



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

DIVISION OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

Department of Climate & Energy

Jessica Fitzwater
County Executive

Shannon Moore, Director
Dawn Ashbacher, Manager

HB 530 – Natural Resources – Forest Mitigation Banks and the Forest Conservation Fund – Alterations

DATE: March 1, 2023
COMMITTEE: House Environment and Transportation Committee
POSITION: Favorable
FROM: Dawn Ashbacher, Climate and Energy Manager, Division of Energy and Environment, Frederick County Government

Thank you for your consideration of HB 530- Natural Resources- Forest Mitigation Banks and the Forest Conservation Fund – Alterations. As the Frederick County Climate and Energy Manager in the Division of Energy and Environment, I urge the committee to give HB 530 a FAVORABLE report.

There are several reasons we support this bill. One is that in 2020, according to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, forests in Frederick County drew down 18% of county-wide greenhouse gas emissions. Our ability to extend the use of existing fees helps us to do additional afforestation and protection.

Another reason we support this bill is that the Forest Conservation Act programs contribute to protecting local water quality and the Chesapeake Bay. These waterbodies have listed impairments, including Total Maximum Daily Loads, which are directly impacted by pollutants that are conveyed by stormwater. Forests prevent pollution from new development. We have performed studies using our local stream survey data indexed by surrounding land use that confirm forested land use is the best predictor of water quality and biodiversity in streams.

Conversely, the more forest land we use, the more our waterways degrade. This is especially true for native brook trout, which are heavily affected by thermal impacts from even small amounts of development activity.

We have targeted Forest Conservation Act funds in sensitive watersheds. For example, these funds were used in the Linganore Watershed surrounding Lake Linganore, which has a drinking water intake for the City of Frederick. Forest protection and afforestation in this area has enabled us to reduce sedimentation to the lake, which was recently dredged.

The more forest that is protected during the development process, the less we have to clean up through watershed restoration in our Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permits.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 530. On behalf of Frederick County Government, I urge a FAVORABLE report.

Respectfully,



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