



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education

House Bill 1209

Environment – Flood Control – Flood Risk Assessment and Model Ordinance
(Climate Ready Floodplain Act of 2023)

Date: March 8, 2023
To: House Environment and Transportation Committee

Position: Support
From: Doug Myers
Maryland Senior Scientist

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** HB 1209 which requires MD Department of the Environment to establish a flood risk map projected forward to expected 2050 sea levels, prohibits certain activities for reconstruction within risk zones and applies Coast Smart siting and design criteria to all new construction.

Maryland's coastal wetlands are disappearing as a result of sea level rise and even if greenhouse gas emissions are sharply reduced now, the amount of carbon dioxide already in the atmosphere will result in a certain amount of sea level rise that cannot be avoided¹. The fish and wildlife nursery habitats, wave attenuation, carbon sequestration and water filtration benefits of healthy tidal wetlands cannot be underestimated in how they protect the Chesapeake Bay. While there are natural mechanisms within wetlands to trap suspended sediments and keep pace with sea level rise, they can only do so if their landward migration is not impeded by human infrastructure.

HB 1209 takes advantage of significant new science projecting sea levels to the mid-century time period that will be experienced within Maryland and calls for the adjustment of our current understanding of coastal flood risk in this dynamic and changing environment. The data will assist homeowners and local governments in preparing resilience plans ahead of impending inundation and limit the expense of repetitive losses of property while creating space needed for wetland migration.

Moreover, the model ordinance assists local governments in considering all of the options to address new sea levels and sets a reasonable timeframe for the adoption of local ordinances. Together, the provisions of HB 1209 will prepare Maryland's coastal communities for the near future as we continue to lower the greenhouse gas emissions that are causing this disruption.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 1209.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

¹ <https://climate.nasa.gov/news/2533/short-lived-greenhouse-gases-cause-centuries-of-sea-level-rise/>