

Favorable Response to Proposed Stormwater Management Legislation

The proposed legislation represents a thoughtful and forward-looking approach to stormwater management, one that aligns with modern environmental science, fiscal responsibility, and long-term watershed resilience. By prioritizing proven practices and strengthening oversight of stream and floodplain restoration projects, the bill helps ensure that Maryland's investments in water quality deliver measurable, durable benefits.

1. Prioritizing Effective Stormwater Practices

Requiring the Department of the Environment to prioritize certain practices is a meaningful step toward ensuring that stormwater management strategies are grounded in evidence rather than convenience. This emphasis supports:

- Nature-based solutions that reduce runoff at its source
- Green infrastructure that provides co-benefits such as habitat, cooling, and community resilience
- Cost-effective interventions that reduce long-term maintenance burdens on local governments

This prioritization helps Maryland maximize environmental return on investment while supporting healthier, more resilient communities.

2. Strengthening Guardrails on Stream and Floodplain Restoration

The bill's restrictions on using stream or floodplain restoration projects to satisfy compensatory mitigation, permit obligations, or TMDL requirements address a long-standing concern: not all restoration projects are created equal. By establishing clearer limits and expectations, the legislation:

- Ensures that restoration is used appropriately and strategically, not as a default compliance shortcut
- Encourages higher-quality, ecologically sound projects that genuinely improve watershed function
- Reduces the risk of over-reliance on channel manipulation, which can be costly and sometimes counterproductive

These guardrails help protect both ecological integrity and public trust.

3. Improving Stormwater Management Plans

Requiring stormwater management plans that include stream-related projects to meet more rigorous standards is a practical and necessary update. This provision ensures that:

- Projects are designed with full watershed context, not in isolation
- Plans incorporate best-available science, including hydrology, geomorphology, and climate resilience
- Communities benefit from more predictable, transparent, and accountable project outcomes

This strengthens Maryland's overall stormwater program and supports long-term compliance with state and federal water quality goals.

Conclusion

Overall, the bill advances a more strategic, science-based, and accountable framework for stormwater management in Maryland. It promotes practices that deliver real environmental benefits, ensures responsible use of restoration projects, and enhances the quality and transparency of stormwater planning. These updates position the state to better protect waterways, reduce flooding risks, and support resilient communities for decades to come.