

SB791_FAV_Preservation Maryland.pdf

Uploaded by: Eleanor Cowan

Position: FAV



PRESERVATION MARYLAND

March 9, 2022

RE: SB791 – Maryland the Beautiful Act

Chairman Guzzone and Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Preservation Maryland and our thousands of statewide supporters, I would like to offer our support of SB791, and our belief in the value of protecting open space and forests statewide.

Through our Smart Growth Maryland program, Preservation Maryland advocates for a more environmentally and economically sustainable future that creates opportunities for all Marylanders through better development patterns.

Support for the Maryland the Beautiful Act

Preservation Maryland supports SB791, which establishes a goal to protect Maryland's open space, works to make greenspace more equitable, empowers land conservation efforts, and seeks to improve the health of our state's forests.

SB791 would establish a land conservation goal for Maryland to protect 30% of its lands by 2030 (30x30) and 40% by 2040 (40x40). These goals are essential to making sure that open space and all its benefits are a part of Maryland's future for all Marylanders. Setting the goals is only the first step, and this legislation takes steps to ensure those goals are achieved by directing the Smart Growth Subcabinet and the Department of Natural Resources to work together to track the 30 x30 and 40x40 goals.

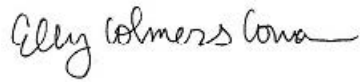
Importantly, SB791 also takes steps to guarantee that land conservation is more equitable by creating the "Greenspace Equity Program," which would provide a new source of grant funding to complete greenspace projects in underserved communities. This grant funding would support community-led projects including land acquisition, park development, community gardens, and greenspace stewardship.

Protecting our forests and setting a land conservation target that is meaningful and achievable are integral parts of our climate solution strategy. Forests in Maryland offset about 15% of gross emissions in our state, and when managed with conservation practices, farmland can also sequester a substantial amount of carbon. The Maryland the Beautiful Act would increase funding and set mandatory appropriations for the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Program to support stewardship efforts of private forest landowners and would establish a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) to provide bridge loans to help land trusts work more quickly and enable conservation to keep pace with development.

Over the last few years, where many people have felt isolated by the distancing measures needed to stay safe during an international pandemic, many turned to the natural world for support. Indeed, we have truly seen the value of open space during the weeks under quarantine and social distancing. With many sources of entertainment like movie theatres and museums closed, Marylanders overwhelmingly sought out open space and parks as essential destinations. Setting the land conservation goals in this legislation would be an important step in protecting those resources that have proven to be so important to the well-being and health, both physical and mental, of Marylanders.

We respectfully request a favorable report on SB791 and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elly Colmers Cowan".

Elly Colmers Cowan
Director of Government Relations

SB 791_CBF SUPPORT.pdf

Uploaded by: Erik Fisher

Position: FAV



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

Senate Bill 791

Natural Resources - Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals and Programs
(Maryland the Beautiful Act)

Date: March 9, 2022

Position: Support

To: Budget & Taxation Committee

From: Erik Fisher, AICP, MD Land Use Planner

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** SB 791, which would bolster coordination and investment in land conservation across Maryland to help achieve community and clean water goals. If adopted, this bill will provide key tools and focus to increase the pace and equity of land conservation through revolving gap funding, coordinated planning, and dedicated investment in underserved communities.

Conserving land protects clean water and improves the health and well-being of Maryland residents.

Maryland's forests and farmlands are natural filters for our waterways that provide clean drinking water, seafood, recreation, and tourism. Forests soak up polluted runoff and capture excess nitrogen from the air before it can reach local rivers and streams. Agricultural operations that improve soil quality, raise pastured meat, or grow crops like hay can drive down pollution loads while supplying healthy, nutritious food. These benefits are magnified when land is protected, as habitats are allowed to mature into high-functioning environmental features and landowners have access to capital that can further improve their land.

Action is needed to keep pace with Maryland's conservation commitments.

Maryland is the fifth most densely populated state in the nation, and its population continues to increase. Under the interstate Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, Maryland has committed to help restore 235,000 acres of wetlands and protect more than 2 million acres of high-value forest and farmland by 2025. This goal has not yet been achieved. Looking ahead, the state will need to set even more robust targets to ensure that land conservation keeps pace with land development.

SB 791 fills persistent and inequitable gaps in Maryland's land conservation strategy.

- Investments in underserved communities are sorely needed to correct persistent imbalances in conservation spending and help stop the flooding and contamination often borne by communities in highly-developed local watersheds.
- The bill's threshold goals affirm Maryland's promise to keep the pace of land conservation in step with development pressure.
- The 5-year plan will improve the efficiency of existing preservation programs, including Program Open Space, MALPF, Rural Legacy, investments by local governments and dozens of regional land trusts.
- Revolving gap funding will make local land trusts nimbler and more responsive for landowners, increasing the pace and quality of lands conserved.

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403
Phone (410) 268-8816 • Fax (410) 280-3513

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on SB 791. For more information, please contact Robin Jessica Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney at rclark@cbf.org and 443.995.8753.

SB 791 Senate B&T testimony 3-9-22 GA.pdf

Uploaded by: gary allen

Position: FAV



March 9, 2022

To: Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

From: *Gary Allen, President, Maryland Forestry Foundation*

Re: Support of SB 791 Maryland the Beautiful act

Mr. Chairman and members My name is Gary G Allen, President, Maryland Forestry Foundation. We would like to thank Senator Elfreth for advancing this bill. I would like to briefly focus your attention on the Bills support for the Mel Nolan Woodland Incentive fund.

The Mel Nolan Woodland Incentive Fund is the state's oldest landowner cost share program. It was created in 1988 with funding derived from a capped amount from the state's land transfer tax based on sale of 100% wooded property. The CAP is \$200,000. It has never been adjusted in 33 years.

Why add funds?

Since creation of the fund over half the counties have never contributed meaning in a sense no woodland land sales occurred there??? This is a significant handicap because of the application of the 100% woodland definition counts existing structures and access roads as mitigating circumstances. Plus, it's easier for local accessors to classify sales as Ag land and then not have to deal with woodland assessment issues

SB 791 avoids a debate over current tax policy and land classification challenges to provide needed resources for the Mel fund to address the authorized uses of the fund.

What will additional funds be used for?

Present law allows 18 program needs to be addressed. SUCH AS:

To offset costs to develop and approve forest management plans and forest conservation plans, and support landowner outreach to encourage them

To support forest health emergency management and programs maintain forest health on both public and privately owned forest lands,

Prevent degradation of forest lands,

Support urban and community forestry programs,

Increase the number communities with urban tree canopy goals

Facilitate tree planting goals

Assist in the development of carbon credit programs,
forest mitigation banking and
clean water credit programs.

Clearly, the breath of ambition set by these objectives far exceeds the current funding available. We ask you favorable support of SB 791 with its annual commitment to the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund.

Gary G Allen
President, Maryland Forestry Foundation

BaltimoreCounty_FAV_SB0791.pdf

Uploaded by: Joel Beller

Position: FAV



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.
County Executive

JOEL N. BELLER
Acting Director of Government Affairs

JOSHUA M. GREENBERG
Associate Director of Government Affairs

MIA R. GOGEL
Associate Director of Government Affairs

BILL NO.: **SB 791**

TITLE: **Natural Resources - Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals and Programs (Maryland the Beautiful Act)**

SPONSOR: **Senator Elfreth**

COMMITTEE: **Budget and Taxation**

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: **March 9, 2022**

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 791 - Natural Resources - Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals and Programs (Maryland the Beautiful Act). This legislation would set conservation goals for State and Local land and establishes funding to support local conservation efforts.

The ability to enjoy outdoor parks and open space is a fundamental right of every Maryland resident. Land conservation brings innumerable benefits to communities by enhancing green spaces in underserved areas, and generally encouraging Marylanders to engage in outdoor recreational activity. This is why since taking office, Baltimore County Executive John Olszewski has aggressively pursued the acquisition of open space across the County, prioritizing accessibility of parks and recreational space for all communities.

Senate Bill 791 lays a clear path forward for local land conservation through the Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Program, which would finance conservation projects when access to Program Open Space funding proves difficult. The bill's ambitious conservation goals would also further the County's efforts to preserve and protect green spaces for residents across the County and State to enjoy.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on Senate Bill 791. For more information, please contact Joel Beller, Acting Director of Government Affairs at jbeller@baltimorecountymd.gov.

