



**The Maryland Department of the Environment
Secretary Serena McIlwain**

Senate Bill 969

***Stream and Watershed Restoration – Stream Restoration Contractor Licensing and
Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Restoration and Funding (Whole Watershed Act)***

Position: Support
Committee: Environment and Transportation
Date: March 26, 2024
From: Jeremy D. Baker

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) **SUPPORTS** SB 969.

Bill Summary

Senate Bill 969 would establish the Whole Watershed Fund to incentivize certain restoration goals and create a framework for prioritizing projects to receive funding through the Department of Natural Resources. The bill would also establish the “Stream Restoration Contractors Licensing Board” (SRCLB), a formal licensure program for all stream restoration contractors.

Position Rationale

The Whole Watershed Fund provisions of SB 969 would establish a science-based framework, based on the Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response (CESR) report, for funding watershed restoration projects with the highest likelihood of success. The bill would ensure that State funds are prioritized for the most beneficial restoration projects based on achievable outcomes, and ensure project integrity is maintained during construction for all stream restoration projects.

Additionally, establishing the SRCLB would allow the MDE to ensure the stream restoration projects it authorizes are constructed according to approved plans and by qualified individuals. Stream restoration projects are intended to be a net benefit to Maryland’s wetland and waterway resources. To achieve this goal, stream restoration projects undergo careful consideration during planning, design, and permitting by individuals with specialized expertise in this area. The SRCLB would help ensure that only qualified contractors who have an understanding of the sensitive resources involved are completing these projects. Further, the Board would be able to hold contractors accountable for complying with MDE and other approvals and ensure that contractors have knowledge of best practices specific to stream restoration, which will be maintained through continuing education based on the latest science.

MDE requests the Committee to consider the staffing and resource needs to fully comply with the bill’s requirements. MDE appreciates the opportunity to continue working with the bill sponsors and leadership on this subject.

Accordingly, MDE asks for a **FAVORABLE** report for SB 969.

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