

SBo246 Favorable

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Thank you for giving me time to speak.

Proper training of private salt distributors is a key to reducing the amount of salt that we use. Senator Kagan's SBo246 and Delegate Qi's HBo371 are important steps to limiting salt use.

Salt is a convenient substance to use on slippery roads and sidewalks because it is cheap and somewhat effective in melting ice. Using brine (a saltwater mixture) is appropriate on major roads, emergency routes, and dangerous intersections. But we don't need to use salt everywhere.

It turns out that "cheap" is a big problem. Because salt is so cheap, we tend to throw it everywhere: on our streets, driveways, storefronts and sidewalks.

But the true cost is much greater than the salt itself; it is a hidden cost. Salt corrodes our bridges, our pipes and our roads. It corrodes our car mufflers and wheel wells. Corroded pipes led to the problems with lead in the water in Flint, Mich. A corroded bridge recently collapsed in Pittsburg.

The cost also is hidden in our region's waterways — and in our health. The salt on our roadways runs off, killing vegetation and wildlife. Once the salt runs off into our streams, it becomes the water we drink. We end up drinking salty water, which is bad for people with high blood pressure or kidney disease. The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) does not remove salt from our water, as it is much too expensive for the public to afford.

The Muddy Branch Alliance and the Izaak Walton League in Gaithersburg have been monitoring the Muddy Branch, a stream tributary of the Potomac River, for several years. We noticed that for more than a quarter of 2021, chloride levels in the stream were poor: exceeding 250 milligrams per liter; normal levels are between 20 to 40 mg/l). The same was true in other tributaries of the Potomac, which are other sources of our drinking water. The average chloride level at some locations along this one stream exceeded 200 mg/l in 2021.

There are many things that we can do to help resolve this problem. Proper training and statewide monitoring of salt are important steps. Management 101 tells us that we need to know how much salt we are distributing (see Picture 2, below). We see poor salt

distribution and poor salt management all the time when we visit our local grocery store or in front of a condo or apartment complex. The salt that you “see” and “hear”, salt that you see in the curb and sidewalk, is not salt that is working for us. The City of Gaithersburg is doing a great job – after a winter event, you don’t see salt crystals lining the road. Gaithersburg brines (a 25% solution) and then they plow. For most of eastern Maryland, where the temperature is in the 40s the day after a winter event, this is sufficient. Proper training would help make this clear.

Private organization also do things like create local, uncovered caches of salt (see picture 3, below). These caches have caused documented fish kills in Gaithersburg’s Lake Varuna (see picture 1, below) and polluted our streams for months at a time.

Training and monitoring are the key, and this Bill is an important step in the right direction.

**Picture 1 - Lake Varuna Fishkill, March 6, 2021**



**Picture 2 - Tracking Salt Use**

**"Sample", Md Salt Use**

Date/Time	Action	Reason	Single Lane Miles Covered	Pounds of Salt Used	Pounds / Single Lane Mile
1/8/2022 14:00	Salt	Ice Storm	280	50000	178.57
1/3/2022 22:00	Salt	Clearing Roads	280	45000	160.71
1/3/2022 8:00	Brine	Impending snow storm	325	15000	46.15

**Picture 3 - Uncovered Salt Dumps, at 9513 Key West Avenue, Rockville, MD January 18, 2022**