FM- Support -SB 791 -Maryland the Beautiful Act.pd

Uploaded by: Josh Hastings

Position: FAV



FOREVER
MARYLAND

Enhancing and Advancing Land Conservation

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Josh Hastings
Program & Policy Director
Dina Lansinger
Keep Maryland Beautiful Grants Coordinator

Date: March 7, 2022
Bill Number: **SB 791 - Natural Resources - Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals and Programs (Maryland the Beautiful Act)**
Committee: Senate – Budget & Tax
Position: Support

Forever Maryland supports, SB 791 - Natural Resources - Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals and Programs (Maryland the Beautiful Act) for the purpose of setting aside a new state land preservation goal, creating two new programs to allow for greater greenspace conservation and access, and for the purpose of enhancing sustainable forestry and better managed forests.

The Maryland the Beautiful Act would create a new statewide conservation goal of 30% of Maryland land by 2030 and 40% of Maryland lands by 2040.

This bill would also create a Greenspace Equity Program where local land trusts, operating within specific areas of need, would be able to utilize grant funds for greenspace purposes, including: community gardens, community parks and woodlands, new trails, urban farms, or other open space uses. The Department of Natural Resources would create a Greenspace Equity Board to help make determinations for grant awards and the program is proposed to be funded at \$3 million within the first year and \$5 million annually, thereafter.

Additionally, this bill would create a Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Program and have the program capitalized at \$10 million. This one-time payment would set up a fund, administered by the Maryland Environmental Trust or a qualified land trust support organization, to help local land trusts rapidly secure a property to accelerate private land conservation. After the land is eased, the funds would be paid back to the revolving loan fund program.

Lastly, this bill would allocate \$1 million annually towards the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund. The purpose of this fund is to support sustainable forestry and better forestland management.

Forever Maryland promotes and supports the land and water conservation community, through education, advocacy, and outreach, to permanently protect working landscapes and healthy ecosystems for all. If further information is requested, please contact the organization's Program and Policy Director, Josh Hastings, at 410-251-5268 or Josh@ForeverMaryland.org.

We respectfully request a favorable report.

FOREVER MARYLAND

2331 Rock Spring Road | Forest Hill, MD 21050 | 410-251-5268 | www.ForeverMaryland.org

SB791_MDSierraClub_fav 9March2022.pdf

Uploaded by: Josh Tulkin

Position: FAV



P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committees: Budget and Taxation; Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
Testimony on: SB 791 “Natural Resources – Land Conservation – Establishment of Goals and Programs (Maryland the Beautiful Act)”
Position: Support
Hearing Date: March 9, 2022

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club strongly supports SB 791. This bill sets a goal of protecting 30% of Maryland’s lands by 2030, and 40% by 2040.

The bill has three main components. First, it would establish the Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Program to provide loans to certain land trusts to purchase land for conservation purposes, establish an advisory committee to review and make recommendations on loan applications, and require the Governor to include \$10,000,000 in the fiscal year 2024 budget for the associated fund. Second, the bill would establish the Greenspace Equity Program to fund land trusts to promote community green spaces in urban areas. These spaces in underserved communities could take the form of urban and pocket parks, community woodlands, trails, community gardens, and urban farms. These spaces would enhance public health and livability by improving air quality and providing places to socialize and trails to use for multimodal transportation or exercise. Third, the bill would also increase funding for the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund, which supports preservation of wooded areas on private lands.

American naturalist, E. O. Wilson, who has been called “the father of biodiversity,” calls for widespread conservation of natural lands and waters worldwide. In his book “Half Earth” he explains that to save ourselves, we must preserve the biodiversity of all creatures and to do this, we must protect their habitat. In his book he calls for saving 50% of all lands and waters.¹ This book has started an international movement to conserve 30% of the earth’s land and waters by 2030.

President Biden has taken his message to task and put forth an initiative to preserve 30% of all lands and waters in the United States. This bill goes one step further and puts into place the process and the funding to make this happen in Maryland and then go beyond to a higher goal of 40% land preserved, which is even closer to E. O. Wilson’s recommendation. Importantly, we note, this bill allows land placed in agricultural preservation programs to count towards the percentages of preserved land. While this land will not be developed in the traditional sense, its conservation value is not the same as a natural area that is habitat for endangered species. Even with those differences in mind, this bill would preserve many natural areas of importance and we should act now to save them.

¹ Wilson, E.O. *Half Earth* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016).

The goals set out in this bill not only help preserve biodiversity but also work towards mitigating the impacts of climate change. Leaving a natural area intact, especially a mature forest, will allow that area to continue to sequester carbon, which is vital to mitigating climate change.

SB 791 sets and supports important preservation goals in a timely and practical way to conserve natural areas that are critical to both conservation and climate goals. We strongly urge a favorable report.

Lily Fountain
Chair, Natural Places Committee
Lily.Fountain@MDSierra.org

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org

SB0791-BT_MACo_SUP.pdf

Uploaded by: Kevin Kinnally

Position: FAV



Senate Bill 791

*Natural Resources - Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals and Programs
(Maryland the Beautiful Act)*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Budget and Taxation and Education, Health,
and Environmental Affairs Committees

Date: March 9, 2022

From: Dominic J. Butchko and Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 791. The bill would establish programs meant to accelerate and improve park land acquisition and encourage the development of community green spaces.

The State of Maryland and its counties have been immensely successful at expanding parks lands and developing those spaces into world-class recreation venues. Maryland's prioritization of public recreational spaces has advanced numerous health and economic benefits, a central element in our state's "quality of life" proposition.

The proposed Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Program (LLTRLP) and the Greenspace Equity Program (GEP) will provide local governments with new resources to make their communities more sustainable, livable, and healthy. The LLTRLP is designed to provide low-interest financing to local land trusts trying to acquire new space, while the GEP will provide technical assistance and grants to help develop greenspaces. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, both state and local greenspaces were filled, often to capacity, as residents sought some form of healthy and safe recreation - it has become abundantly clear that these spaces offer immense value to neighborhoods across the state.

The pandemic has highlighted how critical these spaces can be to a healthy and vibrant community. SB 791 would provide county governments with additional resources to expand park sizes and greenspaces. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to give SB 791 a **FAVORABLE** report.

SB 791 Maryland the Beautiful -- FAVORABLE .pdf

Uploaded by: KIMBERLY EGAN

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
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P.O. Box 606 | Lisbon, Maryland 21797
www.mdhorsecouncil.org

One Common Bond: The Horse
One Common Voice: The Horse Council

Testimony of the Maryland Horse Council on SB 791

Natural Resources – Land Conservation – Establishment of Goals and Programs (Maryland the Beautiful Act) – **FAVORABLE**

The Maryland Horse Council (MHC) is a membership-based trade association that represents the state-wide horse industry in Maryland. Our members include horse farms; horse related businesses; equestrian competitors; trainers; individual enthusiasts; equine-assisted therapy programs; and breed, interest, and discipline associations. We represent over 30,000 Marylanders who make their living with horses, or who just own and love them.

The horse industry overall has a \$2.4 billion impact on Maryland. There are twice as many horses per square mile in Maryland than there are in Virginia, Kentucky, California, or Texas. The Maryland horse industry generates over \$89 million in tax revenue every year and supports at least 28,000 industry jobs. Equine enthusiasts spend over \$1 billion a year on their passion.

Conservation Goals and Land Trust Funding: MHC supports SB 791 because conserved open space is critically important to our industry. Horse farms comprise 10 percent of all land in Maryland and 25 percent of the state's total agricultural land. Of the approximately 705,000 acres in horse farms, 88,000 of them are in permanent preservation.

Horse farms are, in turn, critically important to the State's efforts to mitigate the worst effects of climate change. Well-maintained pastures are second only to healthy forest with respect to nutrient run-off control, carbon fixing, and water filtration. A properly managed pasture retains at least 70 percent of its groundcover year-round, unlike croplands which lie fallow part of the time and have no stabilizing roots to hold the topsoil in place, unless the farmer elects to plant cover crops.¹

¹ See Rebecca C. Bott, et al. *Production and Environmental Implications of Equine Grazing*, JOURNAL OF EQUINE VETERINARY SCIENCE 33 (2013): 1032.



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As a result, SB 791's overall goal of preserving 40 percent of all land in Maryland by 2040 will benefit the horse industry immensely, and we are in favor of any support the State can offer those of our local land trusts that otherwise have difficulty accessing open space preservation funds.

