

HOUSE BILL 854

M3, M1

0lr1911

By: **Delegate Hill**

Introduced and read first time: February 3, 2020

Assigned to: Environment and Transportation

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Department of the Environment – Nontidal Wetlands – Study of Vernal Pools**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring the Department of the Environment to study vernal pools in
4 the State; requiring the Department, in conducting the study, to complete a certain
5 inventory, identify certain protection and management measures, and make certain
6 recommendations; requiring the Department to report to the Governor and the
7 General Assembly on or before a certain date; and generally relating to nontidal
8 wetlands and the study of vernal pools in the State.

9 Preamble

10 WHEREAS, Vernal pools are a specialized category of nontidal wetlands that are
11 typically water-filled from early winter through mid-summer; and

12 WHEREAS, Vernal pools are unique, small-scale ecosystems that contribute
13 significantly to the biodiversity of Maryland by providing habitat for species that cannot
14 reproduce in alternative habitats, including the wood frog, mole salamanders, and fairy
15 shrimp; and

16 WHEREAS, Vernal pools provide a significant amount of ecosystem services as they
17 occur frequently throughout Maryland and have the capacity to replenish groundwater and
18 filter stormwater flows; and

19 WHEREAS, Vernal pools are threatened due to limited knowledge of their seasonal
20 presence; now, therefore,

21 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
22 That:

23 (a) The Department of the Environment shall conduct a study on vernal pools in
24 the State.

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 (b) In conducting the study required under subsection (a) of this section, the
2 Department shall:

3 (1) complete an inventory of vernal pools in the State, including the
4 number and location of vernal pools in the State;

5 (2) identify measures to protect and manage vernal pools in the State,
6 including measures for:

7 (i) protecting existing vernal pools;

8 (ii) creating new vernal pools;

9 (iii) replacing lost or degraded vernal pools; and

10 (iv) improving the biodiversity of vernal pools; and

11 (3) make recommendations addressing the protection and management
12 measures identified in the study.

13 (c) On or before October 1, 2021, the Department shall report its findings and
14 recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State
15 Government Article, the General Assembly.

16 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
17 October 1, 2020.