

SB722CER.pdf

Uploaded by: Barry Glassman

Position: FAV



February 14, 2025

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair
Senate Education, Energy & the Environment
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: Favorable-SB 722- Department of the Environment- Ecological
Restoration**

Dear Chair and members of EEE,

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 722 on behalf of my client the Center for Ecosystem Recovery. The Center is a non-profit dedicated to advancing the science and practice of ecological restoration through research, partnerships and education for the recovery of our living resources.

The addition of the Bill's definition of ecological restoration in relevant regulations and the Environment Article adopts one of the recommendations in the Ecological Restoration Permitting Study Report.

The Center respectfully requests a **Favorable** report for this basic but needed definition update throughout the ecological restoration guidelines and regulations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Barry Glassman

SB722.Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Carol Bean

Position: FAV



Eastern Shore

LAND CONSERVANCY

Committee: Education, Energy and the Environment

Bill: SB722 – “Department of the Environment – Ecological Restoration”

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 18, 2025

Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC) is writing to express our support for **Senate Bill 722** which codifies the definition of “ecological restoration” per the recommendation of the *Ecological Restoration Permitting Study Report* submitted to the General Assembly last year. **SB722** provides a needed definition for the term and will ensure consistency and clarity across regulations which can help to accelerate the permitting and implementation of much-needed restoration projects on the ground.

ESLC is the largest private land trust in Maryland. While we are widely known for our conservation easement work, we also work directly with private landowners, local governments and community organizations on a wide variety of ecological restoration projects. The need is great. As our region grapples with development pressures and the threat of sea level rise, accelerating ecological restoration projects will be essential for sustaining the Eastern Shore’s economic vitality and quality of life.

Advancing conservation is not only a commitment to ecosystem resiliency but a strategic economic choice. Restoration projects are not only environmental investments but powerful economic drivers. These efforts create jobs, stimulate local economies, and generate sustainable, long-term benefits. Policies and regulations that help to advance ecological restoration efforts are worthy of support and we urge a favorable report on SB722.

Respectfully submitted,

Eastern Shore Land Conservancy



Ecological Restoration Definition Bill SB 722, H

Uploaded by: Charles Stegman

Position: FAV

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
Tri-County Bird Club
Salisbury, Md.

SB722 org South Baltimore Gateway Partnership 2025

Uploaded by: Elizabeth Cornish

Position: FAV

Feb 14, 2025

To: Chair Feldman and members of the Maryland Senate Committee on Education, Energy and the Environment

From: South Baltimore Gateway Partnership, Brad Rogers, Executive Director

Subject: Favorable Testimony for Maryland SB 722 Ecological Restoration

South Baltimore Gateway Partnership submits this testimony in support of Senate Bill 722. The South Baltimore Gateway Partnership was established in 2016 to help implement the South Baltimore Gateway Master Plan, a sweeping plan to improve neighborhoods near the Horseshoe Casino Baltimore, with funding provided by Local Impact Grants generated by video lottery terminals. Under its Strategic Plan, SBGP works to improve the vitality of its communities by focusing on three crucial elements of the South Baltimore Gateway Master Plan: Community Development and Revitalization, Environmental Sustainability, and Health and Wellness. SBGP is not an agency of the City of Baltimore or the State of Maryland. It is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of residents of the district and representatives of businesses located in the district. To learn more, visit www.sbgpartnership.org.

Currently there is an inconsistent understanding of ecological restoration and associated project types. Without this clear definition for ecological restoration across state agencies and with the public, confusion and miscommunication persist over what projects are being included in ecological restoration permitting processes. SB 722 address this confusion by creating a standard definition and allowing more possibilities for restoration to be included in Maryland's planning for resiliency.

Having an official state definition of Ecological Restoration will have direct impact on one of our biggest investments, the Middle Branch Resiliency Initiative (MBRI) to ensure ecological restoration projects keep pace with the urgent threats ecosystems face due to rapid sea-level rise.

The [Middle Branch Resiliency Initiative \(MBRI\)](#) is Maryland's largest coastal resilience initiative, dedicated to restoring 50+ acres of habitat along 11 miles of shoreline. During the development of the [Reimagine Middle Branch Plan](#), communities called for environmental justice including better access to nature and more protection from flooding and storm damage. MBRI supports environmental justice goals by:

- Enhancing South Baltimore communities' resilience and protecting critical infrastructure from coastal flooding, intense storm events, erosion, and sea level rise
- Improving public access to the city's waterfront—including greenspace/water recreation and fishing—by restoring wetland habitat diversity and improving water quality

A unified understanding of ecological restoration will increase collaboration between state and federal partners and leveraging more federal resources for projects in Maryland. These relationships and resources are essential to the success of MBRI.