Greenspace Equity Goals: MHC also supports SB 791 because our industry is committed to expanding outdoor recreational opportunities to all populations of Marylanders, including low-income Marylanders, those who lack access to a car, and Marylanders with disabilities.

The proposed Greenspace Equity Board mission to increase community greenspaces in underserved areas, including greenspaces that comprise trails, dovetails nicely with our industry's equity goals. Most riders are recreational trail riders, and recreational trail riding alone supports ~5,000 jobs and adds \$268 million in value to the State's economy. The total economic impact of recreational riding in Maryland is \$438 million in 2022 dollars.

Giving more Marylanders the opportunity to engage in recreational trail riding will benefit our industry, the health and welfare of Marylanders, and the state coffers, all at the same time.

We urge the committee to give SB 791 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

THE MARYLAND HORSE COUNCIL

(844) MDHORSE (844-634-6773)

Info@mdhorsecouncil.org

SB 791 Maryland the Beautiful -- FAVORABLE .pdf

Uploaded by: KIMBERLY EGAN

Position: FAV



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Uploaded by: KIMBERLY EGAN

Position: FAV



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Uploaded by: KIMBERLY EGAN

Position: FAV



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Respectfully submitted,

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(844) MDHORSE (844-634-6773)

Info@mdhorsecouncil.org

SB 791 Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals

Uploaded by: Michelle Dietz

Position: FAV

Wednesday, March 9, 2022

TO: Senator Guy Guzzone, Chair of Budget and Taxation Committee; and Senator Paul Pinsky, Chair of Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee and Committee Members

FROM: Michelle Dietz, The Nature Conservancy, Director of Government Relations; and Cait Kerr, The Nature Conservancy, Climate and Conservation Policy Analyst

POSITION: Support SB 791 - Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals and Programs (Maryland the Beautiful Act)

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports SB 791 offered by Senator Elfreth. 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 science-based, on-the-ground solutions that secure clean water and healthy living environments for our communities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing resilience in the face of a changing climate. We are dedicated to a future where people and nature thrive together.

TNC is part of a global effort to preserve the world's remaining wild and near-natural habitats, with the goal of protecting 30 percent of the planet by 2030. SB 791 sets state-wide land conservation goals for Maryland, aiming to protect 30% of lands by 2030 and 40% of lands by 2040. These goals will ensure that open space will be accessible and available for current and future generations of Marylanders. This bill also prioritizes equity through a new Greenspace Equity grant program. This grant program invests in land acquisition, stewardship and park development projects in geographies across the state that currently lack access to green spaces. This grant program will be community-led, ensuring projects funded are developed to best meet the needs of each community.

There are nearly 150,000 private and family forest owners in Maryland, amounting to 1.2 million acres of forested lands. These forests supply massive clean air and water benefits, provide habitat to a variety of species and are critical to the health of Maryland communities and the state's economy. TNC recognizes these lands' value and we are working in partnership with the American Forest Foundation to pilot the Family Forest Carbon Program. This program allows small family landowners to access carbon markets and provide financial incentives to implement conservation practices that sequester carbon and protect clean water. We are glad to see that SB 791 also values these lands through establishing additional investments in the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund. As outlined in the bill, these funds are used to support stewardship on these privately owned lands, which are vital for maintaining biodiversity in Maryland. This bill will also create funding mechanisms for private land trusts to better compete in real estate markets. TNC uses a similar process as an organization - the Land Protection Fund - to prioritize and fund land acquisitions across our North America program. Creating a Revolving Loan Fund through SB 791 would enable private land trusts, that may not be able to purchase lands without financial assistance, to make large land acquisitions in Maryland; therefore, it will preserve lands that will benefit people and nature for years to come.

Each year, the United States loses an area the size of Delaware to development and unsustainable use. This land and biodiversity loss can often be irreversible. Here in Maryland, the lands and waters that surround us are

precious resources. They are an invaluable part of our heritage, our economy, and our identity. Climate change and a wide range of human activities are impacting habitats at an unprecedented and unsustainable rate. The precipitous decline in biodiversity is one of our greatest challenges; it is jeopardizing food and water supplies and undermining global, social and economic stability. Economists have estimated that nature contributes trillions of dollars to the global economy each year, in the form of ecosystem services such as pollination and water filtration and storage. By passing the Maryland the Beautiful Act, we can take marked steps to reverse biodiversity loss in our state in order to create a future where natural places can support the most vulnerable species and can continue to provide valuable ecosystem services on which state residents depend.

TNC commends Senator Elfreth for advancing legislation aimed at protecting habitats to maintain Maryland's biodiversity and preserving treasured ecosystem services as well as nature's intrinsic cultural and physical values.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report on SB 791.

MD Catholic Conference_FAV_SB0791.pdf

Uploaded by: MJ Kraska

Position: FAV



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

March 9th, 2022

SB 791

Natural Resources - Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals and Programs (Maryland the Beautiful Act)

Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

Position: Support

The Maryland Catholic Conference (“Conference”) represents the public policy interests of the three Roman Catholic (arch) dioceses serving Maryland: the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington.

Senate Bill 791 establishes certain goals and programs related to land conservation; establishing the Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Program to provide loans to certain land trusts to purchase land for conservation purposes; establishing a Land Preservation Rapid Response Advisory Committee to review loan applications and make recommendations on which projects to fund; establishing the Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Fund; requiring the Governor to include \$10,000,000 in the fiscal year 2024 budget bill for the Fund.

In his encyclical, *On Care for Our Common Home (Laudato Si')*, Pope Francis tells us, “Whenever these questions are raised, some react by accusing others of irrationally attempting to stand in the way of progress and human development. But we need to grow in the conviction that a decrease in the pace of production and consumption can at times give rise to another form of progress and development. Efforts to promote a sustainable use of natural resources are not a waste of money, but rather an investment capable of providing other economic benefits in the medium term... We know how unsustainable is the behavior of those who constantly consume and destroy, while others are not yet able to live in a way worthy of their human dignity”.

Senate Bill 791 aims to address the much needed investment in conservation policies and projects to be set to sustain and achieve a healthy global ecosystem. We encourage discussion around the components and goals outlined in this legislation and hope they are a catalyst for positive ecological outcomes.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 791.

SB 791_Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home_FAV.

Uploaded by: Robert Simon

Position: FAV



Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home

Responding to the cry of the Earth
and the cry of the poor.

Hearing before the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Maryland General Assembly
March 9, 2022

Statement of Support (FAVORABLE) of Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home on SB 791, Maryland the Beautiful Act

Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home (MCCH) is a lay-led organization of Catholics from parishes in the three Catholic dioceses in Maryland: the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington. It engages in education about, and advocacy based on, the teachings of the Catholic Church relating to care for creation. MCCH is a voice for the understanding of Catholic social teaching held by a wide array of Maryland Catholics, but should be distinguished from the Maryland Catholic Conference, which represents the public policy interests of the bishops who lead these three dioceses.

MCCH would like to express its strong support for passage of Senate Bill 791, the Maryland the Beautiful Act. As Catholics, we see care for God's creation as an integral part of our faith. Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical, entitled *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home** contains an entire chapter, "The Gospel of Creation," that highlights the ways in which the natural world is a channel for experiencing God: "From panoramic vistas to the tiniest living form, nature is a constant source of wonder and awe. It is also a continuing revelation of the divine." (p.85) Pope Francis decries the loss of landscapes that are integral to biodiversity, framing it in terms of both intergenerational justice and spirituality: "Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us." (p.33) He also notes the disparity in which underserved communities, in particular, lack "access to places of particular beauty": "Frequently, we find beautiful and carefully manicured green spaces in so-called 'safer' areas of cities, but not in the more hidden areas where the disposable of society live." (p.45) For these reasons he states that "in both urban and rural settings, it is helpful to set aside some places which can be preserved and protected from constant changes brought by human intervention." (p.151)

Senate Bill 791 contains provisions that are responsive to all of these themes of Pope Francis's teachings. It sets statewide goals for conservation that ensure that, as Maryland continues to grow and develop, it also continues to preserve and protect open space for nature and for the enjoyment of people now and into the future. It creates a "Greenspace Equity Program" that specifically enables greenspace projects in underserved communities. And it provides for permanent funding for incentives to promote the stewardship of privately owned forestland in Maryland—lands that provide essential habitat for the wildlife and birds that are crucial to the integrity of Maryland ecosystems. By engaging the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors, Senate Bill 791 encourages cooperation and solidarity in its efforts to promote the conservation of Maryland's natural resources and the preservation of healthy ecosystems for the benefit of all Marylanders.

Over 500 Catholics, from 30 Catholic parishes across Maryland and 33 of Maryland's 47 Senatorial Districts, have signed MCCH's petition in support of Senate Bill 791. This bill has also drawn support from a wide coalition of faith communities in Maryland, with whom we are proud to stand.

Thank you for your consideration of our views and our respectful request for a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 791.

* The English text of the encyclical, to which the paragraph numbers in the following parentheses refer, can be found at: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_eniclica-laudato-si.html.

SB791- National Aquarium- FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Ryan Fredriksson

Position: FAV



Date: March 9, 2022

Bill: SB 791- Natural Resources - Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals and Programs (Maryland the Beautiful Act)

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Guzzone and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable report for **SB 791- Natural Resources - Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals and Programs (Maryland the Beautiful Act)**, which sets a land conservation goal for Maryland to conserve 30% of state lands by 2030 and 40% by 2040.

Nature is necessary for human existence, yet human activities are significantly harming our life support systems. Human activities are causing biodiversity – diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems – to decline at an unprecedented rate, with an estimated 1 million species facing extinction in the coming decades¹. In terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems, the primary driver is land-use change. The global trend holds across Maryland, home to diverse habitats for birds, plants and wildlife as well as people. Our state’s landscape has changed dramatically over the past century. Hundreds of thousands of acres of forestland serving as important habitat for wildlife have been developed. More than 500 species and subspecies of plants and animals are recognized in Maryland’s protected species regulations; the state’s current Wildlife Action Plan notes that many other species are declining and may soon warrant listing. Currently, 39 of these species are listed as threatened or endangered according to the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

In short, we must build on existing conservation and accelerate the pace, and as Maryland continues to grow, we must ensure that all Marylanders are able to enjoy and benefit from nature. The Maryland the Beautiful Act is a strong step forward towards ensuring that nature and people can thrive. This legislation will improve land conservation throughout the state, by setting achievable goals and establishing clear mechanisms for implementation, including increased incentives for conservation on private land and a ‘ Greenspace Equity Program ’ to support community-led projects. Building greenspace, stewardship of forests, and other land conservation activities benefit water quality as well as wetland and coastal ecosystems.

Looking ahead, the state should also outline similar goals for conservation of its waters, as recently recommended by the State Park Investment Commission and to be consistent with the country’s national conservation goal established in 2021², to conserve, connect and restore 30% of our lands and waters by 2030 for the sake of our economy, health and well-being.

We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 791.

Contact:

Ryan Fredriksson

Vice President, Government Affairs

410-385-8276

rfredriksson@aquarium.org

¹ IPBES (2019): Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. E. S. Brondizio, J. Settele, S. Díaz, and H. T. Ngo (editors). IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany. 1148 pages. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3831673>

² Presidential Executive Order 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/27/executive-order-on-tackling-the-climate-crisis-at-home-and-abroad/>

SB 791_ESLC Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Sara Ramotnik

Position: FAV



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March 8, 2022

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee
Maryland State Senate
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Jim Rosapepe
Vice Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee
Maryland State Senate
101 James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Eastern Shore Land Conservancy testimony for Maryland the Beautiful Act (SB 791)
- Favorable**

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe and members of the committee,

Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC) supports SB 791- Natural Resources - Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals and Programs, also popularly known as the Maryland the Beautiful Act, and urges a favorable report on the legislation sponsored by Senator Elfreth. Once passed, this legislation will set a statewide conservation goal, empower conservation efforts and make greenspace more equitable.

Maryland is often referred to as “America in miniature” due to its diverse landscape, from the mountains in the western region to the Atlantic Ocean along the coast of the Eastern Shore. Our state relies heavily on agriculture as it is the largest commercial industry in the state and employs around 350,000 people and contributes \$8.25 billion annually to the economy according to the Maryland Manual On-Line. To ensure that our working lands will continue to operate far into the future, conservation is key.

As a result of conservation programs funded by the real estate transfer tax, we have made great progress on land conservation statewide and have conserved over 1,800,000 acres statewide. Yet, development remains a threat to our working lands, forests and open space. Setting a statewide conservation goal of 30 percent by 2030 and 40 percent by 2040 will better guide our state’s conservation efforts over the course of the next two decades. This legislation outlines tools of how we are to accomplish this goal, including the creation of a revolving loan fund appropriated at \$10 million. This revolving loan fund enables conservation organizations to quickly access a large amount of capital they might not have and then protect parcels of land that might otherwise have been developed.

Although there have been significant investments in land conservation over the years, many communities still lack greenspace. This legislation establishes the Greenspace Equity Program which will provide funding to private land trusts and local governments to complete greenspace projects in underserved communities. Creating this fund will mitigate the negative effects caused to communities and local economies due to a lack of greenspace.

Passing the Maryland the Beautiful Act will ensure our working lands and open spaces will be preserved for the years to come and set our state as a leader in conservation.

If you have any questions, we are happy to provide support to members of the committee. Please reach out to ESLC's policy manager Sara Ramotnik at sramotnik@eslc.org.

We request a favorable report on SB 791 and thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SK Kline', written in a cursive style.

Steven K. Kline
President
Eastern Shore Land Conservancy

SB791_Elfreth_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Elfreth

Position: FAV

SENATOR SARAH ELFRETH
Legislative District 30
Anne Arundel County

Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Education, Business and Administration

Chair, Pensions

Senate Chair

Joint Committee on Administrative,
Executive, and Legislative Review

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



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Sarah.Elfreth@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 9, 2022

Testimony in Favor of SB791
Natural Resources - Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals and Programs
(Maryland the Beautiful Act)

Chairman Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe, & members of the Budget and Taxation Committee,

I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 791, legislation to set Maryland on a path to conserve 30% State land by 2030 and 40% of State land by 2040 by, in part, establishing various programs to ensure that we can effectively reach these critical land preservation goals.

Within months of taking office, the Biden Administration implemented the “America the Beautiful” initiative to preserve 30% of our nation’s land by 2030 (30 x 30). Since the enactment of that initiative, other States (California, Nevada, Hawaii, South Carolina, New York, Maine, and Michigan) have introduced legislation or made commitments to reach 30 x 30. This legislation will take Maryland further by also setting a 40 x 40 goal as well.

The good news is that Maryland is well on its way to reaching the 30 x 30 goal with roughly 28% of our State lands already preserved – in large part due to the actions taken by this body to create renowned conservation programs such as Program Open Space and the Maryland Agriculture Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF). This legislation will enact additional, targeted funding sources to support conservation efforts.

In order to provide the funding necessary to meet the 30x30 and 40x40 goals, this legislation will:

1. Create a \$10M Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Program to provide financial support to land trusts to help facilitate the purchase and conservation of property throughout the State.
2. Increase funding to the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives and Fellowship Fund from \$50,000 to \$1M to expand on the important work the Mel Noland Fund supports in the stewardship of our forestland.

SB791 will empower the Smart Growth Subcabinet to oversee reaching 30x30 and 40x40 by requiring the Subcabinet to:

1. Coordinate with different levels of government and NGOs;
2. Develop and publish a plan that meets the goals outlined in the bill and require updates as needed;
3. Submit additional reports to the appropriate Committees on the State’s progress in reaching the goals in the bill.

This legislation will also ensure greater equity in land conserved and open to more Marylanders efforts by:

1. Creating the Greenspace Equity Fund, with a \$3M appropriate in FY24 and \$5M each year thereafter.
2. Authorize the fund to be used to preserve, create, and enhance community greenspaces in overburdened areas of the State, using the lens established in last year’s Tree Solutions Now Act, such as community gardens, urban farms, and trails.

Once again I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 791 to ensure that Maryland remains a nationwide leader in conservation efforts and provides the necessary financial support to conserve additional lands.

Testimony.MdBeautiful.NeighborSpace.rev.pdf

Uploaded by: Barbara Hopkins

Position: FWA

9 March 2022

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair, Budget & Taxation Committee
Maryland State Senate
122 James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable James Rosapepe
Vice Chair, Budget & Taxation Committee
Maryland State Senate
122 James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Maryland the Beautiful Act (HB 1031 / SB 791) FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

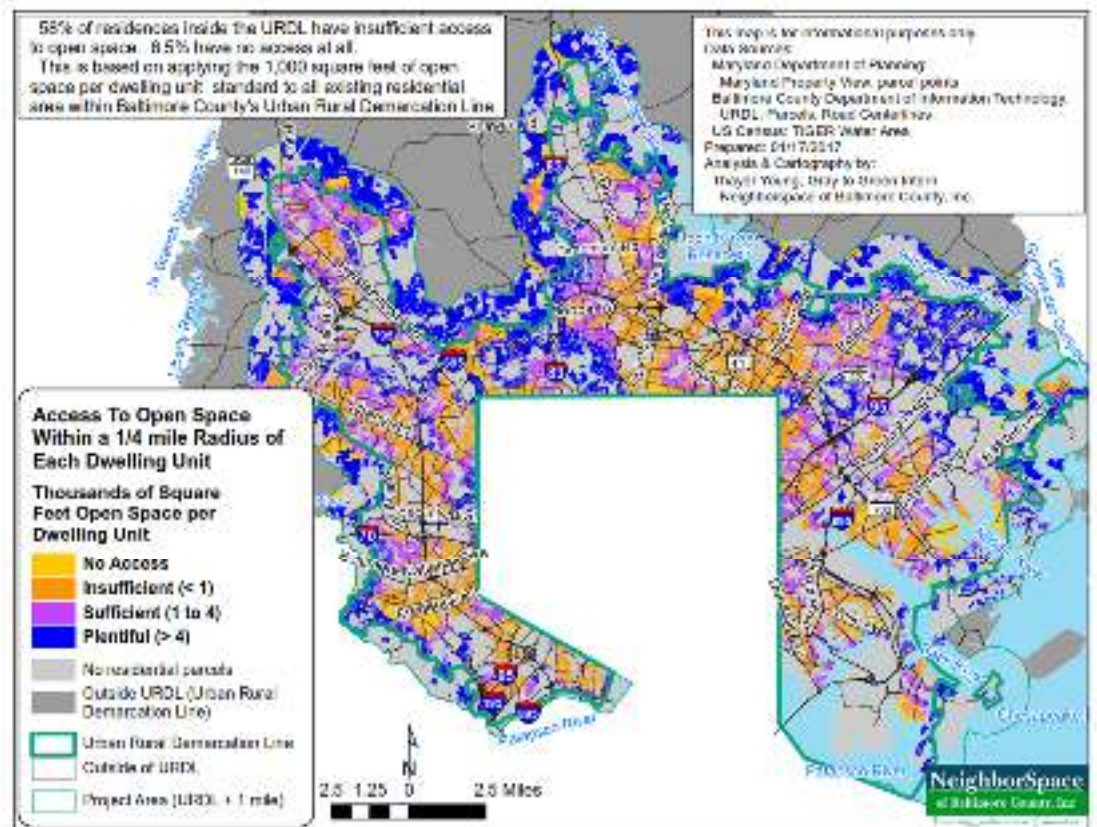
Dear Chairman Guzzone and Vice Chairman Rosapepe:

We are writing to support the ***Maryland the Beautiful Act with amendments***. I would like to comment on several provisions and amendments that are important to our work as an urban land trust in Baltimore County.

1. THE CHALLENGE: *Parks are inaccessible by car AND on foot to a large swath of the population.*

Nationally, 50% of the population is too old, too young, too disabled, or too poor to get in a car and drive to a park. This heightens the importance of being able to get there on foot. But in many places in Baltimore County, that's not possible. ***Sixty-five percent of residences lack access to adequate open space within a quarter mile walk***, as shown at right.

This is the challenge that NeighborSpace seeks to address as an urban land trust. Currently, we've protected over 100 acres, spanning 21 sites inside Baltimore County's Urban Rural Demarcation Line (URDL), about 1/3 of which are improved with parks, gardens, or trails.



2. THE OPPORTUNITY: *The Maryland the Beautiful Act*

In spite of our successes, our efforts have barely addressed the challenge. A big reason is the cost of urban land and the lack of funding to conserve it. A recent report by the Lincoln Institute for Land Policy, a respected international land use

think tank, bears this out. It notes that “[t]he majority of ... resources and funding related to land conservation are dedicated to rural and large landscape conservation ...”¹ The Act would help to address this gap.

3. **AMENDMENTS:** Make nonprofits who are not land trusts eligible only as land trust partners and broaden the definition of “underserved community.”

Those of us doing urban land conservation work are requesting several amendments. I’d like to comment on two:

- (i) **Making nonprofits who are not land trusts eligible only as land trust partners.** The rationale is:
 - a. Land Trusts are nonprofits with specialized expertise in land acquisition and perpetual stewardship that other types of nonprofits lack; they are governed by standards that are inapplicable to other types of nonprofits. Land transactions are inherently complex. Only land trusts have land conservation in perpetuity as a central mission.² In addition, land trusts are held to high standards by the national Land Trust Alliance (LTA), the Md. Environmental Trust (MET), and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to ensure the sanctity of this stewardship and the transactions themselves. These same standards are not applicable to other types of nonprofits. Among the standards imposed by the IRS, for example, is that a land trust be able to demonstrate that it has the resources to defend the conservation values of the land it protects, e.g., the resources to prosecute encroachments. NeighborSpace currently meets this requirement by purchasing conservation defense insurance, which is not available for purchase in public markets and is only available to land trusts through a captive insurance company.
 - b. There is at least a chance that a large nonprofit like a college or university would outcompete a much smaller, urban land trust.
 - c. Finally, Rural Legacy, the land conservation program that this program is meant to complement, does not allow nonprofits who are not land trusts to participate.
- (ii) **Broadening the definition of “underserved community.”** The rationale here is that the current definition equates “underserved” with “redlined.” The majority of inner suburbs in the U.S., including those in Baltimore County, were NOT redlined because they did not exist when the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) was created. Rather, funds flowing from the FHA fueled their development. They are old now, devoid of open space, and home to aging and minority populations. A more inclusive definition would, therefore, focus on the presence of “[vulnerable populations](#),” as defined by the Centers for Disease Control.
- (iii) **Ensuring that 75% of the funds are spent on acquiring new land.** New, land protected in perpetuity should be the focus here. There are lots of funding programs that will help nonprofits who aren’t land trusts do greening projects, which are certainly important. **But there is no source of funding currently targeting the permanent protection of urban land.**

Thank you for your consideration. I have attached a short one-pager with specific suggestions about amendments. Please contact me at 443-377-3760 or at barbara@neighborspacebaltimorecounty.org if you have any questions.

With kind regards, I am

Sincerely yours



Barbara L. Hopkins, Esq., ASLA
Executive Director

¹ K. Wraithwall. *Enhancing Livability Through Urban Land Conservation: NeighborSpace of Baltimore County, Pocket Parks, and Retrofitting the URDL* (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy: September 2020), p. 11 (Available at: <https://landconservationnetwork.org/sites/default/files/Case%20Profile%20on%20NeighborSpace%20%23.pdf>)

² R. Brewer. *Conservancy: The Land Trust Movement in America* (Dartmouth College Press: Hanover, NH) (2003), p. 79.

AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE BILL 1031

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 9, in line 4 after “MEANS:” strike beginning with line 4 through “MUNICIPALITY” in line 7 and substitute

- “(1) A LAND TRUST LOCATED OR WORKING IN AN UNDERSERVED AREA WHERE A PROJECT IS PROPOSED TO BE IMPLEMENTED
(2) A NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION WORKING UNDER A PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT WITH A LAND TRUST IN AN UNDERSERVED AREA WHERE A PROJECT IS PROPOSED TO BE IMPLEMENTED; OR
(3) A COUNTY OR MUNICIPALITY”**

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 9, in line 17 after “ARTICLE,” insert “; AND

- (1) A HOUSING PROJECT AS DEFINED IN SECTION 12-101 OF THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ARTICLE
(2) AN AREA THAT HAS A HIGH CONCENTRATION OF VULNERABLE POPULATIONS AS DEFINED AND UPDATED FROM TIME TO TIME BY THE US CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION’S SOCIAL VULNERABILITY INDEX”**

AMENDMENT NO. 3

On page 11, in line 8 after “ORGANIZATIONS,” insert “

- (5) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL RESERVE AT LEAST 75% OF THE ANNUAL APPROPRIATION TO THE PROGRAM FOR GRANTS TO FUND PROJECTS LISTED IN 5-9D-02(F)(2)(I)”**

SB 791 Testimony - IPC.pdf

Uploaded by: Jodi Rose

Position: FWA



*Forming Faithful Stewards,
Caring for Sacred Waters*

PO Box 6791
Annapolis, MD 21401

March 8, 2022

Chair Guy Gazzone and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Senate Bill 791 – Maryland the Beautiful Act
Position: **Favorable with Amendments**

Dear Chair Gazzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe and members of the Budget and Taxation Committee,

On behalf of Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake, I write to urge your support for the Maryland the Beautiful Act (SB 791), with amendments, to advance this bill favorably from committee.

