

Senate Bill 353 – SUPPORT

**Senate Bill 353 – Environment - CAD Task Force
House Committee on Environment and Transportation
March 21, 2024**

My name is Ryan Bartkowiak. I live in the waterfront community of Stoney Beach in the Curtis Bay area of Northern Anne Arundel County. I have been a resident of the Pasadena and greater Baltimore area for the entirety of my life. I was raised between Pasadena, Dundalk/Edgemere, and Sunset Beach, just across Stoney Creek from where I currently reside. My family has always enjoyed living near the water, whether it be boating, fishing, or simply swimming off of the pier. I remember learning to swim in Stoney Creek and along the Patapsco River from the numerous times I went out on the water with friends and family. These are memories that are dear to me.

As someone who has lived either on the Patapsco or in the immediate area of the Patapsco for the past 27 years, I can remember the state of these waterways many years ago. I remember swimming anytime past approximately 6pm and every hair on your body turning dark brown. We used to jokingly call this time “root beer float hour” because the shorelines would be covered in a brown-ish foam. We were only kids and had no idea why the water would do that. We didn’t understand that swimming in a river near your house shouldn’t be like that. We didn’t understand that reckless environmental policies both by industries in the area and by the state of Maryland were the reason our creek had been polluted to that state.

Flashforward to now, and I can personally attest that the state of the river has improved much more than I can put into words. When walking on the waterfront portion of my community, I can see the bottom of the Patapsco for the first time in my life. I take my dog swimming in Stoney Creek repeatedly throughout the summer and enjoy my neighborhood’s beach, as do the many families that live here. It brings me joy seeing kids swimming in these waterways and enjoying the summer the same way that I did so many years ago. There is; however, one difference now. The phrase “root beer float hour” is no longer understood. Hair no longer turns that dark shade from swimming. I look at these phrases the same as the phrase “smoking or non-smoking” when you would walk into a restaurant: a distant memory of a time before we were concerned with our actions and the impact of those actions on those around us. A time before we understood that we, and I mean all residents who know and love this area, can make a difference. A time before we understood that we can do better and that we deserve better.

I cannot fairly state that I am an environmental expert; however, it does not take an expert to see issues that could arise if this Confined Aquatic Disposal (CAD) project begins. I’m old enough to remember bad hurricanes in this area and can personally attest to the rise and shift of tides during these storms. Furthermore, I have witnessed the tides in my neighborhood shift dramatically on a daily basis, with added emphasis if it so much as rains. When these tides rise and fall, the sand near the shoreline is disturbed, often removing footprints, driftwood, and (unfortunately) trash. If this much of a shift is happening on the shoreline, where the currents are relatively weak and regular, how much would be happening on the riverbottom in the middle of the channel? If these disposal sites are disturbed and the waste they contain is released into the waterway, what will result? More “root beer float”?

I take pride in my community and find it absolutely ridiculous that we even have to come together to keep this from happening. That is why I am in complete support of Senate Bill 353.

Any resident who can remember the disgusting state of this river only 20 years ago will share these same feelings. The importance of the oversight of an independent CAD task force, not over-populated with MD Port Administration representatives or their contractors, cannot be overstated. We residents have the right to know the environmental safety and impact, human health effects and risks, and the right to have our personal concerns addressed. The MPA should be ashamed that this CAD project has even made it this far and any resident of this area should be furious. We are owed the facts of this project as residents of this area and a fair chance to deny this project if it will affect our lives. I do not currently have children; however, I, for one, want my future children to be able to enjoy a cleaner Stoney Creek, a cleaner Patapsco, a cleaner Bay, and a cleaner Earth than I ever had. I cannot and will not stand by and watch this future be taken away.

It is important that the task force proposed in Senate Bill 353 is moved into legislation. It's important the task force has independent science experts, impacted citizens, and watermen in its membership. It's also important that the task force has meaningful bidirectional interactions with impacted communities in North Anne Arundel County and with our legislative representatives.

Sincerely,

Ryan F. Bartkowiak
Stoney Beach