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Maryland projects received millions in EPA funding. See how the money will be spent.

Up to $30 million will fund supporting biodiversity and reducing runoff into the bay

The Severn River Association's "living shoreline" at West Severna Park that acts as a habitat for turtles and other animals. The organization recently received funding to create an action plan to protect the river's shoreline. (Severn River Association/ Courtesy)

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Environmental groups in Maryland are taking steps to improve water quality and biodiversity in the Chesapeake Bay following a $90 million investment in restoration efforts from federal and state entities.

Earlier this month, the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation awarded $37 million to local environmental groups, with other agencies investing $53 million in matching funds. Nearly half of the funded projects will take place in Maryland.

The agencies awarded nearly $16.7 million to organizations including the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, the city of Bowie and the Catoctin Land Trust for projects happening exclusively in Maryland. NFWF estimates an additional $13 million will go toward Maryland restoration efforts from projects shared between Maryland and other states.

Eastern Shore waterway advocacy group ShoreRivers received over $3.8 million for four projects, including one aimed at aligning environmental goals with those for farm productivity in Maryland and Delaware.

Most of the organization's grant money will fund this "producer-led program," an initiative from ShoreRivers' partner organization, Envision the Choptank.

Tim Rosen, ShoreRivers' director of agriculture and restoration, said these producer-led solutions could include planting cover crops to protect soil or adding erosion control measures like buffers at the edges of fields.

The producer-led program is estimated to reduce about 68,000 pounds of nitrogen per year once the measures are implemented, Rosen said, which could significantly improve water quality in the targeted watersheds. This round of money will fund the program for two years, expand its offerings and implement more producer-led practices.

"It's more or less some practices that we might not have state or federal funding for that might be a little bit more innovative," Rosen said, "or they just need more flexibility in order to implement them."

The EPA's funding announcement came just weeks after President Donald Trump revoked an Obama-era executive order. The order established a restoration plan for the bay and levied environmental responsibilities to state and federal agencies.

Trump cited improvements to the bay's health in his order last month. On Tuesday, the bay received a C+ grade on the annual Chesapeake Bay and Watershed Report Card, marking the healthiest it's been in 40 years. But some waterways still

The Severn River, located on the D+-rated Lower Western Shore, is the focus of the nonprofit Severn River Association. SRA was awarded $1.5 million to build on its strategy to restore the river by creating a preservation plan for its shoreline.

A boat floats on the Severn River as the Severn River Association plants 9 million oysters on a protected reef in 2025. The organization recently received funding to create a new 4-acre oyster reef. (Courtesy: Severn River Association)

Then, in partnership with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the Oyster Recovery Program, SRA will build a 4-acre oyster reef to help restore the river's oyster population. Each adult oyster can filter up to 50 gallons per day by eating phytoplankton.

SRA Executive Director Jesse Iliff said the money was a "nice shot in the arm" to SRA's ongoing efforts to revitalize the river's oyster population. Using the funding to improve shoreline ecology is important, Iliff said, because having diverse marine life improves water quality.

"We should be focusing our restoration efforts on preserving, expanding and enhancing those areas," Iliff said. "We want to make sure those nearshore habitats are as viable and ecologically rich as possible."

Increasing biodiversity is also Magdalene Ngeve's goal. Ngeve, an associate professor at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, is the primary researcher on an oyster-planting project in Marley Creek. The creek, which the Baltimore Annapolis Boulevard crosses near Glen Burnie, has suffered from poor water quality.

The project was awarded nearly $195,000 in funding from the EPA, NFWF and the state of Maryland to deploy 20,000 adult oysters in Marley Creek. Cleaner water means healthier, denser underwater vegetation. If water quality improves, Ngeve's team will also plant bay grass she says could thrive in the area.

Local volunteers will take part in the project by helping to load cages, deploy oysters and monitor water levels. Ngeve is designing trainings and coloring pages to involve young volunteers in the project. The grant will also allow Ngeve to hire a graduate student to work with her on the project.

Ngeve said she hopes that, together, researchers and local volunteers will adopt a "shared sense of stewardship" for their local waterways.

"It's not just getting the science out there and the efforts out there — it's training the next generation of scientists who will continue to lead in these efforts."

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