

# **SB176\_ShoreRivers Testimony IN SUPPORT.pdf**

Uploaded by: Annie Richards

Position: FAV



**Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 176 – Agriculture - Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan - Uses of Information**

Education, Energy, and Environment Committee Hearing  
2:30pm – January 28, 2025

1/24/25

To Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT** for **SB176** on behalf of ShoreRivers. ShoreRivers is a river protection group on Maryland’s Eastern Shore with more than 2,000 members. Our mission is to protect local waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, education, and engagement.

**SB176** is a very simple, but beneficial bill that give the affords the Maryland Department of Agriculture more tools to aid in enforcement. Currently, Soil Conservation Districts (SCDs) are required to provide the Department of the Environment with copies of Soil and Water Quality Plans. This bill will require conservation districts to also provide them to the Department of Agriculture to help increase enforcement.

Chesapeake watershed states, like Maryland, face challenges with non-point source pollution control, as highlighted by the recent [CESR Report](#), released by the Chesapeake Bay Program’s Science and Technical Advisory Committee. This makes **SB176** a timely effort to improve the department’s ability to address violations that threaten habitat and water quality in the Chesapeake and its tributaries. As the Chester Riverkeeper, through routine monitoring of the tidal and non-tidal waterways I work to protect and restore, I am often on the frontlines to see violations that result in environmental impacts. **When violations occur, it is essential that our state agency’s enforcement actions are as responsive as possible to abate the impacts of pollution and/or loss of habitat, and to enhance a culture of strong enforcement for Maryland’s critical environmental laws.**

We thank the Department of Agriculture for bringing forward this bill, and we look to this committee to give **SB176** a favorable report.

Sincerely,  
**Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper** on behalf of:

**ShoreRivers**

Isabel Hardesty, Executive Director

Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper | Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper

Ben Ford, Miles Wye Riverkeeper | Zack Kelleher, Sassafras Riverkeeper

**MDE SB176 SUP.pdf**

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Position: FAV



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

***Senate Bill 176***

***Agriculture - Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan - Uses of Information***

**Position:** Support  
**Committee:** Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
**Date:** January 28, 2025  
**From:** Jeremy D. Baker, Director of Government Relations

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The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) **SUPPORTS** SB176. This bill proposes amendments to Maryland's Agriculture Article regarding soil conservation and water quality plans. The Department of Agriculture would be authorized to use data from soil conservation and water quality plans for enforcement actions under Subtitle 8 of the Agriculture Title and statistical purposes. Such information may also be shared with MDE to support water quality issues. The aim is to enhance soil conservation and water quality compliance while maintaining data privacy.

MDE supports Senate Bill 176 due to its emphasis on transparency and enhanced coordination between agencies, which aligns with broader goals of protecting water quality and promoting environmental sustainability.

Accordingly, MDE requests a **FAVORABLE** report for SB 176.

**Contact:** Jeremy D. Baker, Director of Government Relations  
Cell: 240-548-3321, Email: [jeremy.baker@maryland.gov](mailto:jeremy.baker@maryland.gov)

**SB 176 - CBF - FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Matt Stegman

Position: FAV



# CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

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*Environmental Protection and Restoration  
Environmental Education*

## Senate Bill 176

### Agriculture - Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan - Uses of Information

**Date:** January 28, 2025

**To:** Education, Energy, &  
The Environment Committee

**Position:** **Favorable**

**From:** Matt Stegman,  
Maryland Staff Attorney

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Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** SB 176 which would permit the Department of Agriculture (MDA) to access soil conservation and water quality plans if needed to complete certain agency enforcement actions. The Department of the Environment (MDE) already may access this information for some water quality enforcement actions undertaken by that agency. Existing law directs that the information in these plans be maintained in a way that protects the identity of individuals for whom the plans have been prepared.

Consistent and effective enforcement of environmental protections is essential to sustaining the recovery efforts for the Chesapeake Bay. This bill makes a sensible change to current law that puts MDA in the same position as other agencies tasked with enforcing water quality laws and regulations.

**CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on SB 176.**

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at [mstegman@cbf.org](mailto: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.*

**SB 176\_HB 140 - MDA LOS.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Rachel Jones

Position: FAV



# Maryland Department of Agriculture

*Office of the Secretary*

**Wes Moore**, Governor

**Aruna Miller**, Lt. Governor

**Kevin Atticks**, Secretary

**Steven A. Connelly**, Deputy Secretary

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## Maryland Department of Agriculture

### Legislative Comment

**DATE:** January 24, 2025

**BILL NUMBER:** SB 176/HB 140

**SHORT TITLE:** Agriculture – Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan – Uses of  
Information

**MDA POSITION:** SUPPORT

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This legislation grants the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) the same authority as the Department of the Environment (MDE) to request a Soil and Water Conservation Plan from a soil conservation district for enforcement purposes. Under the proposed legislation, MDA's authority would be limited to nutrient management compliance measures contained within a soil and water conservation plan. For example, investigating livestock access to streams or water bodies when an operator fails to install adequate stream exclusion.

Under Maryland Nutrient Management regulations, livestock must be kept away from water bodies. The new authority is crucial in the limited situations where voluntary measures by the soil conservation district are unable to address a resource concern. A soil and water conservation plan could serve as evidence that the individual was aware of the need to implement measures to prevent livestock from entering water bodies.

The MDA thanks the Committee for your consideration and respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 176.

If you have additional questions, please contact Rachel Jones, Director of Government Relations, at [rachel.jones2@maryland.gov](mailto:rachel.jones2@maryland.gov) or 410-841-5886.



# **Senate Bill 176- MASCD - Information .pdf**

Uploaded by: Jen Nelson

Position: INFO



January 24, 2025

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chairman  
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**Re: Senate Bill 176 – Agriculture - Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan - Uses of Information**

Position: **Informational**

Chairman Feldman & Committee Members:

On behalf of the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) I am providing **information** regarding the use of information by the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) from a soil conservation and water quality plan provided by a soil conservation district. MASCD, incorporated in 1956, promotes practical and effective soil, water, and natural resource related programs to all Marylanders. Through individual conservation districts MASCD provides leadership, education, cooperation, and local direction, on a voluntary basis.

Maryland's soil conservation districts work with farmers, connecting conservation goals with resource needs to establish best management practices for the stewardship of their land. In 2024, MASCD wrote or updated 1,317 soil conservation and water quality plans to protect over 130,000 acres. In addition to supporting farmers, local soil conservation districts work closely with the state through its departments. Soil Conservation Districts (SCD) offer compliance assistance on Maryland Department of the Environment's (MDE) Sediment, Stormwater and Dam Safety Program; support on MDA's Field Assessment Team to meet Chesapeake Bay Watershed Best Management Practice Implementation Goals; and more. Currently, a soil conservation and water quality plan disseminated by a SCD supervisor can be utilized by the Department of the Environment for its statistical purposes and enforcement action, although the same data cannot be used by the Department of Agriculture for its enforcement actions. SB 176 would update the permissible use of the data of the information to include enforcement actions of the Department of Agriculture. MASCD and Maryland's soil conservation districts work closely with MDA and will support the department to carry out their mission.

MASCD contains thousands of success stories ranging from innovative conservation techniques to waterway management. Conservation districts are locally led to address soil and water issues at the district level while also connecting their farmers and residents to resources at the state and federal level. Our shared success is the result of a network of partners established through a fair and just process in which the agricultural communities throughout the State are appointed and serve the common goal of their communities. A unified future for agriculture in the State of Maryland has proven to be effective when we can work together.

Thank you for your kind consideration and attention to this legislation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jen Nelson, Executive Director  
Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts