



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

House Bill 613- Calvert and St. Mary's Counties – Living Shorelines and Nonstructural Shoreline Stabilization Measures

Chair Korman, Vice-Chair Guyton and Members of the Committee:

Today, I bring forward House Bill 613.

This is a local bill which applies only to St. Mary's County and Calvert County.

Let me be clear at the outset: I am not against living shorelines. They are an important environmental tool, and the Living Shoreline Protection Act of 2008 established them as the State's preferred method of erosion control where feasible. What I, and many of my constituents, take issue with is the process. Too often, it feels top-down. Exceptions are difficult to obtain, reviews can take a long time, and property owners spend significant money with no certainty of outcome, all while their shoreline continues to erode.

This issue has been developing for several years. A few sessions ago, a similar bill came before the committee. We had a spirited and productive discussion in subcommittee and ultimately decided to continue working on it rather than force the issue.

Since then, we've tried to better understand the full picture through interim site visits. We've been to the Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant, Point Lookout State Park, and Poplar Island. When you stand on those shorelines and see the conditions firsthand, it reinforces something important: Maryland's coastline is not one-size-fits-all.

Calvert and St. Mary's Counties are peninsulas. Unlike much of the Eastern Shore, which faces west into more sheltered waters, our shorelines face east into the open Chesapeake Bay. We have Calvert Cliffs, Scientists' Cliffs, and Drum Point for a reason. The depth of the water and the long fetch across the Bay and its tributaries create stronger wave energy than many other parts of the State.

When severe weather comes, we feel it directly. Nor'easters and coastal storms moving up from the Atlantic often hit us from the east or southeast. That makes shoreline stabilization in our region very different from more protected areas.

Under current law, property owners must generally use nonstructural shoreline stabilization measures. There are two exceptions: where the Maryland Department of the Environment has mapped an area as appropriate for structural measures, or where an applicant can demonstrate that nonstructural methods

are not feasible. The challenge is that much of our shoreline is mapped as “undetermined.” Securing a waiver can take considerable time and expense, and there is no guarantee of approval. Meanwhile, erosion continues—often at an accelerated pace because of the energy of the water we face.

We consistently hear from marine contractors that some property owners simply decide the process is not workable and walk away. When that happens, the shoreline is left unprotected, and we lose more of it each year.

House Bill 613 proposes a different approach. It places the local Soil Conservation Districts in Calvert and St. Mary’s Counties in charge of determining where living shorelines are required and approving appropriate stabilization projects. These districts are state entities. They already do much of the groundwork in erosion control and conservation. They understand local conditions, and both have indicated they can take on this responsibility without additional resources.

This bill does not remove state oversight. It shifts the initial decision-making to professionals who are closer to the landowners and more familiar with the specific environmental conditions in our counties. It also incorporates recommendations from the Soil Conservation Districts to allow flexibility on mitigation and construction timing, while including safeguards to prevent conflicts of interest where design services are involved.

This is a local bill because one size does not fit all. Some jurisdictions experience less intense erosion and may be comfortable with the current system. Calvert and St. Mary’s Counties face unique physical conditions that warrant a more tailored approach.

I’m also proud that this is the first bill to receive a letter of support from the newly created Maryland Rural Caucus, reflecting an understanding that rural coastal communities experience these challenges differently.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask for a favorable report on House Bill 613. Thank you for your consideration.

The below pictures are examples of shorelines for Testimony:

Poplar Island



Point Lookout



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Calvert Cliffs



Calvert and St. Mary's Counties in Southern Maryland

