

Written Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 688- HB1465

Submitted to: Environment and Transportation Committee

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Submitted by: Bryan Seipp- Sr. Environmental Scientist/Forester & Catoctin Land Trust
President

Chair Delegate Marc Korman and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 1465.

My perspective on this legislation comes from a forestry and ecological restoration standpoint. In practice, Maryland stream restoration projects already incorporate tools designed to minimize forest impacts, including tree preservation plans, invasive species management plans, and post-construction monitoring of vegetation and site stability.

Thoughtful project planning—particularly the placement of access roads, staging areas, and stockpile locations—can significantly reduce tree removal. Even where selective removal occurs, traditional forestry tools such as the Gingrich Forest Stand Stocking Chart show that forest stands can remain fully stocked and capable of sustaining long-term forest health.

In addition, restoration projects often provide opportunities to remove invasive vegetation within riparian corridors and support native forest regeneration. These efforts can improve species diversity and age-class diversity within the forest stand, strengthening long-term ecological resilience.

It is also important to recognize that in many degraded systems, trees are already being lost due to active stream erosion. On several streams I have worked on, particularly those experiencing severe headcutting, trees are actively eroding and falling into the channel as the headcut migrates upstream. In these situations, not undertaking restoration will not preserve those trees. Properly designed restoration projects can stabilize the channel and help preserve the remaining forest stands that would otherwise be lost as erosion progresses.

I also serve as President of the Catoctin Land Trust, one of the organizations participating in projects supported through Maryland's Whole Watershed Act. Through this work I have seen firsthand the high-quality watershed restoration efforts being carried out by local organizations and partners. Some of these projects include carefully sited stream restoration work supported by the community and designed specifically to achieve positive environmental outcomes. My concern with this bill is that it risks removing an important tool from the restoration toolbox for projects that are well-located, community supported, and implemented by organizations focused entirely on environmental stewardship.

Rather than imposing a broad legislative restriction, a more effective approach would be to continue strengthening the existing permit review process, which already evaluates project design, ecological impacts, tree preservation measures, and long-term monitoring requirements. Stream restoration, when guided by sound forestry practices and careful project review, can help protect and improve riparian forests rather than simply result in tree loss.

Maryland's restoration community would be better served by refining existing oversight and best practices rather than removing a tool that can play an important role in watershed and forest stewardship.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Bryan Seipp

Trees undercut by stream bank erosion



Pre and Post Stream Restoration Construction



Pre and Post Stream Restoration Construction

