



**The Maryland Department of the Environment
Secretary Serena McIlwain**

Senate Bill 898

Nutrient Management – Tidal Buffer – Vegetative Buffers and Restriction on Fertilizer Application

Position: Informational
Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
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From: Alex Butler, Deputy Director of Government Relations

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) offers the following **INFORMATIONAL** testimony for SB 898.

Bill Summary

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program currently provides one-time payments to landowners who enroll land planted with a forested streamside buffer. Senate Bill 898 would expand the program to include various financial incentives for a “fixed natural buffers”, which the bill defines as “a strip of maintained, native vegetation alongside a body of water.” The Maryland Department of Agriculture will set implementation guidelines, and funding runs from 2026–2031.

Key Points

The bill does not explicitly address whether the buffer can be altered for shore erosion control projects, such as living shorelines, which are mandated by law to be installed where feasible and may require modifications at the land-water interface. Clarification on this point may be necessary to prevent conflicts with shoreline stabilization efforts.

MDE understands that the Maryland Department of Agriculture also has concerns about expanding the use of funding currently dedicated to the Enhancement Program.

MDE hopes this **INFORMATIONAL** testimony regarding SB 898 is helpful. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

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