



Eyes of Paint Branch

Grassroots Conservation, Education, and Action for the Paint Branch and its Watershed

Senate Bill 0722

Department of the Environment – Definition of Ecological Restoration

Date: March 24, 2025

Position: Support with Amendments

To: Environment and Transportation Committee

From: David Dunmire, EOPB President

Eyes of Paint Branch (EOPB) **SUPPORTS SB 0722 WITH AMENDMENTS.**

I am writing as a volunteer with a non-profit watershed conservation organization, as well as a participant in the recent Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) Ecological Restoration Permitting Study. House Bill 869 of 2022 required MDE to conduct a comprehensive study, analysis, and evaluation of the ecological restoration permitting process in Maryland. The bill also required the Department to consult and coordinate with a diverse range of stakeholders in this study, and to publish a final report.

While MDE included representatives from many different organizations in the study, our involvement was highly managed. MDE typically posed specific questions to the participants and summarized our responses, but there was little discussion or debate, and no involvement in any decision-making. It seemed as if MDE was going through the motions of public participation because it was required. For example, we had no involvement in the formulation of findings or recommendations; nor did we have any involvement whatsoever in the final report, all despite repeated urging from several participants. Consequently, MDE's definition of ecological restoration should be regarded as strictly an MDE product, and not representative of a process involving coordination with a diverse range of stakeholders.

Therefore, we strongly urge that the definition of ecological restoration in HB1155 be modified in the following small but essential way:

On page 2, line 4, item (1) IMPROVEMENTS TO PHYSICAL, CHEMICAL, OR BIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OR PROCESSES

Change “OR BIOLOGICAL” to “AND BIOLOGICAL.”

Current laws and regulations already include physical and chemical measures and metrics. It is the addition of biological measures and metrics to the restoration process that is central to the difference between present-day restoration and ecological restoration. It is essential that biology be included in ecological restorations as a requirement, not an option. Without the biological there is no ecological.

EOPB urges the Committee's FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS report on SB 0722.