



Testimony in Support of House Bill 607 – Discharge Permits – Stormwater Association with Construction Activity

February 20, 2023

ShoreRivers strongly **SUPPORTS HB607** as it is needed to protect the streams and rivers of the Eastern Shore at a time when construction activity is at an all-time high.

Pollution from construction sites is the most visible and some of the most damaging to water quality. According to the EPA, a one-acre construction site can result in 35–45 tons of sediment runoff a year. This sediment carries algae-growing nutrients, such as phosphorus, to small streams and creeks where it creates poor water quality conditions, silts over oyster reefs and fish habitat, and is one of the three major pollutants that cause water quality impairments throughout the rivers on the Eastern Shore.

HB607 is needed to directly protect our rivers because:

1. **Construction activity on the Eastern Shore has increased exponentially since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and talks of expanding the Chesapeake Bay Bridge have exposed the Eastern Shore to an unprecedented amount of development interest.** Some towns, like the Town of Easton, have experienced 10-years' worth of development proposals in the past two years, resulting in several large-scale developments being constructed at the same time. A greater number of areas under construction at once increases the amount of sediment pollution that could run off from them.
2. **Construction sites on the Eastern Shore are typically 10 acres or larger.** Unlike development in urban areas, development on the rural Eastern Shore often means converting large parcels of farmland to buildings, roadways, and parking lots. **Take, for example, the almost 900-acre Lakeside at Trappe/Trappe East development** where more than 2,500 buildings will be erected. The larger the construction site, the more sediment pollution that could runoff during rainstorms and pollute local streams and creeks.
3. **Most of the Eastern Shore is either in the floodplain or considered wetlands, riparian buffers, critical area, and other sensitive habitats—which section B.1. of the bill intends to protect from construction site sediment pollution.** With 2,910 miles of coastline, the Eastern Shore covers 66% of the state's Chesapeake Bay coast, making it a force-multiplier for water quality impacts. Sediment coming from construction sites near these sensitive areas will have a greater impact on those resources.
4. **Public input on pollution permits for large construction sites will help permit writers incorporate appropriate and site-specific controls that reflect the unique landscape of the Eastern Shore.** The flat, coastal features on the Eastern Shore make it necessary to control runoff to prevent wide-spread flooding and pollution problems. Allowing for more public input on large construction permits will ensure a greater amount of consideration goes into protecting our waterways from runoff from construction sites.

The rivers on the Eastern Shore are already impaired with too much sediment, a problem that will only get worse if proper protections aren't put in place during this time when construction activity is increasing. As a means of protecting water quality in local rivers and protecting the Eastern Shore communities that depend on clean water, ShoreRivers urges that the committee vote favorably on HB607.

Sincerely,

Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper on behalf of:

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