South Baltimore Gateway Partnership respectfully urges a favorable review of this legislation.

Thank You,

Brad Rogers, Executive Director

Arundel Rivers Testimony Eco Restoration FAV SB722

Uploaded by: Elle Bassett

Position: FAV



PO Box 760 Edgewater, MD
21037

410-224-3802
www.arundelrivers.org

Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 722 – Department of the Environment – Ecological
Restoration

Education, Energy, and the Environment
February 18, 2025

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT OF SB722** on behalf of Arundel Rivers Federation. Deeply rooted in the South, West, and Rhode Rivers, Arundel Rivers Federation heals and protects our waterways and champions clean water across Maryland. Our vision is healthy waterways for all, and we achieve our mission through restoration, education and outreach, and Riverkeeper programs.

SB722 will define the term “ecological restoration” as an activity with the goal of recovering, re-establishing, or enhancing a degraded, damaged, or destroyed ecosystem through certain measures. There is currently no definition of ecological restoration in Maryland law, despite the increasing number of ecological restoration practices being implemented. In 2024, as a result of 2022’s HB 869 becoming law, the Maryland Department of the Environment released an Ecological Restoration Study Report, which recommended the General Assembly adopt a definition for ecological restoration that incorporates (1) improvements to physical, chemical, or biological characteristics; (2) restore natural or historic functions; and (3) improving resiliency. SB722 legislation will create a unified understanding of ecological restoration in the state, resulting in increased collaboration, increased restoration projects that promote co-benefits and resiliency, and support restoration movements and efforts such as the Whole Watershed Act passed in the 2024 session.

The Arundel Rivers’ Restoration program works with communities, funders, and other partners to restore our land and waterways. These projects, both small and large in scale, actively trap and filter pollutants from stormwater, slow erosion, create habitat, and make our lands and communities more resilient. Arundel Rivers implements millions in local restoration projects annually and each project meets the definition of ecological restoration outlined by this bill.

Arundel Rivers Federation strongly supports implementing ecological restoration projects to improve local water quality, increase habitat, and increase resiliency for our communities. We strongly support defining “ecological restoration” with the language outlined in this bill and we respectfully request a **FAVORABLE REPORT on SB722.**

Sincerely,

Elle Bassett
South, West and Rhode Riverkeeper
Arundel Rivers Federation

SB 722 Ecological Restoration (Favorable - The Nat

Uploaded by: Humna Sharif

Position: FAV

Tuesday, February 18, 2025

TO: Brian Feldman, Chair Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee; and Committee Members
FROM: Humna Sharif, The Nature Conservancy, Director of Government Relations; and Isaac Hametz, The Nature Conservancy, Baltimore Program Director
POSITION: Support SB 722 Department of the Environment - Ecological Restoration

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports SB 722 offered by Senators Henson and Augustine. This bill would allow the Maryland General Assembly to adopt a definition of ecological restoration. This definition is in line with the recent report released by Maryland Department of the Environment in its [Ecological Restoration Permitting Study Report](#) (2024). Passage of SB 722 would bring a consistent definition to our state's understanding of ecological restoration activities and associated project types.

TNC is a global conservation organization working to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Maryland, our work focuses on delivering science-based, on-the-ground solutions that secure clean water and healthy living environments for our communities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing resilience in the face of a changing climate. We are dedicated to a future where people and nature thrive together.

SB 722 recommends that the general assembly adopt the following definition for ecological restoration: An activity undertaken with the goal of recovering, re-establishing, or enhancing a degraded, damaged, or destroyed ecosystem through:

- 1) improvements to physical, chemical, or biological characteristics or processes;
- 2) returning natural or historical functions or services or
- 3) protecting or improving resiliency.

TNC is hopeful that SB 722 will help improve the permitting process for vital resiliency projects in the state, such as critical marsh and wetland restoration efforts. It is often the natural processes of ecosystems that are altered which then cause a disruption in that ecosystems' functions and services – specifically giving voice to natural processes in the legislation as is mentioned in the first bullet of the definition above would allow our state to have a broader outlook on what restoration actions are permitted.

Along Maryland's Chesapeake and Atlantic coasts, tidal wetlands act as the first line of defense against storms and rising seas and must be protected. Climate resilient marshes and coastlines provide seafood nurseries, sustaining Maryland's [\\$600 million fishing industry](#), but these vulnerable habitats are quickly disappearing due to sea level rise. Maryland will lose over [20% of all tidal wetlands by 2050](#) at current rates of sea level rise. Protecting these wetlands [safeguards communities](#), and continues to provide critical habitat for many iconic species, including the [threatened saltmarsh sparrow](#). If nothing is done, [75% of Maryland's tidal high marsh could be lost by 2100](#). This not only severely impacts rare and endangered species but also makes coastal communities more vulnerable to dangerous flooding. SB 722 is one step among many to help Maryland restore and protect vulnerable ecosystems in our state.

