



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 807

Natural Resources – Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Surveys

Date: February 21, 2024

Position: **Favorable**

To: House Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Doug Myers
Maryland Senior Scientist

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** HB 807 which acknowledges that there are additional survey methods such as satellite and Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROV) surveys for SAV that can augment the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) aerial survey currently required by multiple regulatory programs as the primary mechanism for determining potential impact to Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) from permitted activities in SAV Protection Zones.

As technology improves, new platforms allow for a much more geographically defined mapping of seagrasses than the aerial surveys allow. In fact, some of these methods are used to “ground truth” the aerial surveys because they can refine SAV polygons mapped by VIMS and verify seagrass species, especially in mixed-species beds. However, several regulatory programs require the use of the VIMS surveys for a 3-year period to identify the risk that a development project would impact SAV.

HB 807 gives Department of Natural Resources the authority to approve the use of these new methods to be used in conjunction with the aerial surveys as a more accurate method to identify and protect SAV in Maryland’s waters narrowly for the SAV Protection Zones. In time, and informed by the implementation of this bill, it is expected that these techniques, coupled with improving satellite data collection, could replace the current VIMS survey methodology. At that time, other regulatory programs that require the VIMS aerial survey method may need to be amended to require the new methods.

CBF urges the Committee’s FAVORABLE report on HB 807.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.