



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education

Senate Bill 722

Department of the Environment – Ecological Restoration

Date: February 18, 2025

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: **FAVORABLE**

From: Gussie Maguire,
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Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** SB 722, which establishes a definition of ecological restoration and directs the Department of the Environment (MDE) to update regulations to be consistent with that definition. Creating a single definition that encompasses restoration practices is one step towards removing permitting bottlenecks that prevent timely implementation of projects like marsh restoration, tree plantings, and nature-based solutions for coastal resiliency or stormwater management.

Through fragmentation and loss of its natural spaces, Maryland has also lost the critical services those environment provided. Salt marshes, which provide habitat for a variety of species, also prevent erosion along tidal coastlines and sequester carbon. Without restoration projects, these critically important ecosystems will soon be drowned by sea level rise. However, permitting hangups for practices like runnel installation¹ and thin-layer placement to raise marsh elevations take up time on an already ticking clock. Additional regulatory hurdles exist around placement of monitoring instruments (key to understanding most effective practices) as well as living shoreline installations. 2024's Whole Watershed Act addressed a few permit shortcomings, but work remains to be done.

In 2024, MDE released the “Ecological Restoration Permitting Study Report” of work conducted to determine how to improve Maryland’s ecological restoration permitting². The first focus area of the study was to define ecological restoration, in an effort to reduce confusion and potential miscommunication over which kinds of projects would be included in a revised permit structure. SB 722, a direct response to this focus area finding, is a crucial early step in reforming Maryland’s restoration permits. With the framework of restoration defined, regulators can direct further efforts to efficiently get critical projects in place.

CBF urges the Committee’s FAVORABLE report on SB 722.

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

¹<https://www.fws.gov/story/2024-02/restoring-salt-marshes-people-wildlife>

²https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/water/WetlandsandWaterways/Documents/Restoration/MDE_Ecological%20Restoration%20Study%20Report_8.6.2024.pdf

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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.