The Nature Conservancy commends Senators Henson and Augustine for introducing this legislation and we look forward to continuing to work with MDE on implementation of ecological restoration projects.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report on SB 467.

SB 722 Ecological Restoration (Favorable - The Nat

Uploaded by: Humna Sharif

Position: FAV

Tuesday, February 18, 2025

TO: Brian Feldman, Chair Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee; and Committee Members
FROM: Humna Sharif, The Nature Conservancy, Director of Government Relations; and Isaac Hametz, The Nature Conservancy, Baltimore Program Director
POSITION: Support SB 722 Department of the Environment - Ecological Restoration

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- 2) returning natural or historical functions or services or
- 3) protecting or improving resiliency.

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The Nature Conservancy commends Senators Henson and Augustine for introducing this legislation and we look forward to continuing to work with MDE on implementation of ecological restoration projects.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report on SB 722.

audubon letter.pdf

Uploaded by: Jan de Regt

Position: FAV

Dear Senators Augustine and Henson,

I am writing on behalf of the Southern Maryland Audubon, which represents over 650 members across four counties bordering major rivers in Maryland and the Chesapeake Bay. Our members are deeply committed to preserving and enhancing the natural habitat in our region.

We strongly support the establishment of a definition for “Ecological Restoration” as proposed in Senate bill SB722 and House bill HB1155. Meaningful discussion must begin with clear, standardized terminology. Passing this legislation will ensure consistent understanding of ecological restoration and associated project types, reducing confusion and miscommunication in the permitting process for ecological restoration projects and increasing the pace with which these projects can address habitat and species loss.

Maryland’s tidal salt marshes are an iconic, natural habitat that defines our state’s cultural identity, but are in crisis today. Tidal salt marshes in Maryland are being lost at an accelerated rate. Unless significant progress is made in the next 15 years, we could lose them forever. Tidal salt marshes are vital to our members’ well-being and their livelihoods:

- Rural economies such as farming, forestry, and trapping, depend on tidal salt marshes acting as a protective buffer from rising waters and saltwater intrusion.
- Commercial fishing depends on tidal salt marshes to provide nurseries for many significant fish species
- Protection for storm surge and flooding is provided by the unique vegetation found in the marshes in the Chesapeake Bay region, which has the capacity to reduce the energy and destructiveness of storm surges
- Water quality is improved when tidal salt marshes absorb excess nutrients from stormwater runoff
- Maryland Recreation and tourism offers a variety of water activities and beachfront experiences. Tidal salt marshes protect our waterfront destinations from storm surge damage and support a wide range of recreational activities including trapping, hunting, fishing, birdwatching and kayaking.

Passing this bill and establishing an official state definition of “Ecological Restoration” will strengthen Maryland’s Climate Implementation Plans, enhance collaboration between state and federal partners and help ecological restoration projects keep pace with urgent threats facing our ecosystems.

Very respectfully,

Jan de Regt
Representing 650 members of Southern Maryland Audubon

SB722 Audubon.fav1.pdf

Uploaded by: Jim Brown

Position: FAV



Maryland Office
2901 E. Baltimore St
Baltimore, MD 21224

Feb 14, 2025

To: Chair Feldman and members of the Maryland Senate Committee on Education, Energy and the Environment

From: Jim Brown, Policy Director, Audubon Mid-Atlantic

Subject: Favorable Testimony for Maryland SB 722 Ecological Restoration

Audubon Mid-Atlantic submits this testimony in support of Senate Bill 722. Audubon Mid-Atlantic is the regional office of the National Audubon Society, representing over 35,000 Marylanders who advocate for the protection of birds, bird habitat, and policies aiming to protect both birds and human communities in the face of increasing environmental challenges, habitat loss, pollution, and climate change.

