March 31, 2026

SB225 – Interjurisdictional Watersheds
Position -Favorable

Dear Delegate Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

We strongly support SB225 - Interjurisdictional Watersheds and urge you to issue a favorable report. We also kindly request that the Patapsco River Watershed be added back into the bill.

The article "**Why forest loss is making our watersheds leak rain"** highlights the critical connection between forest preservation and water management:

"It's a well-established fact that forests and water are deeply connected. For decades, paired-watershed experiments — a scientific method for evaluating land-use impacts on water quantity or quality — **have shown that when we lose forests, the total amount of water flowing through our rivers tends to rise."**

"Our recent study at the University of British Columbia analyzed 657 watersheds across the globe. By using a tool called the Young Water Fraction, **we found that forest loss significantly accelerates how fast precipitation travels through a landscape.** We estimate that for every one per cent of forest lost, the "young water" in our streams increases by about 0.17 per cent."

"Young Water Fraction tells us what proportion of a stream is made up of rain that fell recently — typically within the last two to three months. Ideally, we want a low percentage of young water. A low amount means the landscape is acting like a sponge, filtering rain through the soil and into groundwater, which sustains the river during dry seasons. A high amount of young water, however, suggests a "leaky" watershed that sheds new rain almost immediately."

**"The reasons for this leakage are tied to how we treat the land. When a forest canopy is removed, raindrops hit the ground with full force instead of being intercepted by leaves. Furthermore, heavy machinery and logging roads pack the soil tight, making it harder for water to sink in."**

**We observe this same effect in Maryland when heavy construction machinery compacts the soil, preventing water absorption. Adding impermeable surface exacerbates the situation.**

**"Lastly, without trees to breathe water back into the atmosphere through transpiration, the soil stays saturated. When the next rain comes, there is no room left to store it, forcing the water to run off quickly into the stream."**

**In Maryland, nearly all residents live downstream.** For too long, we have allowed a narrow focus on development without considering how upstream mature tree loss impacts downstream communities. With the increase in precipitation due to climate change, we must consider the impacts on the entire watershed.

SB225 is a common-sense bill that balances development with the safety and well-being of our citizens. Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to your favorable report.

Sincerely,

Sharon Boies
Protect Our Streams

https://theconversation.com/why-forest-loss-is-making-our-watersheds-leak-rain-276867