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

Environment & Transportation Committee
March 26, 2025

Dear Chair Korman 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.

Thank you for advancing the companion bill HB1155 through the House. Arundel Rivers 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** without any additional amendments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elle Bassett".

Elle Bassett
South, West and Rhode Riverkeeper
Arundel Rivers Federation