Science tells us birds are in decline due to climate change related habitat loss. 1/3 of all Maryland bird species experienced significant population declines in the past 50 years. SB 722 will position Maryland to slow this habitat loss while investing in natural systems to protect habitat, improve water quality and increase resiliency protections that the Chesapeake Bay, our tidal coastlines, forests and grasslands provide for the region's birds and people. One such program, Audubon's *Marshes for Tomorrow* initiative, works with state and federal government, local communities and non-government partners to maintain the best 29,000 acres of tidal salt marsh in Maryland, an ecosystem that is seriously at risk of erosion due to increased coastal flooding and sea level rise. As our [Marshes for Tomorrow](#) plan outlines, ecological restoration methods can save these vital marshes. Ecological restoration is an investment to support Maryland's economy, provide a protective buffer for coastal communities, strengthen our environment and save threatened species. Restoring these 29,000 acres helps protect imperiled wildlife, like the saltmarsh sparrow, which relies on these disappearing marshes for breeding. SB 722 will establish a solid building block for this approach and similarly important projects by establishing a consistent definition of ecological restoration in Maryland. A clear definition of Ecological Restoration will elevate these important projects and their many co-benefits to Maryland.

In 2024, as a result of 2022's HB 869 becoming law, The Maryland Department of the Environment released an *Ecological Restoration Study Report* recommending the General Assembly adopt the following definition for Ecological Restoration: "Activities undertaken with the goal of recovering, re-establishing, or enhancing a degraded, damaged, or destroyed ecosystem through: 1. improvements to physical, chemical, or biological characteristics or processes. 2. returning natural or historic functions or services; or 3. protecting or improving resiliency." Audubon believes this is necessary because there is an inconsistent understanding of ecological restoration and associated project types. The report suggests that without a clear definition for ecological restoration across state agencies and with the public, confusion and miscommunication will persist over what projects are included in ecological restoration planning, funding and permitting processes.

Additionally Ecological Restoration and Marsh Restoration are both referenced as practices by Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in their

Climate Implementation Plans. MDE, in their plan, notes that “Maryland’s Climate Pollution Reduction Plan calls for natural climate solutions achieved through afforestation, forest and coastal wetland management.” DNR’s Climate Implementation Plan mentions, “DNR is currently pursuing the creation, protection, and restoration of wetlands to promote carbon sequestration through several means including the Natural Filters Program provided through the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund. The Natural Filters Program restores wetlands and buffers on state and public lands to meet water quality goals.” Lastly, Maryland’s Climate Adaptation and Resilience Framework identifies ‘Nature-based design’ as a climate change adaptation through a state initiative entitled “Resiliency through Restoration.” Defining Ecological restoration as outlined in SB 722 will strengthen these already identified state policy and planning goals.

Protecting Maryland’s Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays tidal salt marshes is a top priority for Audubon in Maryland. A consistent definition of Ecological Restoration in Maryland will help Audubon, and our partners collaborate with Maryland State and Federal partners to promote and implement these practices. It will also help Maryland communicate how Ecological Restoration projects help the state reach our habitat, climate, and conservation goals. These disappearing marshes are critically important to Maryland’s cultural, economic, geographic and environmental identity. Investing in them will take a multipronged approach and significant collaboration. Having an agreed-upon definition of Ecological Restoration will help this collaboration. SB 722 helps advance these critical considerations for the benefits that the tidal salt marshes bring to Maryland’s bird habitat, our water quality, and local economies. Restoration of Maryland’s iconic salt marshes support a broad range of livelihoods and economies in Maryland.

Ecological Restoration of Maryland’s Tidal Salt Marshes directly support:

- Sustenance of fisheries, supporting over \$600 million of the Maryland seafood industry’s impact on the Maryland Economy
- Providing the places and natural infrastructure for \$951 million in outdoor recreation spending annually in coastal Maryland
- A protective natural buffer to the \$1 Billion agriculture economy of Maryland

Codifying a definition of Ecological Restoration in law tells the public, local government, state agencies and nongovernment partners that ecological restoration and natural climate solutions are valuable tools to help the state meet our climate goals, habitat goals, our Chesapeake and Coastal Bays water quality goals, our forest canopy coverage goals, and ever important tidal marsh conservation goals. Audubon believes Ecological Restoration should be an agreed-upon principle, practice and tool that the state has in its options to fund, permit and implement in saving Maryland’s iconic landscapes, and keeping our ecosystems healthy and vibrant. Doing so will keep our local economies viable, prevent the mass extinction of birds and protect Maryland residents’ lives, livelihoods and communities.

Senate Bill 722 will hold Maryland up as a national leader in habitat protection and conservation planning, while strengthening efforts to protect our important ecosystems.

Audubon Mid-Atlantic respectfully urges a favorable review of Senate Bill 722.

Thank You,

Jim Brown, Policy Director, Audubon Mid-Atlantic

SB0722 Department of the Environment - Ecological

Uploaded by: Julia Lawrence

Position: FAV



SB0722
Department of the Environment - Ecological Restoration
Testimony before Energy, Education and Environment Committee
Hearing February 18, 2025
Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Feldman and Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the committee, my name is Julia Lawrence, and I represent the 900+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today **in support of SB0722**, and we thank Senator Henson and Senator Augustine for sponsoring this bill.