Global leaders are calling for conserving 50% of Earth's landmass¹ in the fight of our lives: to combat climate change. This bill is Maryland's response to this global call to fight climate change. Our beautiful and diverse natural areas are also our best tool for climate resiliency. **With preserved forests, and increased greenspaces in urban centers, we can let nature do what it's designed to: sink carbon.**

Our world is losing species at an alarming rate: 1 million species, out of only 8 million species on the Earth, are threatened with extinction². This should alarm humans because without diverse species, we will lose essential food and medicinal sources. As people of faith, we should care about the species regardless of whether their loss will affect humans. But, for lawmakers like you, we understand that you answer to taxpayers. So, allow us to remind you that **when the planet suffers, we all suffer** – literally.

Maryland's thousands of acres of forestland serve as critical habitat for wildlife and diverse species of plants and fungi. As Maryland continues to grow, we must ensure that the natural world has space to do what it does best: **take care of us.**

Senate Bill 791 would achieve this by setting a goal for Maryland to have 30% of its lands conserved by 2030 and 40% by 2040. And we are already close: about 28% of Maryland's lands

¹ National Geographic, "Half of all land must be kept in a natural state to protect Earth," April 19, 2019.

² NPR WAMU 88.5, "1 Million Animal And Plant Species Are At Risk Of Extinction, U.N. Report Says," May 6, 2019.



are protected so far³. **Pushing us to the 40% by 2040 goal signals that we take seriously the well-being of all Marylanders.**

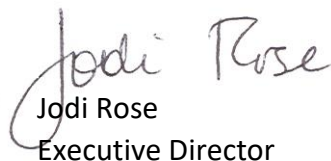
While these are ambitious goals, the bill includes actionable strategies for implementation. Senate Bill 791 would establish a new program called the “Greenspace Equity Program” to provide grants in underserved communities to create greenspace. Another program would create a Revolving Loan Fund for land trusts to help them compete in today’s real estate market. And thirdly, the bill expands the existing Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund to help private landowners steward forests on their properties.

Amendments proposed to the House Bill are attached, and we support similar amendments to the Senate version.

As people of faith, we are urgently called to address climate change and the threats to vulnerable communities and species. The Maryland the Beautiful Act works toward a future where natural areas are valued and protected, biodiversity is recognized as our tool to fight climate change, and money is devoted to drive community-based greenspace creation.

Thank you for considering our testimony, and I urge your support for SB 791.

Sincerely,



Jodi Rose
Executive Director

³ Maryland Protected Lands Dashboard, produced by the Maryland Department of Planning in coordination with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Maryland Department of Agriculture, <https://maryland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/0f3ffd3350b24b17bd3b8e1705af3df5>.

AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE BILL 1031

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3.8.2022 Chesapeake Conservancy testimony SB 791.p

Uploaded by: Joel Dunn

Position: FWA

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Alpine Food Solutions

Leslie Delagran
World Wildlife Foundation

Joel E. Dunn | President & CEO
Chesapeake Conservancy

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MHE Foundation

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Zephyr Energy, plc

Randall W. Larrimore | Chair
Ret. CEO of 2 Fortune 500 Cos.

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Stephanie Meeks
Student Conservation Association

Mamie A. Parker, PhD
US Fish & Wildlife Service, Ret.

John Reynolds
American Society of Landscape Architects

G. Anne Richardson, Chief
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Higher Education Administrator/Biologist, Ret.

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Environmental Stewardship Strategies

March 8, 2022

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee
Maryland State Senate
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Jim Rosapepe
Vice Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee
Maryland State Senate
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chesapeake Conservancy testimony for Maryland the Beautiful Act (SB 791 / HB 1031) – Favorable with amendments

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and members of the Budget and Taxation Committee,

On behalf of Chesapeake Conservancy, I write to urge your support for the Maryland the Beautiful Act (SB 791 / HB 1031) sponsored by Senator Sarah Elfreth and Delegate Eric Luedtke and to support the Conservancy's requested amendments

Maryland's landscape varies from our mountainous west to the central piedmont to the eastern coastal plain. Within that diverse landscape, Maryland is home to significant and diverse habitats for birds, plants and wildlife. Our state's landscape has changed dramatically over the past century. Hundreds of thousands of acres of forestland serving as important habitat for wildlife have been developed.

This trend is playing out across the United States and globally, where today as many as 1 million species are threatened by extinction in the coming decades due to global climate change, habitat loss, pollution, and other human-caused factors. This nature crisis is happening in our backyards, too. In 2021, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declared that the Maryland darter fish – the only species known to be unique to Maryland – is extinct.

As Maryland continues to grow, we must ensure that space for nature and for Marylanders to enjoy and benefit from open space is a part of our future. SB 791 would achieve this by setting a goal for Maryland to have 30% of its lands conserved by 2030 and 40% by 2040. For two decades, Maryland has preserved hundreds of thousands of acres of agricultural lands by following a goal set by the General Assembly in 2002 (Senate Joint Resolution 10 / House Joint Resolution 22).

Thanks to conservation programs funded through the real estate transfer tax, we have made significant progress on the agricultural land preservation goal and on land conservation statewide. Today, about 28% of Maryland's lands are protected, but we do not have a goal in statute to guide overall land conservation efforts today and over the next two decades. SB 791 would resolve this by setting a meaningful and achievable goal, but also by providing the tools to help achieve this goal and do so in an equitable manner.

Importantly, SB 791 would establish a new program called the “Greenspace Equity Program.” This program would provide grants to land trusts, local governments and non-profits to complete greenspace projects in underserved communities such as new parks, community gardens, trails and more. Despite considerable investments in land conservation over the past decades, many Maryland communities still lack greenspace and this has significant costs for public health, local economies, and community well-being. The Greenspace Equity Program would target grant investments to support community-led greenspace projects that meet the unique community needs for greenspace. In this way, we can help ensure that as Maryland pursues a 30% and 40% land conservation goal, it can do so in a way that is equitable and benefits underserved Maryland communities.

Chesapeake Conservancy is requesting three amendments to this program, which are attached in the accompanying document.

SB 791 would also help to advance progress toward its conservation goal by creating a revolving loan fund for private land trusts. Land trusts play an important role in protecting land across Maryland. These organizations – most often non-profits – are based in communities and serve to acquire and conserve land so that it remains forestland, farmland or open space in perpetuity. Very often, landowners will first contact their local land trust to explore a conservation option, making these organizations especially important in the effort to protect open space in Maryland.

SB 791 would establish a revolving loan fund to provide land trusts with another source to secure capital so that they can work with landowners and buy and conserve land. In today’s hyper competitive real estate market, landowners are pressured to act quickly. A revolving loan fund would allow private land trusts to better compete in the real estate market and to meet the interests of landowners seeking to conserve their property. As a result, land trusts would be able to continue to play an important role in protecting and stewarding land for the benefit of Marylanders across the state.

Lastly, SB 791 would increase funding for the existing Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund. Statewide, the majority of forestland in Maryland is privately owned. Forests provide numerous ecological benefits to Marylanders, like clean air and clean water, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration and more. Recognizing the important role that private forestland owners play in stewarding forests and the benefits to Maryland, the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund provides grant funding to private landowners to support their efforts to steward and manage forests.

By passing the Maryland the Beautiful Act, we can ensure that nature and people will continue to thrive in Maryland today and long into the future. Thank you for considering my testimony, and I urge your support for SB 791.

