

Stream and Floodplain Restoration Projects-
Requirements And Limitations

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy,
and Environment Committee,

My name is Roger Davis, I am with Save Font Hill Wetland Park in Ellicott City. I am writing to express my strong support for SB688. My first notice of a stream restoration was the sound of chainsaws and bulldozers removing acres of a unique ecosystem in 2017. These woods provided deep shade to the stream and the wetland was covered with acres of skunk cabbage that stills tries to come back each year but it gets baked in the sun and dies. The stream is often choked with algae due to the increased sunlight. When that algae dies it is eaten by bacteria that consumes the oxygen in the water. Many of the saplings that replaced the mature trees have died and were never replaced. Noone in my neighborhood knew anything about the project. People that used a footbridge to cross the stream every day had no idea about the project. The contractor claims that in 20 years the streams will be in deep shade with cool water. There will not be shade because the trees have died. The picture shows what happens when one rock falls out of place.



In 2023 my neighbors and I helped stop the Plumtree Branch stream restoration that was estimated to cost 1.8 million dollars. One of the biggest problems we had was the inadequate notice of the project, and the misinformation provided about the project. What is on the technical documents is not honestly presented in their public documents and presentations. At one meeting the county denied knowledge of a 1000 ft. auxiliary truck path that had already been surveyed and staked that would require the removal of an additional 600 trees! When talking about tree removal they only acknowledged the 46 trees over 12" ignoring the hundreds of other trees to be removed. The majority of the trees proposed in the replanting plan were 1" saplings. The county claimed on its MDE permit application that the streambanks were eroding at rates that could not possibly be true given the mature trees straddling the stream at many locations. In the picture below are mature trees on the right and a hill on the left. These streambanks have not moved in decades. Peter Wilcock, now Professor Emeritus of watershed sciences at Utah State University, was a professor at the Johns Hopkins University until 2014, and he takes issue with how Rosgen's approach (to stream restorations) has been applied in Maryland. For example, he says, it tends to identify streams as rapidly eroding

because they have tall, bare banks. Some of these streams are indeed eroding, but others stopped eroding years ago and have remained stable since. "Bank erosion is too complex, too episodic, and controlled by too many factors to predict its rate based on the presence of bare banks," Wilcock says.



In their NPDES permit Annual Update 22, on page 57, in response to a comment from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation concerning stream restoration failures, Howard County responded "Except for one or two times where we've needed to do localized repairs, which were done by manual labor or with a small piece of equipment, the projects have been successful." At the Font Hill Wetland Park the county is proposing the third stream restoration since the park was built in 2007. In 2019 they added 4 stone walls, two of which have collapsed so now they are proposing to repair those two walls and build

additional walls. Typically, Howard County holds their first public meeting on a capital project at the 60 % design phase. On this project they waited until they received their permit and then held a public meeting in September 2025, and then proposed starting in the winter. The meeting notification signs were posted on park paths rather than the street. So their new strategy is to limit public notice and rush the beginning of work. This park has had bald eagles, beaver(which have been killed), river otters, heron, a barred owl nesting right in a proposed work area, and a rare leucistic cardinal. This leucistic cardinal named Lucy is also mostly seen in the same work area. Lucy actually draws birders from Virginia an Pennsylvania. Park and Rec actually put up a fence and sign to keep birders out of the woods to prevent damage to the habitat. They are now proposing to bulldoze that area to build a wall that has a 50% chance of success.





On this project Howard County claims to be removing only 8 trees. The 2025 original project scope on their MDE permit called for the disturbance of 1.75 acres. There will actually be hundreds of trees removed. My tree count includes saplings which have a much better chance of surviving than those planted during the two previous restorations. During the 2007 project alone the county claimed to have planted “2000 trees and shrubs”, there is little evidence that many of these survived. One resident at the meeting (that I didn’t know about) expressed concern about fireflies. The Project manager replied “We are only looking at 8 trees and there are probably 30 or 40 Ash trees that have come down, so they should be alright.” Fireflies actually winter in dead trees and underground the 1.75 acres that will be bulldozed. They will not be alright.

I hope I have made the case for Section 18-102(c)(7) - The Department’s assessment review shall include WHETHER PROJECT COMMUNITY NOTIFICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS WERE COMPLETE AND CONSISTENT WITH THE TECHNICAL MATERIALS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT.

At another meeting I attended, there was much talk about the stream encroaching on someones property and the damage to his fence. The project managers were presenting themselves as responsive government employees who were there to help. There was little talk of the stream restoration and lots of talk about keeping it out of peoples yards. The project

area was a heavily wooded area separating the back yards of two rows of homes. There was no talk of tree removal until I asked during the Q & A how much tree removal there would be. They said there would be some tree removal. The picture below shows what Howard County means by some. I think it would be a conservative estimate to say these \$800,000 homes lost \$ 20,000 in value.



The consistent dishonesty about tree removal and project scope needs to be stopped.

On a community FAQ sheet about the Font Hill Project they state: “ Is this project being done to earn Chesapeake Bay or MS4 credits? No. While Maryland counties must meet stormwater management requirements under the MS4 permit program, this project is not being pursued primarily to generate Bay or MS4 credits.” The table below show every stream restoration project planned in 2017 is for MS4 credits.

Note: Project Planning List as of December 2017, subject to change.

