

COALITION TO STOP STREAM DESTRUCTION

March 4, 2024

**Committee:** Environment and Transportation Committee

**Testimony on:** HOUSE BILL 1284 “Wetlands and Waterways Program – Stream Restoration Projects”

**Position:** FAVORABLE

**Hearing Date:** March 6, 2024

We, the undersigned seven organizations and thirty-six individuals, request a **FAVORABLE report on HB 1284**, “Stream Restoration Projects.”

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

Repealing an exemption for stream “restoration” projects from application fees for projects that impact a wetland or waterway is a common-sense action given our budget shortfalls.

It makes common sense to require that applications for a stream “restoration” permit include how the goals of biological uplift, ecological uplift, Chesapeake Bay water quality, forest conservation, and climate change will be attained.

The current Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) community engagement process is woefully inadequate. This bill would improve that process.

We agree with requiring MDE to maintain on its website more information for stream “restoration” projects.

Unlike MDE’s current credit award schema, it is essential that pollution reduction credits reflect reality. Thus, we agree with requiring MDE to adjust pollution reduction credits for stream “restorations.”

We agree with repealing an exemption for stream “restoration” projects under the Forest Conservation Act.

Most importantly, this bill would require applicants to have a plan a for addressing each of the potential unintended impacts associated with stream and floodplain restoration projects in the Chesapeake Bay Program’s “Unified Guide for Crediting Stream Floodplain Restoration Projects.”

Unlike so-called stream “restorations,” out-of-stream practices address the root cause, not the symptom, of stream erosion. Out-of-stream practices such as bioretentions and permeable pavement capture stormwater from impervious surfaces such as roads, roofs, and parking lots and from farm runoff before it fire-hoses into our streams.

We can protect our streams and save money by meeting stormwater control and mitigation regulations with cheaper and more effective out-of-stream practices compared to stream

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“restorations.” If this bill results in fewer stream “restorations” in favor of out-of-stream stormwater control projects, it would decrease the costs of meeting pollution reduction targets and hasten meeting the deadlines agreed to by Chesapeake Bay states.

For these reasons, we request **FAVORABLE report on HB 1284.**

Sincerely,

Organizations:

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Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Environmental Justice Ministry, Lee McNair  
Coalition to Stop Stream Destruction, Kenneth Bawer  
Gillis Environmental Education Inc., Julie Super  
Howard County Citizens Association, Brian England  
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Individuals:

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