A Trout Unlimited Gold Chapter

RE: SB 688 – Environment – Stream and Floodplain Restoration Projects – Requirements and Limitations – UNFAVORABLE

On behalf of over 400 members of Maryland Trout Unlimited, we strongly oppose SB 688. As a cold-water conservation organization, Trout Unlimited recognizes the significant degradation our waterways have incurred since Post-Colonial Development (Jacobsen and Coleman 1986) and have seen firsthand the habitat and water quality improvements created by stream restoration across the country, including locally on the property of River Valley Ranch and the Eccleston Mitigation sites in Baltimore County, Maryland. These projects have increased habitats for cold-water species like our native Brook Trout and wild Brown Trout populations, as well as many bird, mammal, and amphibian species. SB 688 disregards many of the positives of stream restoration projects and appears to be written from a narrow, biased perspective that is ignorant of practical considerations and the overall state of the science on stormwater and ecological restoration. Implementation of stormwater and stream restoration together has proven beneficial where development has impacted our watersheds.

From our work with local government partners, we recognize that SB 688 eliminates tools and strategies for those teams to meet water quality obligations, significantly reducing Maryland's ability to meet environmental commitments under the federal Clean Water Act and the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan. This bill will result in fewer projects, that are more expensive and less effective at removing sediment from our waterways.

Sediment is one of the most important contributors to impairment within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, impacting light penetration, altering stream bed morphology, and degrading aquatic habitat such as SAV beds. Research has found that erosion of upload sources and stream corridors are among the largest sources of sediment in the Bay, with studies finding that stream banks can contribute over 50 percent to the fine-grained suspended sediment load in certain tributaries. Studies have found that stream restoration projects successfully improve bank stability, reduce total suspended solids, increase floodplain connectivity and nutrient processing, and improve aquatic habitat, all of which support meeting goals of reducing downstream sediment and pollutant loads.

While a variety of stormwater control measures can reduce runoff and peak discharges, they often do not consider sediment transport dynamics thus leading to channel instability over time. Thomson et al. (2018) performed a study in Montgomery County, Maryland to compare the impacts of different types of stormwater management on watershed hydrology and channel stability. Coupling a calibrated hydrologic and hydraulic model with a sediment transport model, the study revealed that infiltration practices aid hydrologic control and reduce long-term rates of erosion, but channel degradation continues regardless of the level of implemented stormwater management.

Our members recognize SB 688 is harmful to the health of the Chesapeake Bay. The bill likely represents the vision of short-sighted individuals, upset about the short-term loss of trees near their homes, not focused on long-term health of our waterways. We strongly recommend the Committee to issue an unfavorable report on SB 688.

Sincerely,

Rich Dennison

Vice President, Maryland Chapter of Trout Unlimited

References

Jacobsen, R. and D. J. Coleman. 1986. Stratigraphy and recent evolution of Maryland Piedmont floodplains. American Journal of Science 286: 617-637.

Thompson et al. 2018. The multi-scale effects of stream restoration on water quality. Ecological Engineering. 124:7-18.