

Wednesday, February 25, 2026

TO: Marc Korman, Environment and Transportation Committee, and Committee Members
FROM: Humna Sharif, Climate Adaptation Manager, The Nature Conservancy; Michelle Dietz, Director of Government Relations, The Nature Conservancy
POSITION: Oppose HB 613 - Calvert and St. Mary's Counties - Living Shorelines and Nonstructural Shoreline Stabilization Measures

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) opposes HB 613 offered by Delegate T.Morgan. TNC is a global conservation organization working to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Maryland, our work focuses on delivering data-driven, on-the-ground solutions that secure clean water, air, and healthy, secure living environments for our human and natural communities today and in the generations to come.

Maryland's more than 7000 miles of shoreline along the Atlantic Ocean, and the Chesapeake and Coastal Bays is experiencing rapid sea level rise, and increased flooding because of it. Flooding impacts both people and our economy, with more than 100 communities at risk of chronic inundation by 2100. Conservative estimates indicate the costs to safeguard Maryland from chronic flooding by 2040 to be a minimum of \$27.4 billion¹. As Maryland looks ahead, the state will need to use a variety of tools to prevent catastrophic impacts due to sea level rise. Living shorelines are an integral part of Maryland's response to coastal flooding. Living shorelines protect communities, trap sediment, filter pollution, and provide important aquatic and terrestrial habitat.

The Nature Conservancy is supportive of Maryland's Living Shorelines Protection Act and the Living Shorelines Program. We understand the need to revisit permitting processes to remove redundancies and ensure there isn't undue burden on applicants. We believe, however, that HB 613 will create processes that complicate the implementation of the state's living shorelines laws and programs. This bill would create a waiver exemption process Calvert and St. Mary's county that would go through respective county Soil Districts instead of being reviewed by the Maryland Department of the Environment, or Maryland Department of Natural Resources as appropriate. Adding further complication to the process, HB 613 would also require Calvert and St. Mary's counties to review each other's shoreline stabilization projects before construction can begin.

¹ Center for Climate Integrity. (n.d.) *Climate Costs in 2040: Maryland*
<https://www.climatecosts2040.org/files/state/MD.pdf>

TNC recognizes living shorelines are not appropriate for every location and waivers should be considered for some sites. However, existing Maryland law already includes a waiver process for areas and geomorphological features where creation and maintenance of living shorelines is not feasible. HB 613 is duplicative and creates potentially conflicting guidance for Marylanders.

The Nature Conservancy supports the creation of living shorelines across our state, while at the same time, ensuring permitting processes are not overly burdensome or complicated. This legislation adds unnecessary process steps to the implementation of Maryland's Living Shorelines legislation.

Therefore, we urge an unfavorable report on HB 613.