Sincerely,



Joel Dunn
President and CEO
Chesapeake Conservancy

AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE BILL 1031

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 9, in line 4 after “**MEANS:**” strike beginning with line 4 through “**MUNICIPALITY**” in line 7 and substitute

- “(1) A LAND TRUST LOCATED OR WORKING IN AN UNDERSERVED AREA WHERE A PROJECT IS PROPOSED TO BE IMPLEMENTED**
- (2) A NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION WORKING UNDER A PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT WITH A LAND TRUST IN AN UNDERSERVED AREA WHERE A PROJECT IS PROPOSED TO BE IMPLEMENTED; OR**
- (3) A COUNTY OR MUNICIPALITY”**

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 9, in line 17 after “**ARTICLE,**” insert “**; AND**

- (1) A HOUSING PROJECT AS DEFINED IN SECTION 12-101 OF THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ARTICLE**
- (2) AN AREA THAT HAS A HIGH CONCENTRATION OF VULNERABLE POPULATIONS AS DEFINED AND UPDATED FROM TIME TO TIME BY THE US CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION’S SOCIAL VULNERABILITY INDEX”**

AMENDMENT NO. 3

On page 11, in line 8 after “**ORGANIZATIONS,**” insert “

- (5) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL RESERVE AT LEAST 75% OF THE ANNUAL APPROPRIATION TO THE PROGRAM FOR GRANTS TO FUND PROJECTS LISTED IN 5-9D-02(F)(2)(I)”**

Baltimore Green Space Testimony Maryland the Beaut

Uploaded by: Katherine Lautar

Position: FWA



March 9, 2022

The Honorable Guy Guzzo
Chair, Budget and Taxation
Maryland State Senate
3 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Jim Rosapepe
Vice Chair, Environment and Transportation
Maryland State Senate
3 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Maryland the Beautiful Act (HB 1031 / SB 791) SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

Dear Chairman Guzzo and Vice Chairman Rosapepe:

I am writing in support of the Maryland the Beautiful Act *with amendments*. This bill addresses a structural inequity in the Program Open Space funding and conservation funding available at the state level. This funding has historically been inaccessible to smaller land trusts.

Program Open Space Local funding is distributed directly to county & city governments and Program Open Space Stateside requires a minimum acreage of 5 acres for a land trust to be eligible. Additionally, the Rural Legacy Program is available only to rural land trusts and municipalities for land acquisition. While the programs as they exist are powerful conservation tools to be celebrated, there is nothing comparable for urban or populated areas where green lots available have a smaller acreage footprint, green spaces are in high demand, dwindling, and even more essential for local climate resilience.

In 2020, sixteen Baltimore residents died because of extreme heat. Hundreds ended up in the hospital. Heat waves also led to poorer air quality, which means that people with asthma and other respiratory problems had a harder time breathing. Baltimore also struggles with significant flooding. Runoff overloads sewage treatment plants and polluted waterways.

Baltimore City currently has over 1,000 green spaces where neighbors tend abandoned lots creating green spaces for their communities. These communities though not all, are often in historically redlined areas. Without more conservation these spaces are vulnerable to development and increased vulnerability to worsening climate change. Baltimore Green Space, a land trust for community green space, protects 16 spaces totaling 7.2 acres in Baltimore's City limits. None of these protected spaces hits the 5-acre mark required by the current state conservation programs. Each green space, protected in the trust or not, is crucial to the surrounding neighborhood.

For 15 years Baltimore Green Space has existed to assist community members interested in preserving their green spaces. We know that the likelihood of a space remaining a benefit to



the community sustained over time requires community support and trusted partnership with local organizations. Our preservation process requires participation from a community partner and is vetted with the Baltimore City Planning Department and the Department of Housing and Community Development as required by Baltimore City's Policy for Preserving Community Managed Open Space. Currently none of the state conservation programs require defined equity measures be met, has a community related advisory committee, or require formal input from community leaders as to the need the conservation projects may serve. The Green Space Equity Program will be an opportunity to course correct.

Subtitle 9D. refers to the Greenspace Equity Program. Its mirror program, The Rural Legacy Program received 26 million dollars in 2021. In the interest of a more equitable beginning, we hope you will support the amendment to propose the Green Space Equity Program begin with 5 million in funding in its first year and 10 million in the second year and each year thereafter.

Additionally, the Greenspace Equity Program's Equity Board doesn't seem to have any leaders of color represented, and seems to have few members whose primary work requires they be grounded in deep knowledge of underserved communities, or equity issues. We recommend this Board be amended and/or complimented by an advisory board that might deepen the goals of equitable implementation and expand understanding of unreserved community needs in the conservation community.

Finally there are areas throughout Maryland that have been affected by various inequities and the definition currently outlined in this bill should be broadened to expand beyond historically redlined communities. The Center for Disease Control has created a map of Socially Vulnerable Communities. We encourage you to examine that map here: <https://chescon.maps.arcgis.com/apps/mapviewer/index.html?webmap=b91f828f3ccf4fb7a21a39050ddee5be>.

For a list of local land trusts that would be able to make use of these funds to address equity issues follow this link https://dnr.maryland.gov/met/Documents/Land_Trust_Directory.pdf.

Thank you for your consideration and your service to the greater good through your work.

Sincerely,

Katie Lautar, Executive Director

SB 791 Testimony MARBIDCO.pdf

Uploaded by: Steve McHenry

Position: FWA



MARBIDCO
growing rural ventures™

MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL AND RESOURCE-BASED
INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
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Office: 410-267-6807 ~ Fax: 410-267-6809
www.marbidco.org

Mary Shank Creek, *Chair* / Stephen R. McHenry, *Executive Director*

TESTIMONY STATEMENT

BILL: Senate Bill 791 (Natural Resources – Land Conservation – Establishment of Goals and Programs (Maryland the Beautiful Act))

COMMITTEE: Senate Budget and Taxation, and Education, Health, and the Environment

DATE: March 2, 2022

POSITION: Support with Amendments

The Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) supports Senate Bill 791, which does the following: sets a new State goal of 30% of Maryland land conserved by 2030; creates a “Greenspace Equity Program” and “Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Fund” and supports greater sustainable forestry through the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund. Over the past 50 years, more than one million acres of forestland and farmland were developed in Maryland. This bill will provide important assistance in helping to protect open spaces and rural working lands that will ultimately serve to improve the quality of life for the citizens of Maryland in the future.

MARBIDCO was an active member of an informal workgroup consisting of more than 15 farm, forestry and conservation organizations that held several meetings during the 2021 Interim to develop recommendations for a more supportive open space preservation, forest and farmland protection, and agricultural policy, that included a special emphasis on developing urban agricultural opportunities across the State. A focus on diversity, equity and inclusion was a guiding principle in these discussions. Senate Bill 791 supports the implementation of four of the workgroup’s recommendations.

Establishing a 30% Goal of Maryland Land Conserved

Senate Bill 791 establishes a statewide land conservation goal for the State to protect 30% of its lands by 2030 and 40% by 2040 to ensure that open space for nature, parks and local agriculture and forestry is part of Maryland’s future. The Smart Growth Subcabinet will work with State and local partners to track and implement.

Creating a Greenspace Equity Program

Senate Bill 791 creates a Greenspace Equity Program in which a land trust working in an underserved area, can apply to the Department of Natural Resources for grants to fund greenspace projects in underserved communities. Projects should enhance community greenspace which is defined to include community gardens and urban farms, community woodlands, parks, trails, community gathering open space area and a green networks (like a trail connector). Amendments have been developed to clarify how certain aspects of the Greenspace Equity Program would work for urban land trusts and nonprofit organizations to better reflect the intent of this legislation.

Creating a Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Fund

Senate Bill 791 creates a revolving loan fund, to be administered by the Maryland Environmental Trust (MET), to provide bridge loans to help land trusts work more quickly to conserve land from development. MET may designate a non-profit to run the program on its behalf. MARBIDCO sees this component of the bill as being a very useful complement to other efforts being undertaken to help facilitate the preservation of privately-owned rural working farm and forestland (and especially by MARBIDCO with respect to next generation farmers).

Increases Funding for the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund

Senate Bill 791 increases the funding to the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives and Fellowship Fund to \$1 million annually beginning in FY 2024. The Mel Noland Woodland Incentives and Fellowship Fund supports stewardship efforts of private forest landowners through incentive programs like the Woodlands Incentives Program which provides cost sharing assistance for tree planting, site preparation and timber stand improvement practices. This is especially important funding considering private forest landowners own 2.2 million acres of timberland in Maryland.

As such, MARBIDCO respectfully requests a Favorable Report with Amendments Senate Bill 791.

