



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

House Bill 1621 Wastewater Treatment Plants – Discharges – Monitoring, Reporting, and Requirements

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To: Environment & Transportation Committee

Position: **FAVORABLE**

From: Gussie Maguire
MD Staff Scientist

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS House Bill 1621** which updates notification requirements for wastewater treatment plants discharging pollutants at levels above their permitted limits and, critically, allows the Department of the Environment to deny, suspend, or revoke Water Quality Trading Program credits, or suspend participation in the program, for facilities that violate their permit limits.

Within the last year, several of the state's largest wastewater treatment plants applied to renew their discharge permits, sparking community concern on the topics addressed by this bill. Individuals living and recreating near discharge pipes expressed serious concerns about the water quality downstream of those pipes. Notification procedures wove a common thread through public hearings: while some facilities use beacon lights to indicate compromised water quality, neighbors strongly expressed a preference for more direct outreach. The real-time alerts and plain language explanations required by HB 1621 reflect that preference and would improve transparency and help rebuild trust between wastewater treatment plant operations teams and their neighbors—especially in the wake of the Potomac Interceptor overflow, which alerted the general public to the prevalence of sewage overflows.

Participation in the Water Quality Trading Program formed another point of contention shared by CBF and other water quality nonprofits. Despite years of egregious permit violations, the Back River and Patapsco Wastewater Treatment Plants and others remain permitted to participate in Water Quality Credit Trading. CBF feels strongly that these facilities owe a debt to the waters to which they discharge and submitted public comments to that effect on the draft permits. Facilities with a history of pollution must not be automatically given a clean slate. Restricting their participation in the Water Quality Trading Program will help ensure that polluters are not rewarded in the wake of permit violations.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 1621.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.