

**Chesapeake Watershed Restoration Professionals**

**Senate Bill 541**  
**Natural Resources – Maryland Park Service and State Parks – Alterations**  
***Great Maryland Outdoors Act***

**Position: FAVORABLE**

February 16, 2022

Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee

Honorable Paul Pinsky  
Chair, Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Chair Guzzone, Chair Pinsky, and members of the Committees,

On behalf of the Chesapeake Watershed Restoration Professionals (CWRP), we strongly support SB 541 – Great Maryland Outdoors Act. CWRP was founded in November of 2020 and represents Maryland professionals whose daily work improves the health of Maryland’s waters and our prized Chesapeake Bay. First, we would like to commend Senator Elfreth and Delegate Luedtke for their leadership in assembling stakeholders over the last year to undertake the herculean task of identifying the sources of underinvestment in our State Parks but also presenting a vision for what the future of Maryland state parks. The final product as laid out in SB 541 will bring Maryland’s State Parks into the 21<sup>st</sup> century by clearing the critical maintenance backlog, making capital improvements, and requiring all Park Service projects to contribute to the improvement of local water quality.

CWRP would like to raise awareness of two key provisions that underscore our support for the legislation.

First, the bill establishes the Park System Capital Improvements and Acquisition Fund with a one-time \$70 million appropriation. \$5 million of the appropriation is directed to infrastructure projects that mitigate the impact of climate change including areas like stormwater infrastructure. Our members specialize in this work, and we believe this is a critical investment that we can fulfill and support its inclusion in SB 541.

Second, SB 541 requires the recognition of the role forests, trees, and wetlands play in tackling climate change and further requires all Park Service projects to contribute to the improvement of local water quality. CWRP believes this underlying theme sends an important message in recognizing the role our streams play in protecting and improving not only local water quality, but the Chesapeake Bay.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony and we urge a favorable report on SB 541.

Sincerely,

Liam O’Meara  
President  
Chesapeake Watershed Restoration Professionals