

House Bill 886 – SUPPORT

**House Bill 886 – Environment - CAD Task Force
House Committee on Environment and Transportation
February 23, 2024**

My name is Olivia Saliger. I live in the waterfront community of Stoney Beach, in Northern Anne Arundel County. I am an aquatic biologist at Maryland Department of Environment's Water & Sciences Administration. I am one of three MDE employees that regularly sample PFAS (aka the new forever chemical) in drinking water supplies. I have also conducted award-winning research on harmful algal blooms in Ocean City's inlet through Maryland Sea Grant and the Chesapeake Research Consortium. In addition, I am a certified Climate Change Professional (CCP), have conducted freshwater fish research, am a competitive swimmer, and an avid fish-keeper. My entire life is centered around water, specifically the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

I am fully aware of the necessity of dredging the Baltimore Harbor to support its crucial shipping industry. However, there must be a set plan that prioritizes the safety of the Patapsco River and Chesapeake Bay ecosystems, with emphasis on public health. Dredged material from the Baltimore Harbor is highly contaminated with toxic metals, PFAS (the new forever chemicals), and a plethora of other hazardous chemicals from the surrounding industrial facilities. There must be additional precautions taken by MPA in containing this material. The Patapsco River is considered one of Maryland's most impaired rivers, so much so that it has different regulations compared to the rest of dredging in the Chesapeake Bay. With such polluted dredge, MPA is struggling to find adequate space for land-based dike containment.

MPA has acknowledged the shortage of available land area to properly store this hazardous dredge material. However, they are looking into a relatively new aquatic storage alternative called Confined Aquatic Disposal (CAD). CAD involves replacing the natural and clean riverbed with contaminated dredge that is not entirely filled/capped. This will allow the carcinogenic chemicals to leak out of the dredge. MPA has created an Innovative Reuse & Beneficial Use Program (IRBU) to promote CAD and its reuse of dredge material. There is not sufficient data or plans on how long it will take the ecosystem to recover, or what quantities residents will be exposed to. Additionally, MPA's research and development process occurred in a cove in Brooklyn, which is a very protected location. This is not at all representative of Patapsco's depth, tidal flows, or open waters. Additionally, MPA has failed to communicate their plans effectively and directly of CAD to the residents of Anne Arundel County.

MPA has chosen 1 mile from Stoney Creek/Rock creek due to its relative health. However, this approach will not contain nor control the seeping pollution. It is unclear how the public's health will be affected, especially with waterfront communities and their recreational beaches that many children access. From what I've gathered, CAD has only been used in pre-polluted industrial sectors, not residential communities.

There needs to be proper oversight of an independent CAD task force, with proper stakeholder engagement in order to consider the environmental safety, public health, and community concerns of the impacts of such a large-scale project. There must be more effort to ensure stakeholders are properly informed. Both Anne Arundel County's citizens and our legislators have expressed great concerns regarding the transparency and safety of this project.

Pollution in the Patapsco River has a long history of environmental injustices. According to Maryland Department of Environment's environmental justice indicator, the location of the proposed CAD dredge ranks in the top percentile of environmental injustices and pollution exposure. Already, there is a coal-fired power plant about 1 football field away from me at Stoney Beach. I cannot fathom the water to be swimmable if the dredge material is also placed within this proximity. But again, MPA has not effectively communicated their plan for containing these chemicals.

Therefore, it is crucial that the task force proposed in Senate Bill 353 is moved into legislation and incorporates non-biased scientific experts, engineers, and legacy watermen. The task force must also have significantly better community outreach. With all the money MPA has placed into CAD, they should be required to have and implement a proper stakeholder engagement plan. Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns.

Sincerely,

Olivia Saliger

Stoney Beach, Curtis Bay, MD