



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 345

Fish and Wildlife – Endangered and Threatened Species – Definitions, Petitions, and Regulations

Date: February 14, 2024

Position: **Favorable**

To: House Environment & Transportation Committee

From: Allison Colden
MD Executive Director

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** House Bill 345 which updates the definition of “fish” and “wildlife” with respect to defining threatened and endangered (TE) species, requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to review and update regulations every 5 years, and outlines information that must be submitted to petition for addition or removal of a species from the state’s threatened and endangered species list.

Scientists have declared the current time period as the “sixth mass extinction” event, driven by human impacts, including habitat loss and fragmentation, pollution, invasive species, and climate change. In Maryland alone, nearly 350 species are at risk of extinction or extirpation. Erosion of protections under the federal Endangered Species Act in recent years have placed TE species at greater risk than ever before and necessitates strong state protections to prevent future species listings and further decline.

HB 345 seeks to update the state’s existing TE species statute by including specific definitions for “fish” and “wildlife” as well as requiring DNR to review, and update if warranted, TE species regulations every 5 years. Given rapidly changing environmental conditions due to climate change, periodic review of regulations to ensure they are sufficiently protective of TE species and their habitats is warranted.

HB345 also outlines data needs and requirements for petitions for listing or delisting species in the state. This is a critical component to evaluating the need for listing as data gaps are one of the largest challenges for state agencies with limited staff and resources. This is particularly true for less charismatic and rare species, like freshwater mussels, insects, amphibians, plants, and other invertebrates. Defining data needs will help scientists, non-profit organizations, and even hobby naturalists to understand and collect the data needed to secure protections for species in need of conservation.

CBF urges the Committee’s FAVORABLE report on HB 345.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.