Project Name	Proposed BMP Type	Watershed	Projected Impervious Credit	FY Funding Year - Estimated Cost -		FY Funding Year - Estimated Cost -	
				Design	Design	Construction	Construction
Ashton Woods (F90-011)	New BMP	Patapsco LN Branch	5.0	PF	PF	FY19	\$500,000
Beech Creek	Pond Repair	Little Patuxent	25.1	PF	PF	FY18	\$500,000
Brentwood Manor - Gatewood Drive	Sand Filter	Little Patuxent	3.3	FY18	\$66,719	FY19	\$300,000
Brentwood Manor (DOR-SR-F906/DOR-SR-F907)	Stream Restoration	Little Patuxent	20.4	FY18	\$65,799	FY19	\$800,000
Churchill Way Outfall Stabilization	Outfall Stabilization	Middle Patuxent	2.0	PF	PF	FY18	\$149,503
Columbia Medical Campus	Submerged Gravel Wetlands	Little Patuxent	8.0	FY19	\$90,000	FY20	\$500,000
Country Meadows	New BMP	Little Patuxent	5.0	PF	PF	FY18	\$1,200,000
Courthouse	New BMP	Patapsco LN Branch	2.0	PF	PF	FY18	\$800,000
Cradlerock Way	Step Pool Storm Conveyance	Little Patuxent	2.3	PF	PF	FY18	\$106,160
Diversified Lane	New BMP	Patapsco LN Branch	8.5	PF	PF	FY19	\$800,000
Dobbin Road Commercial Center	Retention Pond (Wet Pond)	Little Patuxent	9.4	FY20	\$90,000	FY21	\$437,359
Ducketts Lane	Stream Restoration	Patapsco LN Branch	33.2	PF	PF	FY19	\$277,144
Ellicott City Parking Lot D Water Quality Enhancements	New BMP	Patapsco LN Branch	8.0	PF	PF	FY19	\$1,375,94
Ellicott View Pond - Opti	Wet Pond	Patapsco LN Branch	4.9	FY18	\$152,980	FY19	\$200,000
Font Hill Stream Restoration	Stream Restoration	Little Patuxent	20.0	FY18	\$350,000	FY19	\$2,950,000
George Howard Building Parking Lot	Bioretention	Patapsco LN Branch	2.0	PF	PF	FY18	\$800,000
Golden Coin Court	Retention Pond (Wet Pond)	Little Patuxent	9.9	FY19	\$90,000	FY20	\$227,240
Governor Martin	Outfall Stabilization	Patapsco LN Branch	4.0	PF	PF	FY18	\$500,000
Gwynn Park Drive	Stream Restoration	Little Patuxent	5.0	FY19	\$150,000	FY20	\$500,000
Heritage Woods Retrofit	Wet Pond	Little Patuxent	2.0	PF	PF	FY18	\$600,000
Kesting Court	Extended Detention Pond - Wetland	Patapsco LN Branch	4.0	FY19	\$90,000	FY20	\$242,090
Kings Meade	Sand Filter	Middle Patuxent	3.2	PF	PF	FY19	\$300,000
Longview Drive (3509) Stream Restoration	Stream Restoration	Little Patuxent	4.5	PF	PF	FY18	\$700,000
Mellen Court Stream Restoration and Outfall Stabilization	Stream Restoration	Little Patuxent	28.0	PF	PF	FY20	\$950,000
Mink Hollow - Stream	Stream Restoration	Rocky Gorge Dam	8.4	FY18	\$200,000	FY19	\$379,800
North Laurel Community Center	Stream Restoration	Patuxent River Upper	12.0	FY18	\$226,985	FY20	\$800,000
North Laurel Industrial Park	Stream Restoration	Patuxent River Upper	6.0	FY18	\$271,008	FY19	\$270,000
Nuetzel Stream	Stream Restoration	Little Patuxent	1.0	FY20	\$271,008	FY21	\$783,996
Old Annapolis Road	Retention Pond (Wet Pond)	Little Patuxent	14.5	FY20	\$90,000	FY21	\$428,480
Park Drive	Stream Restoration	Patapsco LN Branch	5.0	PF	PF	FY18	\$500,000
Patapsco Park Estates Repair and Retrofit	Extended Detention Structure, Wet	Patapsco LN Branch	5.0	FY18	\$90,000	FY20	\$277,165
Patrick Farm	Stream Restoration	Brighton Dam	64.0	PF	PF	FY18	\$2,471,000
Phelps Luck Stream	Stream Restoration	Little Patuxent	5.0	FY19	\$150,000	FY20	\$500,000
Plum Spring Lane (NLP-SR-F99a)	Stream Restoration	Little Patuxent	22.0	FY19	\$200,000	FY20	\$800,000
Quaker Mill Court	New BMP	Patapsco LN Branch	5.0	FY15	\$83,387	FY18	\$900,000
Red Hill Way Phase 2	Stream Restoration	Little Patuxent	4.5	PF	PF	FY18	\$184,152
Route 40 N (NLP-SR-F555b; Frederick Road - South)	Stream Restoration	Little Patuxent	14.0	PF	PF	FY18	\$900,000
Route 40 S (NLP-SR-F555a; Frederick Road - North)	Stream Restoration	Little Patuxent	13.0	PF	PF	FY18	\$800,000
Sante Fe Court	Stream Restoration	Little Patuxent	10.7	FY20	\$180,000	FY21	\$783,996
SHA Study A	Stream Restoration	Little Patuxent	17.3	FY20	\$200,000	FY21	\$700,000
SHA Study B	Stream Restoration	Little Patuxent	17.3	FY20	\$200,000	FY21	\$700,000

Whenever you ask Howard County about MS4 credits they say “We do not perform projects for credits.” In their NPDES annual report 30 on page 51 they state “Howard County continues to provide regular outreach to the public and specific stakeholders related to watershed management, associated infrastructure issues, capital project implementation for TMDL creditable projects.” They may be doing outreach, but they need to be compelled to tell the truth. To ensure the best outcomes for our watersheds and our communities, we must mandate transparency and early engagement. I urge a favorable report on SB688.

Thank You,

Roger Davis