

COALITION TO STOP STEAM DESTRUCTION

March 1, 2024

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Testimony on: SENATE BILL 969 “Stream and Watershed Restoration – Stream Restoration Contractor Licensing and Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Restoration and Funding (Whole Watershed Act)

Position: UNFAVORABLE

Hearing Date: March 5, 2024

We, the undersigned eight organizations and thirty-six individuals and, request an **UNFAVORABLE report on SB 969**, the Whole Watershed Act.

This bill would undermine efforts to restore the health of the Chesapeake Bay, undermine efforts to protect communities from the effects of climate change, and undermine efforts to advance environmental progress.

The Chesapeake Bay Program’s 2023 Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) document known as the CESR report (“Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response) states that “the Bay of the future will be different from the Bay of the past because of permanent and ongoing changes in land use, climate change, population growth, and economic development.”

Yet the Whole Watershed Act would enable the continued futile attempt to “restore” streams to pre-colonial conditions. This ignores the reality spelled out in the CESR report that returning to pre-colonial conditions is impossible given the current level of watershed development and population size.

The establishment of a Stream Restoration Contractors Licensing Board and the licensing of stream “restoration” contractors would bestow undeserved credibility to the practice of so-called stream “restoration.” Observations on the ground show that stream “restoration” projects are being washed out by storms. Published scientific reports that analyzed over 700 stream “restoration” projects show that they resulted in no ecological benefits.

We should not license stream “restoration” companies when observations and the science show that their practices are failing to prevent stream erosion, failing to improve water quality, and failing to improve the environment.

This bill would only accelerate the use of stream “restorations” which are proven to be ineffective and destructive. This bill would only accelerate the conversion of Maryland streams into unnatural engineered stormwater conveyances.

In addition, this bill fails to address the root cause of steam degradation which is uncontrolled stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces such as roads and parking lots as well as from

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agricultural fields. This can only be accomplished using out-of-stream practices such as bioretentions and permeable pavement.

This bill would increase the costs of meeting pollution reduction targets according to Maryland Department of the Environment's (MDE's) 2022 "Annual Report on Financial Assurance Plans and the Watershed Protection and Restoration Program" and delay meeting deadlines agreed to by Chesapeake Bay states.

For these reasons, we request an **UNFAVORABLE report on SB 969**.

Sincerely,

Organizations:

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Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Environmental Justice Ministry, Lee McNair
Coalition to Stop Stream Destruction, Kenneth Bawer
Divergence, LLC, Peter Ensign
Gillis Environmental Education Inc., Julie Super
Howard County Citizens Association, Brian England
Patuxent Watershed Protective Association, Inc., James Putman
Protect Our Streams, Sharon Boies

Individuals:

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Antoinette Hudson, Gaithersburg, MD
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Jane Hill, Bethesda, MD
Janette Rosenbaum, Gaithersburg MD
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