SB0722 would define “ecological restoration” as an activity undertaken with the goal of recovering, re-establishing, or enhancing a degraded, damaged, or destroyed ecosystem through:

1. improvements to physical, chemical, or biological characteristics or processes
2. returning natural or historical functions or services
3. protecting or improving resiliency

Ecological restoration involves providing services which revive the natural processes, structures, and biodiversity that characterize healthy ecosystems. These services can include carbon sequestration, water filtration, soil stabilization, and habitat provision for diverse species. [1] Without ecology restoration, the delicate balance of ecosystems would continue to decline with dire results. [2] The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) would update any relevant regulation to incorporate the definition of ecological restoration or be consistent with the definition of ecological restoration. This would take effect October 1, 2025.

SB0722 is important because across MDE stakeholder collaboration meetings [3], it was evident that there was an inconsistent understanding of ecological restoration and associated project types. Without a clear definition for ecological restoration across state agencies and with the public, confusion and miscommunication would persist over what projects are being included in ecological restoration permitting processes. **A clear definition of ecological restoration will create consistency and expand permitting authority to MDE for qualifying ecological restoration projects.** [4]

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

Julia Lawrence
Columbia, MD 21044

Sources and Notes:

[1] [Ecological Restoration: The Incredible Power to Heal Nature – Forestry.com](#)

[2] [Ecology Restoration Techniques & Examples | What is Ecology Restoration? - Lesson | Study.com](#)

[3] MDE conducted a comprehensive study on ecological restoration and stakeholder engagement between October 2022 and February 2024. MDE consulted with Maryland state agencies, federal agencies, local governments, community environmental-based advocacy organizations, non-governmental environmental organizations, and academic representatives through 6 stakeholder meetings. The Department also reached out to 6 mid-Atlantic jurisdictions (including Delaware, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington, D.C., and West Virginia). [MDE Ecological Restoration Study Report 2024.docx](#)

[4] Ibid.

HB722RestorationDefASCM19Feb2025.pdf

Uploaded by: Julie Dunlap

Position: FAV



Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

Testimony on: S.B. 722 Department of the Environment – Ecological Restoration

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 19, 1 pm

I am the volunteer Advocacy Chair for the Audubon Society of Central Maryland. ASCM is a 501C3 nonprofit with a mission to protect birds, other wildlife, and their habitats, and we recognize ecological restoration as a powerful and creative approach to human interventions in the natural world. By returning natural processes to normal function, it fosters healing of species, ecosystems, and human-nature relationships that we all depend upon to survive and thrive. Grounded in ecological science, ecological restoration is pursued globally and at ASCM's two wildlife sanctuaries in Frederick County as an efficient and effective way to mitigate climate change and biodiversity loss, but it has not yet been clearly defined by the Maryland state government to facilitate state projects and state-non-profit collaborations. ASCM strongly supports SB 722, the Ecological Restoration Definition Act of 2025.

Early attempts at correcting human damage to natural communities often involved simple replacement of missing components, such as releasing bobwhite quail where they had disappeared due to overhunting and habitat loss. Pioneering studies in the 1930s revealed that sustained recovery of wildlife species requires an understanding of their year-round ecological needs and long-term efforts to repair and recover to pre-disturbance levels. As ecological science has progressed, the record of successful restorations has grown but so has complexity of planning and executing these long-term projects.

At ASCM sanctuaries, restoration projects have included removal of invasive species, planting of natives, and streambank erosion prevention, some supported by state funding. Even on our small properties, planning to repair damage from farming would be facilitated with a state definition of ecological restoration. Larger scale Audubon projects, such as salt marsh restoration on the Eastern Shore, would benefit even more from a clear, science-based, and widely-accepted definition of the goals and objectives of restoration activities. As climate change and biodiversity loss accelerate, the ability to identify, plan, and implement ecological restoration projects with clear aims becomes ever-more urgent. In 2025, Maryland can take a leadership role in fostering biodiversity, forest health, water quality, and a healthy climate by defining ecological restoration for projects throughout the state.

P.O. Box 660
Mt. Airy, MD 21776
www.centralmdaudubon.org



ASCM's members throughout Howard, Carroll, and Frederick counties care about wildlife diversity and abundance throughout the state. Volunteers at ASCM's Audrey Carroll Wildlife Sanctuary in Mount Airy and Fred Archibald Sanctuary in New Market have worked to restore warm season grasslands, streams, and woodland habitat for Maryland birds and other wildlife. We urge you to pass the deeply important Ecological Restoration Act of 2025 to assure that restoration work continues and expands, healing our lands and waters and all that life that depends upon them.

