

DANA M. STEIN
Legislative District 11B
Baltimore County

—
SPEAKER PRO TEM
—

Environment and Transportation
Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Environment

Natural Resources,
Agriculture and Open Space



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 301
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3527 · 301-858-3527
800-492-7122 Ext. 3527
Dana.Stein@house.state.md.us

The Maryland House of Delegates
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Delegate Dana Stein Testimony in Support of HB 1155
Department of the Environment – Ecological Restoration

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

In 2022, we passed HB 869 “Wetlands and Waterways Program Division-Permitting for Ecological Restoration Projects-Required Study,” requiring the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to study and report to the Governor and General Assembly on permitting for ecological restoration. That report was published last year, and among other recommendations, it called on the General Assembly to adopt a definition for ecological Restoration.

As recommended by MDE, this legislation enacts that definition as: “1. improvements to physical, chemical, or biological characteristics or processes. 2. returning natural or historic functions or services; or 3. protecting or improving resiliency.”

Having this definition will be a critical to elevating "ecological restoration" as a tool for Maryland's response to climate change and habitat loss. In the future, it will enable the establishment of a special permitting track for ecological restoration projects to expedite their implementation. It will also create the possibility of a special funding source for ecological restoration projects, (perhaps similar to Whole Watershed). But, in the short-term, having the definition will accelerate the important Tidal Marsh Restoration work currently underway on throughout the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Coastal Bay watersheds. These marshes filter our water, protect our coastlines, sequester carbon, and provide shelter to threatened species.

I believe enacting the definition will be an important first step in accelerating:

- Tidal marsh restoration (which protects habitat, buffers communities and agricultural land from sea level rise, and protects the bay's fisheries and nurseries)
- Rebuilding disappearing islands (using dredged material from the state's ports)
- Saving important cultural landmarks such as Harriet Tubman's Heritage Area
- The implementation of MDE's and DNR's Climate Implementation Plans.

I urge you to pass this simple, but very important legislation.