

SUPPORT bills SB688 & HB1465 - "Stream and Floodplain Restoration Projects."

I have been an advocate for out-of-stream solutions to storm water issues in the Little Patuxent watershed since 2020. Along with other community activists, we were able to prevent a potentially highly destructive in-stream channel engineering project that would have removed miles of stream forest buffers from the beautiful streamside paths that meander through our neighborhoods. The project we stopped involved massive in-stream channel engineering coupled with a financing tool called a Mitigation Bank, that would have disrupted a cherished community environment for several generations.

My neighbors and I needed to undertake our own crash course in the so-called 'stream restoration' industry in order to save our streams. This involved researching local and regional scientific papers on the processes used and their results. We found rapid failures of the vast majority of suburban/urban in-stream projects, with few to no measurable benefits to the stream, the watershed, or the wildlife and human environments, and at great public financial cost before, during and after the work was done. At the same time, we were looking at actual on-the-ground results of these failed projects in neighboring communities, and speaking with residents and experts who knew, firsthand, what had been lost, and the untold downsides of these projects. Thankfully, as a community, we rallied to prevent the worst in our Village, but we were soon getting calls from others in our County and beyond, who were facing similar threats to their own cherished woodland streams and paths, so our advocacy continues, as we share what we have learned, and continue to learn, with others.

These bills encourage only necessary, effective stream restorations. The proposed law is an important step to protect our streams and their forested buffers from destruction and profiteering at the expense of our outdoor natural environments. Our interconnection with the natural world is irreplaceable to the wellbeing of our communities, now and for future generations.

These bills include an important requirement that an analysis of alternatives be done to evaluate out-of-stream bed stormwater control options. Some common alternatives include rain water harvesting, dry swales, permeable pavement, and forest planting with proper maintenance. Many, possibly most, out-of-stream practices are less expensive in overall short and long term costs, than most in-channel engineered 'stream restorations', and can provide more reliable, longer lasting and environmentally sound solutions to the problems presented.

Please vote a FAVORABLE report on SB688 and HB1465.