

February 20th 2024

HB 1284 Favorable

Chair and delegates

My name is Brian England, I represent the Howard County Citizens Association. We support HB 1248 because it will “protect and enhance the environment”.

My background is that I have worked closely with and hired experts over the last 20 plus years that are experienced in Stormwater Management. I was chair of the Columbia Association Watershed Committee and was on the committee that selected the vendor who wrote the **Columbia Watershed Management Plan**.

Over these years I have seen many so called “watershed restoration projects” implemented that have been counterproductive and fail to “protect and enhance the environment”. I have seen many that have cost millions of dollars. Millions of dollars have literally been washed down the drain.

Here are just a few examples where projects failed to “protect and enhance the environment” in Howard County

The MPEA New Country Lane project cost \$300k and the area still hadn't recovered after over a decade. The erosion gully is now twice as large and tons of soil has gone into the Middle Patuxent River.

Red Hill Branch project in Ellicott City failed dramatically, the CA Watershed Manager took me on tour of the site after the first storm and all the newly planted trees and shrubs along the stream had been washed away! In May 2021 the Center for Watershed Protection along with the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin reported in their study of the effectiveness of restorations said....

“The Red Hill Branch displayed consistently worse biological health than the control watersheds”

More recently in Columbia \$2,000,000 was spent on a project that destroyed acres of trees and vegetation, took dozens of truck loads of soil away all of which was effectively soaking up stormwater from 4 parking lot outfalls. The giant hole they dug quickly filled up with groundwater, now this site is a lake and it has totally failed to “protect and enhance the environment”.

A year ago I hired Richard Klein of Community & Environmental Defense Services (CEDs) to evaluate the effectiveness of 10 watershed best management practices (BMP's) in Columbia. He found that most projects were failing because of lack of maintenance. When this was pointed out to the county administrating the inspections

he was told there was a lack of staff to enforce the regulations. I find this ironic because just down the road from where I live they are spending \$400,000 on a bridge repair and an erosion gully repair! This project will remove half an acre of woodland and negatively affect the environment.

What needs to be done?

THREE THINGS

ONE All watershed projects must include ALL stakeholders working together.

1. All state and county departments including but not limited to, Bureau of Environmental Services, Office of Sustainability, Bureau of Highways, Bureau of Utilities and Special projects in the Department of Public Works and the Stormwater Management Division
2. Residents
3. Other property owners
4. ALL HOAs

TWO The objectives of projects should include a description of how the project will improve or align with each of the following measurable and quantifiable goals regarding.

1. Biological Uplift
2. Ecological Uplift
3. Chesapeake Bay Water Quality
4. Forests Conservation
5. Climate change

THREE A scientific panel approval that reviews compliance with ONE and TWO

HCCA is available to provide further input to assist the achievement of Maryland's Policy goal "to protect and enhance the environment".

Respectfully,
Brian England
Howard County Citizens Association