Julie Dunlap, PhD
Advocacy Chair
Audubon Society of Central Maryland
P.O. Box 660
Mt. Airy, MD 21771

P.O. Box 660
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www.centralmdaudubon.org

Support Letter_SB0722.pdf

Uploaded by: Kevin Smith

Position: FAV



MARYLAND COASTAL BAYS PROGRAM

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February 14, 2025

Senator Brian J. Feldman
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West Wing
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

Support for SB 722

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee,

The Maryland Coastal Bays Program thanks you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **Support of SB 722**. The Coastal Bays Program is a local watershed organization in Worcester County. Our mission is the protection, preservation and restoration of waters in the 5 coastal bays that make up our watershed. As part of our mission, we undertake many ecosystem restoration and enhancement projects within the watershed.

Ecological Restoration is an often used term; however, the meaning of the term is not always well understood. Consistency across state agencies and other organizations would be a benefit to the citizens of Maryland and those of us who work in the field of ecological restoration.

Ecological restoration will be a cornerstone to achieving mandated goals for the Chesapeake and Coastal Bays watersheds. This will be aided by the recognition of an accepted definition. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment and we are very appreciative of your committee's leadership in moving forward with the passage of SB 722.

Sincerely,

Kevin M. Smith, Executive Director
Maryland Coastal Bays Program

sb722 ecological restoration EEE 2-18-2025.pdf

Uploaded by: Lee Hudson

Position: FAV



Delaware-Maryland Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Testimony Prepared for the
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
on
Senate Bill 722
February 18, 2025
Position: **Favorable**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify for stewardship of creation. I am Lee Hudson, assistant to the bishop for public policy in the Delaware-Maryland Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We are a faith community with three synods in every part of our State.

Our community addressed concern for a safe, healthy living planet that sustains life with "Caring for Creation" (ELCA, 1993). We are committed to protection, preservation, and restoration of natural gifts.

Our support for this bill is based on our understanding of what it can accomplish according to the fiscal note: *This bill addresses one of the recommendations included in the Ecological Restoration Permitting Study Report... Specifically, the report recommended that the General Assembly should adopt a definition for ecological restoration that is consistent with the definition included in the bill*

That authorized study has produced to a regulatory standard for restoration projects that may be undertaken in the State; perhaps with public permitting and financing. We concur with that goal to better ensure that environmental standards do as intended to preserve and remediate.

We ask your favorable report for **Senate Bill 722**.

Lee Hudson

SB722sponsor testimony final.pdf

Uploaded by: Linda Hanifin Bonner

Position: FAV

SHANEKA HENSON
Legislative District 30
Anne Arundel County

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Joint Committee on Children,
Youth, and Families



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SPONSOR TESTIMONY

Senate Bill 722

**Department of the Environment - Ecological Restoration
(Cross filed with HB1155 - Delegate Dana Stein)**

Chairman Feldman and Committee Members

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce and provide important details regarding SB 722-
Department of the Environment – Ecological Restoration

For the record, I am Senator Shaneka Helson from the 30th Legislative District of Anne Arundel County, MD. Senator Augustine and I thank you for the opportunity to introduce and present information about this legislation.

The origins of this bill evolved from legislation adopted in 2022 and a report to the Maryland General Assembly recommending the adoption of a definition for Ecological Restoration. As stated in the report, the Maryland Department of the Environment and its supporting advocates recognized the inconsistency of terminology and lack of understanding of the intent of the environmental work to be pursued through ecological restoration.

SB722 proposes to define the term “ecological restoration” as an activity undertaken with the goal of recovering, re–establishing, or enhancing a degraded, damaged, or destroyed ecosystem through specified measures. It requires the Department of the Environment to update its regulations, as appropriate, to incorporate the definition of ecological restoration or be consistent with the definition of ecological restoration.

Joining us today to elaborate further on the reasons for these changes,

- Maryland Department of the Environment
- Audubon Society-Mid-Atlantic
- Nature Conservancy
- Assateague Coastal Trust

After you hear the testimony from those here today, I urge that you give a favorable report to SB 722.

SB 722 - National Aquarium - Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Maggie Ostdahl

Position: FAV



Date: February 18, 2025

Bill: SB 722 - Department of the Environment - Ecological Restoration

Position: Support

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable report for **Senate Bill 722**, which will define “ecological restoration” as an activity undertaken with the goal of recovering, re-establishing, or enhancing a degraded, damaged or destroyed ecosystem through specified measures, and require the Department of the Environment to update its regulations to incorporate or be consistent with this definition.