MARBIDCO Contact: Steve McHenry, 410.267.6807

MARBIDCO was established by the Maryland General Assembly 15 years ago to help enhance the sustainability and profitability of the State's agricultural and resource-based industries to help bolster rural economies, support locally produced food and fiber products, and preserve working farm and forest land. MARBIDCO is a nimble, quasi-public financial intermediary organization which has a mission to serve exclusively the commercial farming, forestry, and seafood industries of Maryland. Assisting young and beginning farmers are a special focus for MARBIDCO, as is farm operation diversification (through value added processing activities). Commercial urban farming has also become a focus of MARBIDCO's efforts.

In delivering its financing programs, MARBIDCO works cooperatively with commercial banks and farm credit associations, as well as a host of federal, State, regional and local government agencies, and universities. Since 2007, MARBIDCO has approved 1056 financings totaling nearly \$80 million for food and fiber business projects located in of all Maryland's counties (including Baltimore City) – and in the process has leveraged more than \$170 million in commercial lender financing. For more information about MARBIDCO's programs, please visit: www.marbidco.org.

SB791-Unfavorable-Fink-D32.pdf

Uploaded by: Nelda Fink

Position: UNF

UNFAVORABLE Testimony – SB791

Nelda Fink, 8372 Norwood Dr, Millersville

MD District 32

No. In general we are at a pivot point in history where we must stop spending state residents' tax dollars that they have had to work very hard for! And the last two years the residents have had to work harder than ever just to make ends meet because of YOUR lack of understanding of your roles as legislators. You are here to protect our rights not take them away. I will not support any additional funding for any thing new until that principle is understood and adhered to! This is the first principle establishing the foundation of our Constitution and that is the same constitution that you swore an oath to. Every time any one of you agree to more taxes being taken from your constituents without first replacing what was already taken away, you are continuing down the path of incompetence and malfeasance by not upholding your oath.

OPPOSE This Bill.

Nelda Fink

SB791 Testimony 22 Session.pdf

Uploaded by: Theresa Kuhns

Position: UNF



Senate Bill 791 – Natural Resources- Land Conservation- Maryland the Beautiful

Position: Unfavorable

Maryland REALTORS® understands there is a need to balance conservation efforts with the growing challenge of affordable housing. We are concerned SB791 will further negatively impact the housing undersupply in Maryland and continue to undermine the housing affordability issues Marylanders face today.

Maryland is currently estimated to have a **housing undersupply** of over 80,000 units which includes both for sale and residential rental property. Moreover, according to the “Maryland Housing Needs Assessment and 10-Year Strategic Plan (Needs Assessment),” Maryland will be adding 178,000 new households between 2020 and 2030. The Needs Assessment also estimates that in 2030 more than half of all new households in Maryland will qualify as low-income. By raising the current conservation goals from 24%, to 30% and 40% respectively, it provides a smaller footprint for developable land and increases land costs.

In an American Strategies January 2022 Maryland Housing poll, **71%** of Maryland voters said it was too expensive to purchase a home- a 14% increase from 2020. That study also showed that for voters 50 and under, the number increases to **78%**. Additionally, 1 in 5 voters said they were worried about missing a mortgage payment in the next 3 months. Financial strain due to housing costs were experienced by 48% of all respondents. Finally, **65%** of Maryland voters felt housing opportunity in Maryland was a concern.

We are in unprecedented times and housing inventory is at an all-time low. Important environment goals must be balanced with the continuing undersupply of housing. While Maryland can continue to be a leader in land conservation, expanding the conservation goals under this bill will limit growth options in the future.

For these reasons, the REALTORS® recommend an unfavorable report.

For more information, contact

bill.castelli@mdrealtor.org, susan.mitchell@mdrealtor.org,

lisa.may@mdrealtor.org or theresa.kuhns@mdrealtor.org

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SB 791 Land Conservation-Establishment of Goals an

Uploaded by: Barbara Wilkins

Position: INFO



Maryland

DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET
AND MANAGEMENT

LARRY HOGAN
Governor

BOYD K. RUTHERFORD
Lieutenant Governor

DAVID R. BRINKLEY
Secretary

MARC L. NICOLE
Deputy Secretary

SENATE BILL 791 Natural Resources – Land Conservation – Establishment of Goals and Programs (Elfreth)

STATEMENT OF INFORMATION

DATE: March 9, 2022

COMMITTEE: Senate Budget & Taxation and Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs

SUMMARY OF BILL: SB 791, in part, mandates \$10 million in FY 2024 to the Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Fund to assist land trusts in purchasing property; increases from \$50,000 to \$1 million the annual mandated appropriation to the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives and Fellowship Fund; mandates \$3 million in FY 2024 and \$5 million in FY 2025 and each fiscal year thereafter for the Greenspace Equity Program for grants to local govts, nongovernmental organizations, and land trusts to implement projects to preserve, create, and enhance community greenspace. Further, the bill expresses legislative intent that 30% of public and private land is conserved by 2030 and 40% by 2040.

EXPLANATION: The Department of Budget and Management's focus is not on the underlying policy proposal being advanced by the legislation, but rather on the nearly \$14 mandated appropriation provisions, which impact the FY 2024 budget and the \$6 million mandated appropriations impacting subsequent budgets.

DBM has the responsibility of submitting a balanced budget to the General Assembly annually, which will require spending allocations for FY 2024 to be within the official revenues estimates approved by the Board of Revenue Estimates in December 2022.

Changes to the Maryland Constitution in 2020 provide the General Assembly with additional budgetary authority, beginning in the 2023 Session, to realign total spending by increasing and adding items to appropriations in the budget submitted by the Governor. The legislature's new budgetary power diminishes, if not negates, the need for mandated appropriation bills.

Fully funding the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Kirwan) will require fiscal discipline in the years ahead, if the State is to maintain the current projected structural budget surpluses. Mandated spending increases need to be reevaluated within the context of this education funding priority and the Governor's tax relief proposals.

Economic conditions remain precarious as a result of COVID-19. High rates of inflation and workforce shortages may be short lived or persist, thereby impacting the Maryland economy. While current budget forecasts project structural surpluses, the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continues to present a significant budgetary vulnerability. The Department continues to urge the General Assembly to focus on maintaining the structural budget surplus.

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<http://dbm.maryland.gov>

**For additional information, contact Barbara Wilkins at (410) 260-6371
or barbara.wilkins1@maryland.gov**

SB0791_DNR_LOI_B&T_3-9-22.pdf

Uploaded by: Bunky Luffman

Position: INFO



Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary
Allan Fisher, Deputy Secretary

Bill Number: SB 791

Short Title: Natural Resources-Land Conservation-Establishment of Goals and Programs (Maryland the Beautiful Act)

Department's Position: Letter of Information

Explanation of Department's Position

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources provides the following information on SB 791.

Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Program

SB 791 would establish a new revolving loan program, administered by the Maryland Environmental Trust (MET), to provide loans to local land trusts in Maryland to assist the land trust to purchase property. The loans would be made on a rolling basis, and a land trust that receives a loan from the program would repay the loan after the property has been placed under easement or transferred to a state or local government entity. It is important to note that both state and local easement and fee-simple acquisition programs have both statutory and programmatic requirements that need to be met before proceeding with a fee-simple or easement acquisition. Any property proposed to be placed under easement or transferred to a state or local government entity would be contingent on review, due diligence work, appraised value, and other criteria for evaluation. If a land trust purchases property with funds from the Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Program it does not require the state or local government entity to accept an easement or transfer. It is not clear from this legislation how the loan gets repaid if an easement is not placed on the property or if the property is not transferred to a state or local government entity.

Administering the revolving loan fund program at the level proposed in SB 791 would be a considerable undertaking, for which MET does not currently have the necessary staff. MET has determined that it would need at least two additional full-time permanent staff to set up and administer this new program. SB 791 is not explicit as to the source of funding to pay the costs of administering this program and clarification would be needed to determine whether the cost for additional staff can be paid from the loan fund.

Land Conservation Goal

While DNR believes that the goals established under the legislation are obtainable, it is important to note that acres preserved in FY 2022 through FY2040 by programs administered by DNR (Program Open Space Stateside, Program Open Space Local, Rural Legacy Program, and Maryland Environmental Trust) will depend on a number of factors. These factors include the availability of future funding, willing landowners, and per-acre costs for projects approved by the Board of Public Works.

Greenspace Equity Program

SB 791 establishes a Greenspace Equity Program administered by DNR to implement projects to preserve, create, and enhance community greenspace. In order to fulfill DNR's responsibilities under the bill, new permanent positions with associated funding to administer the program would be required.

For any additional information, please feel free to contact our Legislative and Constituent Services Director, Bunky Luffman.