



8219 Stephen Decatur Highway
Berlin, Maryland 21811

February 23, 2022

Chairman Kumar Barve
251 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

SUPPORT for HB 869 – Wetlands and Waterways Program

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee,

The Maryland Coastal Bays Program thanks you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT OF HB869**. The Coastal Bays Program is a local watershed organization in Worcester County. Our mission is the protection, preservation and restoration of waters in the 5 coastal bays (Assawoman, Isle of Wight, Sinepuxent, Newport and Chincoteague Bays). As part of our mission, we undertake many restoration and enhancement projects within the watershed. These restoration projects involve work in tidal waters, shorelines, streams, floodplains, marshes and wetlands and typically involve the work within these regulated areas.

It has been our experience that implementing these projects within the existing State regulatory framework can be complex, time consuming and unnecessarily costly. While we understand that this work should not be exempt from regulatory review, we do believe that the process necessary to get through this review should be efficient. Current permitting requirements were established for development projects like roads, commercial and residential endeavors and the like. The regulatory review system was not established to review ecosystem restoration projects such as those undertaken by our organization or the many other organizations which are working to improve water quality and habitat in Maryland.

A streamlined process for voluntary ecosystem restoration work will improve the efficacy of these badly needed projects and will ultimately save the taxpayers money. Afterall, it is the taxpayers who ultimately fund these projects. It should be our objective to provide the most efficient course possible to get these badly needed projects in the ground.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment and we are very appreciative of your committee's leadership in moving forward with the passage of HB869.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "KMS", is written over a horizontal line.

Kevin M. Smith, Executive Director
Maryland Coastal Bays Program