Atlantic Conservation Coalition (ACC) Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Overview

Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) Background

In 2022 the Inflation Reduction Act established the CPRG program within the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which provided planning and implementation funds for states, tribes, and local governments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In 2023, the EPA made $4.6 billion available for competitive implementation grants. EPA anticipates awarding approximately 30 to 115 grants ranging between $2 million and $500 million under this general competition. Eligible applicants were able to apply as individuals or as coalitions. This was a one-time availability of funding, and applications were due April 1, 2024. Once awarded, the grants will be spent over five years. According to the EPA, successful applications should 1) achieve significant greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and beyond, 2) substantially benefit communities, 3) compliment other funding sources and 4) pursue innovative policies that can be scaled up across multiple jurisdictions.

ACC Application

On April 1, 2024 the North Carolina Dept. of Natural and Cultural Resources ("NCDNCR") submitted a $421 million bipartisan, multi-state coalition application to the EPA in partnership with the states of South Carolina ("SC"), Virginia ("VA"), Maryland ("MD"), along with The Nature Conservancy ("TNC") named the Atlantic Conservation Coalition ("ACC"). The Coalition's goal is to reduce carbon emissions through conservation and restoration of natural resources while increasing community resilience to natural hazards.

The ACC will use the funding for conservation and restoration projects for peatland wetlands, coastal habitats, and forests across all four states. $50 million will be allocated to each state for shovel-ready projects and $200 million will be allocated to The Nature Conservancy for additional forest and wetland restoration projects across coalition states. The 21 projects identified in the application will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 28 million metric tons CO2e by 2050. Examples of projects include salt marsh restoration, conserving land for outdoor recreation, building living shorelines, cost-assistance to small forest landowners, planting trees in cities, preserving farmland, and reforestation among other activities. 594 unique census tracts or block groups across the ACC were identified as both low-income or disadvantaged communities and could reasonably be expected to benefit from this funding.

Supporting Existing State Initiatives

For NC, this grant will support the directives of Governor Cooper's Executive Order (EO) 305, which set bold goals to conserve and restore natural and working lands by 2040 and supports the NC NWL Action Plan. For SC, this grant will support the activities outlined in the state-mandated (S.C. Code §48-62-10) Strategic Statewide Resilience and Risk Reduction Plan. The activities will support MD's Climate Pollution Plan5 which sets a 60% reduction in emissions by 2031 and net-zero emissions by 2045. It also supports MD's goal to plant and maintain five million native trees by 2031. In VA, the grant supports

commitments to decarbonize all port operations by 2040 and supports various Chesapeake Bay commitments including the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Agreement that MD also participates in. All projects in this proposal support the coalition states' respective Priority Climate Action Plans (PCAPs).

Anticipated Outputs of ACC

Coastal Habitats and Peatlands

- 33,000 acres of peatlands newly preserved and/or restored in NC and VA (TNC)
- 150 acres of tidal wetlands restored in VA (TNC)
- 15 acres of peatlands and 595 acres of coastal habitats newly preserved and restored (NC)
- 3,300 acres permanently added to State Park System (NC)
- 10,000 of acres of forests, current or future coastal habitats, or agricultural lands restored (MD)
- 1,540 acres of coastal habitats restored (MD)
- 2,040 acres of created or improved wildlife habitat (MD)
- 217,700 trees and 4,800,000 native wetland species planted (MD)
- 100 properties protected from flooding after storms (MD)
- Annual sediment loading reduced by about 9,000 metric tons; nitrogen and phosphorus loading reduced by 10 and 5 metric tons respectively (VA)
- 10,000 acres of shorelines and habitats restored (VA)
- Coastal Resilience Plan created for 100 properties, implemented at 5 properties (MD)
- Two National Seashores protected from erosion and sea level rise (NC)

Forests

- 67,647 acres of forests under improved management in the Appalachians in MD and VA (TNC)
- 25,447 acres of bottomland hardwood forest under improved management in SC and VA (TNC)
- 1,000 new acres of agroforestry practices installed (MD)
- 250 producers and landowners engaged on the benefits of agroforestry (MD)
- 500 new acres of forest and 13 acres of urban trees planted (MD)
- Over 1,000,000 new native trees planted (VA)
- 1,200 urban trees planted (NC)
- At least 55,000 acres of land reforested (NC)
- Approximately 12,240 acres placed into conservation, with additional benefits for agroforestry, recreation, and flood mitigation (SC)

Project Partners

State	Partners
North Carolina	NC Dept. of Natural and Cultural Resources, NC Forest Service, NC Coastal Federation, Sustainable Forestry and Land Retention Project, Black Family Land Trust
South Carolina	South Carolina Office of Resilience, SC Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism
Virginia	VA Dept. of Environmental Quality, VA Dept. of Wildlife Resources, Virginia Port Authority, Virginia Tribes
Maryland	MD Dept. of Agriculture, MD Dept. of the Environment, MD Dept. of Natural Resources
Coalition-wide	The Nature Conservancy, Duke University