



**Senate Bill 665 Natural Resources _ Healing Hunting and Fishing Fund – No-Cost
Licenses and Stamps
(Senators Corderman et al.)
Written Testimony**

Date: March 9, 2022

Position: SUPPORT

Submitted to: Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Submitted by: Jana Davis, President, Chesapeake Bay Trust

The Chesapeake Bay Trust is honored to have the role of distributing the funding from the existing Healing Hunting and Fishing Fund to projects that benefit veterans, particularly projects that connect veterans to the outdoors for rehabilitation purposes.

Members of the Committee know the Chesapeake Bay Trust well: We are an unbudgeted independent state agency, also a 501(c)(3), created by the General Assembly in 1985 to complement the work of larger state agencies by distributing grant funding to smaller, on-the-ground groups such as faith-based groups, local governments, schools and teachers, homeowners associations, scout troops, civic associations, environmental nonprofits, and others. We distribute funds from various sources, including since 2020 the Healing Hunting and Fishing Fund.

This bill: SB 665

This bill articulates that grants made to not-for-profit organizations for outdoor veterans rehabilitation and recreation projects can be used to support individual fishing or hunting licenses for veterans. The Trust grant-making philosophy is that the more flexibility an organization has in spending grant funds to further the specific goals of any project (if justified), the better, and so we support this bill.

The Trust’s Veterans Work and the Healing Hunting and Fishing Fund

The Trust’s veterans work falls under the umbrella of our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiative (<https://cbtrust.org/diversity-inclusion/>) through which we aim to engage previously under-engaged, underserved, and/or under-resourced audiences. Our Diversity and Inclusion Committee, on which Senator Lam served for some time, identified three such audiences: the faith community, communities of color, and the human health sector, under which our veterans rehabilitation work falls. <https://cbtrust.org/veterans/>.

All of our grant programs support relevant veterans work; however, we offer a program specifically marketed to veterans organizations through which we invest many of the funds from the Healing Hunting and Fishing Fund in addition to funds from other unrestricted sources (the “bay plate,” the Chesapeake and Endangered Species tax checkoff, etc.): <https://cbtrust.org/grants/veterans-engagement/>.

Examples of veterans-related outdoor rehabilitation/therapeutic projects funded by the Trust include:

- Talisman Therapeutic Riding’s “Talisman TheraBay Trails program to support veterans therapeutic programs and a Veteran’s Victory Garden (Queen Anne’s County)
- The 6th Branch: A Train the Trainer workforce model that provides skills to veterans surrounding the maintenance of bioretention areas. (Baltimore City)
- Talmar Gardens and Horticultural Therapy Center’s veterans-to-farmers initiative called “Breaking New Ground,” providing a 10-month farmer’s training for skills to lead to employment in agriculture (Baltimore County)
- Friends of the Patapsco Valley State Park and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources’ Wounded Warrior and Veteran Outreach program for an adaptive cycling program for veterans with mobility differences, offering health benefits through therapeutic recreation and the healing power of nature. They will provide hand crank bicycles and ride-along units that wounded veterans can use with the guidance and assistance of veteran volunteers.
- The Audubon Naturalist Society for the “Service and Healing: Bringing Veterans and Nature Together” to develop, with the aid of two program consultant veterans and the Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs, environmental programs along a wheelchair-accessible, streamside nature trail, in the initial period working with 50-75 veterans.



About the Chesapeake Bay Trust

The Trust was created by the Maryland General Assembly in 1985 as a non-profit grant-making organization with a goal to increase stewardship of and engagement in the restoration of the state’s local rivers, streams, parks, and other natural resources in diverse communities across the state, from the mountains of Western Maryland and the Youghiogheny watershed to the marshes of the Coastal Bays. The goal was to create an entity that could complement state agency work numbers of groups on the ground: schools, nonprofit organizations, faith-based and reach large institutions, homeowners associations, community and civic associations, and other types of groups.

The Trust invests in local communities and watersheds through grant programs, the Chesapeake Conservation Corps, and special initiatives and is known for its efficiency, putting on average 90 cents of every dollar into programs. The Trust has awarded over \$130 million through more than 12,000 grants and projects in every county in Maryland since 1985. We make 350-400 grants and other awards a year and have about 1,000 active grantees at any one time.

The Trust does not receive a direct state appropriation, instead supported through revenue from the Chesapeake Bay vehicle license plate; half of the Chesapeake and Endangered Species Fund checkoff on the state income tax form; two new donation options through Maryland’s online boating, fishing, hunting license system, including this one that focuses on veterans’ rehabilitation; partnerships with federal, state, local agencies, family foundations, and corporate foundations; and individual donors.

Due to its efficiency, the Trust has been rated with the maximum four-star rating by the nation's leading charity evaluator, Charity Navigator, for more than two decades, putting it in the top 1% of non-profits in the nation.

One of the Trust's basic tenets in its strategic plan is to engage under-engaged audiences in natural resources issues, and that theme characterizes the Chesapeake Conservation Corps. Every individual in our area benefits from healthy natural resources, and in turn, every individual can help natural resources. Three under-engaged audiences of particular focus identified by our Diversity and Inclusion Committee are the faith-based sector, communities of color, and the human health sector, which leads to our particular interest in veterans outdoor rehabilitation work. The Trust has seen much success: The number of students, volunteers, and teachers of color engaged in our grants match the demographics of Maryland. Close to 10% of our grants supported work at faith-based institutions of 13 different religions.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to present to the Committee. If you should have any questions regarding the Trust's testimony, please contact us at 410-974-2941 x100 or jdavis@cbtrust.org.