

February 24, 2025

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: Department of the Environment - Ecological Restoration

Position: Support HB 1155

Dear Chair Korma, Vice Chair Boyce and Committee Members,

I write on behalf of the Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) in strong support of HB1155.

The threats to Maryland's fields, forests, marshes, rivers and the Bay are increasingly severe and frequent. Prominent among these are sea level rise, hotter summers, more violent storms, invasive species (both plant and animal), and contamination by pesticides, PFAS ('forever chemicals') and other harmful synthetic chemicals. In order to combat these threats, Maryland authorities, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the general public have a lot of work to do to achieve ecological restoration. To be effective, this restoration needs to be clearly and unambiguously defined so that all parties know what needs to be done. Some examples of how clearly defined ecological restoration will help restore Maryland's natural environment:

Maryland's Climate Implementation Plans, which needs to increase tidal wetland coverage, marsh restoration and increased tree canopy coverage to prepare for climate change.

Whole Watershed Act investments, which will be used to restore essential ecosystems and the cultural landscapes of Maryland's beautiful coastlines.

Restoration of Maryland's salt marshes along the Bay, which will benefit of the Saltmarsh Sparrow and other threatened wildlife.

Projects along Maryland shores, which will mitigate the impacts of sea level rise.

Ecological restoration will help Maryland's agricultural, tourism, fisheries industries and local economies.

From a birder's perspective, two examples would be the restoration of grasslands, to benefit the now uncommon Henslow's Sparrow, and the restoration of early successional woodland, which will help the now rare Golden-winger warbler.

HB1155 would define ecological restoration as:

1. enhanced physical, chemical, or biological characteristics or processes.
2. restoring natural or historic functions or services; or
3. protecting or increasing resiliency.

We need an all hands-on-deck effort to combating the multiple threats to Maryland's habitat, passing HB1155 will be an essential first step in this effort.

MOS was founded in 1945 and is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization. It now has about 2000 members and consists of 15 chapters throughout the state. Our mission is to study, conserve and enjoy wild birds and their habitats, with special emphasis on birds which spend at least part of their lives in our state. We are also keenly interested in the health of the various habitats upon which these birds depend. We hold regular bird

walks, host lectures on bird-related topics, have a very active youth group, hold an annual convention and own 10 sanctuaries scattered through the state (all of which are open to the public at no charge).

We ask that HB1155 be given a favorable report.

Sincerely,



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MOS Conservation Chair

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