



Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary

February 10, 2021

The Honorable Kumar Barve
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Dana Stein
Vice Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Support – House Bill 631 – State Lakes Protection and Restoration Fund – Purpose, Use and Funding – Sunset Extension

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and Committee Members,

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources supports House Bill 631. This bill would continue to provide dedicated funding for the State Lakes Protection and Restoration Fund until 2027.

Since funding was made available to the State Lakes Protection and Restoration Fund, Maryland's lakes have greatly benefited from dozens of projects designed to improve ecological and recreational use of our State-owned lakes. Each year the department conducts extensive public outreach and education with local, state and public stakeholders interested in lake protection and management. Together with stakeholders and lake managers we design an annual program for how best to appropriate the \$1 million allocated annually. The department has worked with many state, local and private parties to maximize the cost effectiveness of the projects (some listed below).

Almost all of Maryland's state lakes are 50 years old or older, and are typically filled with nutrient enriched sediments. As our lakes become shallower due to sedimentation they become colonized by native and non-native submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) and begin to experience more abundant algae and sometimes even harmful algae blooms. The funding provided through the State Lakes Protection and Restoration Fund has been instrumental in many important projects, including:

- Established a contract to dredge a part of Urieville Lake (Kent County) expected to begin in 2021 to make the lake more accessible to boaters.
- Starting shoreline improvement or restoration projects in Deep Creek Lake (Garrett County) and projects pending at Hunting Creek Lake in Frederick County.
- Completed sediment quality and toxin analysis at four Maryland lakes in anticipation of possible future dredging (St. Mary's, Herrington (Garrett County), Blair's Valley (Washington County) and Urieville lakes) and preparing to do the same at six more lakes

(New Germany Lake in Garrett County, Clopper Lake in Montgomery County, Tuckahoe Lake in Caroline County, Hunting Creek Lake in Frederick County, Wye Mills Lake in Queen Anne's County and Myrtle Grove Lake in Charles County).

- Starting submerged aquatic vegetation monitoring and control programs for each lake to maximize the ability of the public to access and use our lakes, including hydrilla control in Deep Creek Lake.
- Established a contract to build and install reef balls in several Maryland lakes to permanently improve fish habitat, thereby increasing the recreational value of the lakes. These projects are underway or completed in Hunting Creek, St. Mary's, Blair's Valley, Deep Creek Lake and Lake Habeeb (Allegany County).
- Conducted an SAV restoration project to help native underwater grasses grow in St. Mary's Lake. Native SAV helps stabilize sediments, reduce nutrients, produce oxygen, and provide critical habitat for fish and other aquatic resources.

Deep Creek Lake receives a significant portion of the program's funding. As Maryland's largest lake and the economic driver for western Maryland, it is critical to fund projects that help protect and preserve one of our most treasured resources.

For the above reasons, the department respectfully requests the committee to grant HB 631 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

James W. McKitrick
Director, Legislative and Constituent Services