

Committee: House Environment and Transportation

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

Position: Support

I am the Board of Directors President of the Audubon Society of Central Maryland (ASCM). ASCM is a 501C3 nonprofit owning and managing two wildlife sanctuaries totaling 270 acres in Frederick, County, Maryland. We dedicate ourselves and our efforts to providing safe habitat for birds and other wildlife. We're doing this in the face of substantial housing developments in this part of the state. It's quite a challenge, but we're up to it.

However, we really need your support. Ecological restoration is a powerful and creative approach to human interventions in the natural world. The positive impact of returning natural processes to normal function is substantial. It enables the healing of species, ecosystems, and human-nature relationships that we all depend upon to survive and thrive. Ecological restoration is practiced world-wide. We urge your support in our little corner of the world so that we can do our part to mitigate climate change and biodiversity loss. The ASCM strongly supports the Ecological Restoration Definition Act of 2025 and requests that the Maryland state government clearly support the Act to facilitate state projects and state-non-profit collaborations.

Fortunately, ecological science has progressed to the point where successful restoration is more prevalent. But a variety of other factors has enhanced the complexity of planning and executing these long-term projects. And the ability to provide sustainable recovery of wildlife habitat/species clearly requires deeper understanding of the ecological needs of wildlife.

In striving to do our part, we have implemented restoration projects at our two sanctuaries including the ongoing battle to remove invasive species, the strategic planting of natives, and streambank erosion prevention. Some of these efforts have been supported by state funding. Beyond Frederick County, 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.

We thank you for the support already exhibited. We understand companion bill HB 1155 has advanced through the House. Please support Maryland taking a leadership role in fostering biodiversity, forest health, water quality, and a healthy climate by moving this Senate bill favorably without any additional amendments. And please know that ASCM's members throughout central Maryland seek your support as collaboration to the work we do at our Audrey Carroll Wildlife Sanctuary in Mount Airy and Fred Archibald Sanctuary in New Market.

With gratitude,

Tom Rogers

President, ASCM Board of Directors