***Environmental Stewardship***

I am happy to report that the State Budget made a major investment in the Water Quality Improvement Fund bringing total funding for non-point sources to $41 million in 2019 and $86.4 million in 2020. **This is something I have been advocating for years because we get the most “bang for the buck”! I am thrilled that we finally got this done.** The total of $127.4 million is 67% higher than any previous commitment. This increased funding will be distributed among the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts for providing grants for implementing agricultural “best management practices”. This program is crucial for reducing agricultural “run off” into our streams and rivers and will continuing our progress on Chesapeake Bay restoration.

In addition, the General Assembly passed HB2786, which requires the owner or operator of any coal combustion residuals (CCR) unit, defined in the bill to include a coal ash pond or landfill, within the Chesapeake Bay watershed to close such CCR unit by removing all of the CCR for recycling, or deposition in a permitted and lined landfill that meets federal standards. The measure requires that any owner or operator beneficially reuse no less than 6.8 million cubic yards in aggregate of such removed CCR from no fewer than two of the sites. Such a closure project shall be completed within 15 years of its initiation and shall be accompanied by an offer by the owner or operator to provide connection to a municipal water supply for every residence within one-half mile, or if such connection is not feasible, the owner or operator shall offer to provide water testing for any such residence. **I was proud to be a co-patron of this very important legislation.**

Finally, it is my belief that environmental regulations must be based on 3 important principles including: regulations must be based on sound science; must produce results that are measurable; and must be affordable and workable. The best intended environmental regulations are useless if they are too costly or complex to implement.