



## **\$50 million allotted for Chesapeake by Senate**

### **Blackwater Refuge among targeted bay-related sites**

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The Chesapeake Bay is slated to get \$50 million in funding, thanks to an appropriations bill that passed the Senate last week and awaits President Barack Obama's signature.

In Maryland, the funds will include \$1 million for the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network, which provides support to more than 160 parks, wildlife refuges and museums around the Chesapeake Bay, as well as 22 water trails.

The bill also includes \$2 million for the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in Dorchester County, and \$500,000 for the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail.

The bill is called the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Conference Report. Of the total \$641 million designated for protection of the nation's great bodies of water, \$50 million - or about 8 percent - has been set aside for the Chesapeake Bay.

"The Chesapeake Bay is a national treasure - and Maryland's greatest natural resource," Maryland Democratic Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski, a member of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee that produced the bill, said in a written statement.

"Maryland's communities want to do right by the bay, but they can't do it on their own. That's why I've worked so hard to put money in the federal checkbook to preserve and protect the bay and speed its cleanup. I will always fight for the bay and the lives and livelihoods that depend on it."

Maryland Democratic Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin lauded the bill's passage and the work of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network.

He called the gateways "a very, very popular part of Maryland" and added: "We depend on it for tourism. It brings our history to life. It has been very successful in developing important sites along the bay."

The network - a partnership of 166 sites through the Chesapeake Bay watershed - receives about \$1 million in federal funds every year, according to program manager Bob Campbell. Those sites include water trails, museums and historic sites, as well as county and state parks

The network also funds a grant program through the National Park Service.

"The Chesapeake Bay is big and diverse; it's over a huge geographic region, and it's got a lot of stories to tell," Campbell said.

One of those stories is told by the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail.

The new trail will commemorate the Chesapeake campaign of the War of 1812, Campbell said. The federal funding will probably go toward planning and building the trail, which Campbell said will include water and land sites.

The Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge will use its \$2 million allocation to acquire land, according to refuge manager Suzanne Baird.

"Every national wildlife refuge has an approved boundary that identifies the land needed to meet the purpose for which the land was established," Baird said.

The Blackwater Refuge provides wintering spots for migratory birds, as well as a habitat for the endangered Delmarva fox squirrel. Currently, the refuge encompasses 25,000 acres.

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