



**House Bill 1372 (Delegate Lehman) – Green Infrastructure Rebate Program -
Establishment
Written Testimony**

Date: March 9, 2022

Position: INFORMATIONAL

Submitted to: Environment and Transportation Committee

Submitted by: Sadie Drescher, Vice President of Programs for Restoration, Chesapeake Bay Trust

The Chesapeake Bay Trust (the Trust) is honored to provide information to the Committee as it considers House Bill 1372 to establish the Green Infrastructure Rebate Program.

The Trust was established by the General Assembly in 1985 to increase stewardship through grant programs, special initiatives, and partnerships, focusing on on-the-ground watershed restoration, community engagement, environmental education, capacity-building, and science. The Trust has experience with residential and commercial rebate programs, having administered Prince George’s County Rain Check Rebate program for our Department of the Environment partner for the past eight years.

HB 1372 calls for the establishment of a Green Infrastructure Rebate Program with counties that elect to participate in the Program. The Trust believes that we should engage and empower diverse groups to take actions that enrich natural resources and local communities of the Chesapeake Bay region. Providing rebates is one tool to reach and engage people to act on their own to improve their surroundings such as their property or business and improve our environment. Working together and using many tools available to us are needed for healthier natural resources.

The power of rebate programs – Reaching and supporting individuals who wish to green their property

Rebate programs empower individuals to take actions that improve their communities and properties and their local watersheds all at the same time, offering incentives to install small-scale restoration projects, such as rain barrels, rain gardens, trees, pervious pavers, and other practices. These projects beautify the site and provide environmental benefits such as stormwater management while engaging in and with the communities themselves. The following information highlights our experience working with rebates:

- Rebate programs are one way to provide people with the tools they need to implement stormwater management practices on their property;
- Property owners appreciate the ability and flexibility to choose which practices to install on their properties. Some install a few practices now and then more later, creating buy-in and ownership for the process;
- Once the practice is installed, the individual often feels pride in his/her/their work and wants to share what they did with neighbors;
- Since fiscal year 2015, the Trust has worked in partnership with the County to manage 707 Prince George’s County Rain Check Rebate projects. To date in the program:
 - 858 rain barrels have been installed,

- 665 trees have been planted, and
- 110 permeable pavement projects have been installed
- Accountability is built into the process: The Trust provides technical support throughout the process, verifies project implementation, helps property owners document all costs, and ensures that property owners agree to maintain the practices.

Programs such as these allow the state and counties to engage private residents in the call to restore our watersheds and ultimately to protect and restore our receiving waterways. The majority of our watershed is privately owned, and rebate programs provide a vehicle by which these private individuals and organizations can play a role.

On a larger scale, these small practices involve and engage people and they also amplify our restoration strategies to slow down stormwater that cleans the water of pollutants to protect our wildlife, reduce the energy that can cause erosion, cool hot water coming from rooftops or parking lots, and create a space to enjoy for people as well as animals such as birds and butterflies. We know the benefits of greening extend beyond water quality to improve our air, health, and provide habitat for native plants and animals. Finally, while some participants install these practices themselves many will hire professionals to help which can provide more green jobs.

The Trust believes that individual property owners have the power and desire to do work that helps our communities and local watersheds. Providing and using a rebate program is one tool to direct and support people who wish to green their property.

Examples of rebate projects:

BEFORE AND AFTER RAIN GARDEN



Before



After

Rain Barrel



Urban Tree Canopy



BEFORE AND AFTER PERMEABLE PAVEMENT



Before



After

Projects in progress:



About the Chesapeake Bay Trust

The Trust was created by the Maryland General Assembly in 1985 as a non-profit grant-making organization with a goal to increase stewardship and citizen engagement in the restoration of the state's local rivers, streams, parks, and other natural resources in diverse communities across the state, from the mountains of Western Maryland and the Youghiogheny watershed to the marshes of the Coastal Bays. The goal was to create an entity that could complement state agency work and reach large numbers of groups on the ground: schools, nonprofit organizations, faith-based institutions, homeowners associations, community and civic associations, and other types of groups.

The Trust invests in local communities and watersheds through grant programs and special initiatives and is known for its efficiency, putting on average 90 cents of every dollar into programs. The Trust has awarded over \$130 million through more than 12,000 grants and projects in every county in Maryland since 1985. We make 350-400 grants and other awards a year and have about 1,000 active grantees at any one time.

The Trust does not receive a direct state appropriation, and is instead supported through revenue from the Chesapeake Bay vehicle license plate; half of the Chesapeake and Endangered Species Fund checkoff on the state income tax form; two new donation options through Maryland's online boating, fishing, hunting license system, one that focuses on veterans' rehabilitation; partnerships with federal, state, local agencies, family foundations, and corporate foundations; and individual donors.

Due to its efficiency, the Trust has been rated with the maximum four-star rating by the nation's leading charity evaluator, Charity Navigator, for fourteen years, putting it in the top 1% of non-profits in the nation.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to present to the Committee. If you should have any questions regarding the Trust's testimony, please contact us at 410-974-2941 x105 or sdrescher@cbtrust.org.

