



CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION

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Bill Report

Bill Number/Title: SB 969 / Stream and Watershed Restoration - Stream Restoration Contractor Licensing and Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Restoration and Funding (Whole Watershed Act)
Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Hearing: March 5, 2024
Position: Support with Sponsor Amendments

Background

The Chesapeake Bay Commission is tri-state legislative commission created by law in Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia to advise the members of the three general assemblies on matters of watershed-wide concern. Its fundamental purpose is to develop legislation and policies that foster the collaborative and practical restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed.

In late-2022, Commission members first received a briefing from the Chesapeake Bay Program's Science and Technical Advisory Committee about the pending release of a major new scientific analysis of the restoration efforts over the past 40 years, called the "Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response" (or CESR). With its formal release last year, the report identified areas of needed improvement for the Bay Partnership to collectively make better progress in achieving restoration goals.

SB 969 is greatly informed by that analysis – in particular the need for the more focused or targeted implementation of best management practices, a greater emphasis on shallow-water habitats, and more engagement of citizens and local communities in restoration. The legislation creates the organizational, management and financial structure to pilot innovative strategies to improve both water quality and living resource response.

Position

The Maryland Legislative members of the Commission support SB 969. Our collective inability to achieve the water quality goals originally established for 2025 (the Total Maximum Daily Load, or TMDL) demonstrate the need to try new approaches to watershed restoration – informed by the sound science of the CESR report.