One of the National Aquarium’s three overarching conservation goals is to save wildlife and habitats. We work with communities and partners on restoration efforts in several areas around the state and throughout our Chesapeake Bay watershed. In 2024, we completed and opened a free outdoor floating wetland exhibit between the piers of the National Aquarium campus on Baltimore’s Inner Harbor, allowing visitors to experience diverse native flora and fauna in an innovative re-created salt marsh. The exhibit reestablishes wetland habitat and function to a post-industrial harbor and is one example of ecological restoration in action.

Establishing in statute a definition of Ecological Restoration will clarify a shared understanding among agencies, local government partners, non-governmental organizations and the public that ecological restoration and natural climate solutions are valuable and necessary approaches to help the state meet our climate, habitat and water quality goals. An established definition will contribute to ongoing collaboration and help leverage additional public and private resources to fund, permit and implement ecological restoration projects that lead to healthier and more resilient watersheds for people and wildlife.

We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 722.

Contact:

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SB722_Department of the Environment - Ecological R

Uploaded by: Marisa Olszewski

Position: FAV



**MARYLAND
LEAGUE OF
CONSERVATION
VOTERS**

Kim Coble
Executive Director

2025 Board of
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February 18, 2025

SUPPORT: SB722 - Department of the Environment - Ecological Restoration

Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

Maryland LCV supports Senate Bill 722 and we thank Senator Henson for advancing this legislation.

Incorporating a definition of ecological restoration into statute that can be used and understood across our State agencies was the first recommendation in the Maryland Department of the Environment's Ecological Restoration Study Report (2024)¹. Doing so will eliminate confusion across agencies and with the public as to what projects are and are not included in ecological restoration permits.

This simple act of advancing a single definition will support essential ecological restoration projects across our state providing clarity, especially for permitting. Having this definition in place will support the advancement of the natural climate solutions called for in our state's Climate Implementation Plan. It will help to more rapidly address habitat loss in Maryland and expand efforts to restore vital ecosystems, like the salt marshes along our coasts, threatened by sea level rise.

Maryland LCV supports incorporating the definition of ecological restoration as written in SB722 and we urge a favorable report on this bill.

¹ Available online:

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

Testimony of Dr Mark Southerland for SB 722 Ecolog

Uploaded by: Mark Southerland

Position: FAV



SB 722 Ecological Restoration Definition

TESTIMONY of DR. MARK SOUTHERLAND for VERNAL POOL PARTNERS -- **Favorable**

I received a Ph.D. and Smithsonian Fellowship in freshwater ecology and have consulted for federal, state, and local agencies on water resource issues for 30 years. I am the founder of **Vernal Pool Partners** and have served with the Maryland Academy of Sciences' Science Council, Maryland Water Monitoring Council, Howard County Environmental Sustainability Board, Howard County Conservancy, Patapsco Heritage Greenway, and Safe Skies Maryland.

Summary. In 2024, as a result of HB 869 of 2022 becoming law, The Maryland Department of the Environment released an Ecological Restoration Study Report recommending the General Assembly adopt the following definition for Ecological Restoration:

“Activities undertaken with the goal of recovering, re-establishing, or enhancing a degraded, damaged, or destroyed ecosystem through:

1. improvements to physical, chemical, or biological characteristics or processes.
2. returning natural or historic functions or services; or
3. protecting or improving resiliency.”

Under this bill, State Agencies will incorporate the statutory definition of ecological restoration in regulation to **eliminate confusion and ensure that appropriate projects are being included in a streamlined ecological restoration permitting process.**

Benefits. Having an official state definition of Ecological Restoration will allow ecological restoration projects throughout Maryland to keep pace with accelerating threats to our ecosystems and public health. This bill will create a unified understanding of ecological restoration, increasing collaboration between state and federal partners and leveraging more federal resources for projects in Maryland. Lastly, it will increase the role of Ecological Restoration as tool for investing in Maryland's agricultural, tourism, fisheries industries and local economies.

The Time is Now. Millions of dollars of restoration is continuing in Maryland, so this definition must be applied to ensure the benefits to our citizens are maximized and cost-effective.

SB 722 - CBF - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Matt Stegman

Position: FAV



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,
MD Staff Scientist

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

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403

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.

