/bayrestorationfund
- Maryland DNR Rural Legacy Program: dnr.maryland.gov/land/Pages/Rural-Legacy
- Maryland Department of Agriculture, MALPF: mda.maryland.gov/Pages/malpf
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation on blue catfish inspection: cbf.org/blogs/save-the-bay/nows-the-time-to-correct-blue-catfish-policy
- Elfreth press release on MAWS Act House passage: elfreth.house.gov
- Bay Journal on pet food approach criticism: bayjournal.com
- Baltimore County Master Planning history: baltimorecountymd.gov/departments/planning/masterplanning/history

PARTNERS

Maryland League of Conservation Voters (MD LCV). Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC). Lower Shore Land Trust (LSLT, Salisbury area). Chesapeake Conservancy. Audubon Maryland-DC. Sierra Club Maryland Chapter, Lower Eastern Shore Group. Harford Land Trust. Baltimore County Land Trust Coalition. Valleys Planning Council. Friends of Blackwater NWR. Friends of Eastern Neck NWR. ShoreRivers (Choptank, Chester, Miles-Wye, Sassafras Riverkeepers). Maryland Conservation Council. Ducks Unlimited (Maryland chapters). Maryland Sportsmen's Association. Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Maryland Department of the Environment.

SOURCES

Theme 3: Environmental Justice

Sources for every claim made in the briefs of this theme. Bills cite the 119th Congress sponsor and bill number unless otherwise noted; "see *Brief X.Y*" indicates a citation that recurs across briefs and is fully detailed in the named brief.

THEME 03: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Brief 3.1: The Bay and the Polluters Killing It

BILLS

- Federal debarment legislation tying federal contracts and USDA programs to Clean Water Act and Chesapeake Bay TMDL compliance. To be drafted or cosponsored.
- Real-time pollution monitoring legislation for industrial agriculture operations on Bay tributaries.
- Integrator liability legislation.
- Chesapeake Bay Program reauthorization (multiple bills across recent Congresses).
- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law lead service line replacement funding (already enacted; defense fight ongoing).
- PFAS remediation funding expansion (multiple bills).

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1251 et seq.).
- Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (Bay TMDL).
- EPA Drinking Water State Revolving Fund.
- Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA).
- USDA EQIP, CRP, CSP.
- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (P.L. 117-58) lead service line replacement provisions.

SOURCES

- EPA Chesapeake Bay Program.
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation.
- ShoreRivers; Waterkeepers Chesapeake; Choptank Riverkeeper.
- Maryland Department of the Environment.

Brief 3.2: Offshore Wind Done Right

BILLS

- Inflation Reduction Act renewable energy provisions (Title III, energy tax credits).
- One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025 (P.L. 119-21). Narrowed offshore wind tax credit timelines.
- Federal community-benefits framework legislation for offshore renewable projects.

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) offshore wind permitting authority.
- Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act.
- Investment Tax Credit and Production Tax Credit (Internal Revenue Code).

COURT CASES

- Ocean City of Maryland v. BOEM. Filed October 2024. Five claims allowed to proceed July 2025.
- Massachusetts v. Trump (D. Mass.). December 9, 2025 ruling by Judge Saris struck down withdrawal order.
- Delaware Court of Chancery substation permit ruling, March 25, 2026.

SOURCES

- BOEM Maryland Offshore Wind Project page.
- US Wind project page.
- Maryland Energy Administration.
- Maryland Public Service Commission.

Brief 3.3: Climate, FEMA, and Crisfield**BILLS**

- Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018 (DRRA) (P.L. 115-254). Created BRIC; needs statutory hardening against rescission.
- BRIC reauthorization and statutory protection legislation.
- Disaster declaration objective criteria legislation.
- Sea Grant reauthorization (recurring).

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES

- Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. § 5121 et seq.).
- FEMA Disaster Relief Fund.
- NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge.
- Coastal Zone Management Act.
- BRIC program (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities).

COURT CASES

- Multi-state suit challenging FEMA's BRIC termination (federal district court ruling December 2025).

SOURCES

- FEMA BRIC program.
- Crisfield BRIC project documentation (FEMA award announcement, July 2024).
- Maryland Department of Emergency Management.
- NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge.
- Maryland Sea Grant.

Brief 3.4: Watermen: A Trade Worth Saving**FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS**

- NOAA Sea Grant.
- USDA Rural Development.
- Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA).

- SBA 8(a) Business Development Program.
- USDA Value-Added Producer Grant program.
- USDA Section 2501 Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program.
- Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund.

SOURCES

- Vincent Leggett, Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation.
- Imani Black, Minorities in Aquaculture.
- National Trust for Historic Preservation, Watermen Project.
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Commercial Waterman Licensing.
- Maryland Sea Grant.

Brief 3.5: Family Farms in the Future

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- USDA Section 2501 program.
- USDA Heirs' Property Relending Program.
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP); Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).
- USDA Microloan, FSA Beginning Farmer, Value-Added Producer Grants.
- Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP).
- Healthy Food Financing Initiative.
- USDA Local Agriculture Market Program.
- USDA Farm Service Agency; USDA Rural Development.

SETTLEMENTS

- Pigford v. Glickman (1999) and Pigford II (2010). Discrimination against Black farmers by USDA.

SOURCES

- USDA Farm Service Agency; USDA Risk Management Agency; USDA Food Access Research Atlas.
- Maryland Department of Agriculture; Maryland Farm Bureau.
- National Black Farmers Association; Federation of Southern Cooperatives.

Brief 3.6: The Land Worth Keeping

BILLS

- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL / Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act), Public Law 117-58, 2021. Chesapeake Bay Program \$238M over five years. Authorization expires September 30, 2026.
- MAWS Act, Mitigation Action and Watermen Support Act (H.R. 4294). Sponsors: Rep. Sarah Elfreth (D-MD-03), Rep. Rob Wittman (R-VA-01). Cosponsors: Hoyer, Kiggans. Passed House March 16, 2026; now in Senate.
- Blue catfish FDA inspection transfer legislation (multiple bills across recent Congresses). To be confirmed and cosponsored.
- Land and Water Conservation Fund permanent funding (Great American Outdoors Act, P.L. 116-152, signed 2020). Defense legislation to block administrative diversion.
- Farm Bill Title II conservation programs (CRP, EQIP, CSP, ACEP) reauthorization. Current extension through September 30, 2026.
- USDA Forest Legacy Program (annual appropriations).

- Endangered Species Act defense legislation (multiple bills against narrowing).

FEDERAL AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- EPA Chesapeake Bay Program. Federal coordination of Bay restoration across MD, VA, PA, DE, WV, NY, DC.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wildlife Refuge System.
- National Park Service.
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS): Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP-ALE, ACEP-WRE), EQIP, CSP, CRP.
- USDA Forest Service: Forest Legacy Program.
- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).
- Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. § 669 et seq.).
- Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. § 777 et seq.).
- Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (Duck Stamp).
- Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. § 1531 et seq.).

MARYLAND AUTHORITIES AND PROGRAMS

- Maryland Program Open Space (POS). 0.5 percent real estate transfer tax.
- Maryland Rural Legacy Program (created 1997).
- Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) (created 1977).
- MARBIDCO Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program.
- Maryland Bay Restoration Fund (BRF). Septic-tier split 60 percent septic upgrades / 40 percent cover crops. Sunsets 2030 absent legislative action.
- Baltimore County Urban-Rural Demarcation Line (URDL). Established 1967.

SOURCES

- League of Conservation Voters, Member of Congress page, Andy Harris (lcv.org/moc/andy-harris).
- Funding Landscape on IJJA cliff (fundinglandscape.com/answers/infrastructure-ijja-funding-2026).
- Transportation For America, "Five Reasons Why IJJA Will Expire Without a Replacement in September 2026" (July 2025).
- EPA Chesapeake Bay Program (epa.gov/climate-change-water-sector/chesapeake-bay-program-cbp).
- Friends of Blackwater NWR on staff cuts (friendsofblackwater.org).
- Star Democrat on Eastern Neck NWR staffing (stardem.com).
- Harford Land Trust on Program Open Space cuts (harfordlandtrust.org/program-open-space-2026).
- Eastern Shore Land Conservancy on POS cuts (eslc.org/md-budget-cuts-target-land-conservation).
- Maryland Department of the Environment, Bay Restoration Fund (mde.maryland.gov).
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Rural Legacy Program (dnr.maryland.gov).
- Maryland Department of Agriculture, MALPF (mda.maryland.gov/Pages/malpf.aspx).
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation on blue catfish inspection (cbf.org, March 2021).
- Elfreth press release on MAWS Act House passage (elfreth.house.gov).
- Bay Journal on the pet food approach to blue catfish (bayjournal.com).
- Baltimore County Master Planning history (baltimorecountymd.gov/departments/planning/masterplanning/history).
- Baltimore County land preservation goals (CitizenPortal.ai).

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