



March 4, 2020

Chairman Kumar Barve
Environment and Transportation
House of Delegates

**House Bill 1306 – Natural Resources – SAV Protection Zones and Hydraulic Clam Dredges
(Aquatic Habitat Protection Act)**

Chairman Barve and distinguished committee members:

Thank you for your consideration of this important piece of legislation that requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to update the delineations of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) protection zones annually and allows zones to be designated when SAV has been mapped by aerial survey in the previous five years. Additionally, the legislation prohibits hydraulic clam dredging within 150 feet of an SAV protection zone and requires DNR to study the ecological effects of hydraulic clam dredging. The current law allows delineations of SAV protection zones every 3 years and aerial mapping within 3 years.

Submerged aquatic vegetation is a critical part of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem because they provide food and habitat for countless species. They also help keep the water clear and healthy by absorbing nutrients, trapping sediments, reducing erosion and adding oxygen. Finally, waterfowl feed on SAV throughout the year, while SAV seeds sustain populations of migratory waterfowl during the winter. Prohibiting hydraulic clam dredging within 150 feet of these critical and delicate protection zones is an important step forward in protecting the Chesapeake Bay and improving water quality. For these reasons, we support HB 1306 and urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Isaac Meyer on behalf of the Chesapeake BaySavers