



# Working to Improve Your Chesapeake Bay

## SEAGRASS RESTORATION

**Why Seagrass?** Seagrasses release oxygen; feed aquatic birds; and shelter juvenile blue crabs, striped bass, bay scallops, and many other species that are vital for the ecosystem and regional economy. Seagrasses also reduce erosion of shorelines by absorbing energy from crashing waves. Seagrasses are 250% more efficient than forests at absorbing carbon dioxide! Protecting and restoring seagrasses helps to slow down the effects of climate change.

**History** The Chesapeake Bay is home to seagrass beds and a multitude of fish and shellfish species including the famous blue crab. The Bay provides 34,000 jobs and \$3.39 billion in revenue per year to people in Maryland and Virginia. The Bay's health is affected by severe storms, poor water quality, and human interactions such as fishing, dredging, boating, and aquaculture. The Chesapeake Bay Program, a partnership of federal and state agencies, has initiated restoration programs for seagrasses, oysters, shoreline protection to absorb excess contaminants, and has collaborated with farmers to reduce pollution runoff. With the Program's efforts and community participation, the Bay's water quality is improving, and the best it's been since it started declining in the 1950's.

**Successes** Improved water quality in the Bay has promoted better growth of seagrass beds (from 38,000 acres in 1984 to over 100,000 acres now), even in areas that had been barren for 45 years! The Maryland Department of Natural Resources and Anne Arundel Community College have contributed to this effort by dispersing seagrass seeds throughout the Bay. ACFHP is supporting these efforts, helping to raise funds to disperse more seeds and grow more seagrasses. With water quality at its recent best, NOW is the time to support these restoration efforts!



*January Murray*

**WHY DO WE NEED HEALTHY FISH HABITAT?** Healthy habitats provide native fish with abundant oxygen, food, and shelter to grow and reproduce. Habitats can help filter pollutants and maintain water quality, protect our coastlines from erosion and sea level rise, and combat climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide.

## BLUE CRABS



*Will Parson, The Chesapeake Bay Program*

### STATUS

Stable

### THREATS

Habitat loss, overfishing

### LIFESPAN

1-3 years

### MAXIMUM SIZE

4-6 inches

### RANGE

Nova Scotia to Gulf of Mexico

### FISHING

Blue crab is the unofficial Chesapeake Bay mascot, with 600 million crabs in the Bay as of 2019. Annually, 55 million pounds of blue crabs are caught and steamed, fried, added to soups, made into crab cakes, and more. The blue crab generates more than \$78 million for the local economy each year.

### DID YOU KNOW?

After hatching, baby crabs molt 15-20 times before becoming a juvenile crab. During molting, they are particularly vulnerable because their shells are so soft, so seagrass beds are great for protecting them from predators. A study by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science discovered that the denser the seagrass bed, the more crabs there are!

For more information visit:

[https://www.chesapeakebay.net/issues/blue\\_crabs](https://www.chesapeakebay.net/issues/blue_crabs)

# Fundraising Goals

We need you!

- Restore **20 acres of seagrass annually** for 5 years or **100 acres by 2025**
- Help us reach The Chesapeake Bay Program's goal of restoring **185,000 acres** of seagrass habitat throughout the Bay - That's over **4x** the size of Washington, DC!

**EVERY DOLLAR RESTORES SEAGRASSES: OUR BAY'S LUNGS**

\$670,000 = 100 ACRES OF SEAGRASS

**Want to help ACFHP raise funding for this project?**

Contact Dr. Lisa Havel, our Coordinator at [lhavel@asmfc.org](mailto:lhavel@asmfc.org)

## Make a Connection in Your Community: Support Local Projects

ACFHP's Focus + Expertise + Network + Funding = Healthy Habitat

We rely on people like *you*. With your contribution, our growing partnership can have an even greater impact on improving fish habitat – including habitats in your favorite waterway!

To learn more about ACFHP, visit our website

[www.atlanticfishhabitat.org](http://www.atlanticfishhabitat.org)



### **FOCUS**

Our work uses science, data, outreach, communication, and conservation projects to protect the Atlantic coast's vital fish habitats, including rivers, coastal waters, coral reefs, shellfish beds, and seagrasses.

### **EXPERTISE**

We capitalize on the extensive expertise of our partner scientists and managers to ensure that the projects we undertake, and fund will have marked and long-lasting impacts to fish habitat conservation.

### **NETWORK**

ACFHP's 75 project partners and counting *make the connection* among rivers, oceans, fishes, and humans.

### **FUNDING**

Over the past decade, ACFHP has helped to restore 1,340 acres of fish habitat and counting, having an economic impact of over \$116 million.