Assateague Coastal Trust - SB 0722 - Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Taylor Swanson

Position: FAV



SENATE BILL 0722 - Department of the Environment - Ecological Restoration

POSITION: FAVORABLE

February 14, 2025

Dear Chair Feldman and Honorable Members of this Committee,

I am writing to express my strong **SUPPORT** for **Senate Bill 0722** - Department of the Environment - Ecological Restoration, which seeks to define the term "ecological restoration" in the context of Maryland's regulatory framework. **This bill is a vital step toward addressing the urgent threats to Maryland's landscapes and habitats, and I urge you to consider its swift passage.**

Assateague Coastal Trust serves more than 800 square miles of Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore, including Worcester and portions of Wicomico and Somerset Counties, in its mission to safeguard clean water rights for residents and visitors to the region. We speak on behalf of our membership, residents and visitors alike, who share a common interest in the health of the Coastal Bays located behind Assateague Island, and the southern tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay.

Ecological restoration efforts are crucial to the long-term health and resilience of Maryland's coastal ecosystems, particularly in light of the increasing pressures from climate change, rapid sea-level rise, and habitat degradation. Without official definition there is room for confusion and miscommunication, impeding effective decision-making and project permitting processes.

The lack of clarity has serious consequences for the protection of our natural resources. Maryland's critical marsh and wetland restoration efforts are not able to keep pace with the immediate and mounting threats to our ecosystems. This is especially concerning as we confront the loss of key species and the degradation of habitats like our tidal salt marshes, which are essential for biodiversity and serve as a buffer against climate impacts.

By establishing an official state definition for "ecological restoration," we can:

- Support the State of Maryland Climate Implementation Plans, which include natural climate solutions such as marsh restoration, increased tidal wetland coverage, and tree

canopy expansion. These solutions are vital for Maryland's response to and preparedness for climate change.

- Help address the alarming habitat and species loss, including the protection of the threatened Saltmarsh Sparrow, which depends on Maryland's tidal salt marshes.
- Ensure that ecological restoration projects along Maryland's coasts can respond rapidly to the challenges posed by sea-level rise, enabling us to protect these valuable ecosystems.
- Expand restoration efforts across the Lower Eastern Shore to protect vital ecosystems and cultural landscapes along Maryland's iconic coastlines.
- Foster a unified understanding of ecological restoration, increasing collaboration between state and federal partners, and enabling Maryland to leverage additional federal resources for restoration projects.
- Strengthen the role of ecological restoration in supporting Maryland's agricultural, tourism, and fisheries industries, boosting local economies and ensuring the sustainability of these critical sectors.

In summary, Senate Bill 722 is a necessary and timely piece of legislation that will allow Maryland to better manage its environmental restoration efforts, ensuring they align with the state's climate goals, protect critical habitats, and promote collaboration among stakeholders. A clear definition of "ecological restoration" will provide consistency across agencies, making it easier to streamline funding and implement effective, science-based restoration projects.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. I urge you to support Senate Bill 722 to safeguard Maryland's natural resources and ensure a healthy, resilient environment for future generations.

Sincerely,

Taylor Swanson
Assateague Coastal Trust
Executive Director & Assateague Coastkeeper
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www.ACTforBays.org

MDE SB722 SWA.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Jeremy D. Baker

Position: FWA



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

***Senate Bill 722
Department of the Environment - Ecological Restoration***

Position: Support with Amendments
Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Date: February 18, 2025
From: Alex Butler, Deputy Director of Government Relations

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) **SUPPORTS SB 722 WITH AMENDMENTS.**

Bill Summary

Senate Bill 722 adds a new Subtitle 10, “Ecological Restoration,” to the Environment Article. The bill creates a definition for “ecological restoration” and requires MDE to update relevant regulations to align with this definition.

Position Rationale

The definition of “ecological restoration” proposed in SB 722 is consistent with the definition MDE put forth in Recommendation 1A of its Ecological Restoration Permitting Study Report (submitted to the Governor and General Assembly on August 6, 2024). In this report, MDE recommended that the proposed definition should be adopted by the General Assembly and supports this section of the bill.

The term “ecological restoration” does not appear in existing regulations based on a cursory review by MDE and there is the potential for a significant fiscal impact and increased operational impact if MDE needs to conduct a large-scale review and overhaul of regulations.

After discussion with the bill stakeholders, MDE understands there is an agreement to strike the regulations requirement from the bill, removing the fiscal and operational impacts.

For the reasons detailed above MDE asks for a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report for SB 722.

Amendment

[Strikes regulation review and update requirement from bill]

On page 1, strike beginning with “requiring” on line 5 down through “restoration;” in line 8, inclusive; and in line 11 strike “and 1-1002”.

On page 2, strike beginning with “**1-1002.**” in line 6 down through “**RESTORATION.**” in line 12, inclusive.

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