

Testimony regarding SB722, HB 1155
Tri-County Bird club
Salisbury, Maryland

My name is Charles Stegman. I represent the Tri-County Bird Club, an organization formed in 1970 in Salisbury to promote a healthy environment through interest in birding. Our club is a member of the Maryland Ornithological Society.

I am writing in support of the Ecological Restoration Definition Bill, SB 722, HB1155. This bill would require the Department of the Environment to update its regulations to incorporate the definition of ecological restoration. The bill is particularly relevant to the restoration of tidal saltmarsh habitat.

The Eastern Shore of Maryland, where I live and work, contains the majority of Maryland's saltmarsh habitat. This habitat is crucial to supporting a healthy environment as well as a healthy economy here on the Eastern Shore. The bill will support commercial crabbing and fishing, recreation and tourism, as well as providing storm protection, water filtration, carbon sequestration, and it will mitigate salt water intrusion on agricultural lands. The ecosystem services provided by the tidal saltmarsh ecosystem amount to over \$6 billion annually.

This ecosystem is currently threatened by sea level rise as well as land subsidence. Tipping points are approaching, beyond which it will become impossible or prohibitively expensive to restore this critical ecosystem. This bill will facilitate projects such as hydrological repair and sediment placement to restore and preserve tidal saltmarsh.

Because of these benefits to the Eastern Shore environment and economy as well as to other areas of Maryland that contain tidal saltmarsh, the Tri-County Bird club strongly favors passage of this bill.

Charles Stegman MD
Chairman, Conservation Committee
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