



March 30, 2021

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair, and Members
Maryland House Environment and Transportation
Committee
The Honorable Maggie McIntosh, Chair, and Members
Maryland House Appropriations Committee
House Office Building Rm 251
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, Maryland 21401 – 1991

Re: SB0737 The Comprehensive Conservation Finance Act of 2021

Dear Chair Barve, Chair McIntosh and Committee Members,

Restoration Systems enthusiastically welcomes the introduction of the “Comprehensive Conservation Finance Act” in Maryland. The legislation is a long overdue modernization of conservation approaches which will drive an explosion of private investment in Maryland green infrastructure.

Restoration Systems is America’s most experienced mitigation banker and has two projects underway in Maryland, The Heritage Harbor and Turkey Point projects are being performed for Anne Arundel County under their innovative contracting approach which helped inspire the Act.

Since the overall approach and benefit of the bill has been well described by others, Restoration Systems would like to comment specifically on the hazardous dam removal provisions. Our firm has removed, under precisely the pay-for-performance contracts the legislation encourages, three hazardous large river dams in North Carolina and restored natural flow to over a hundred miles of large river and tributaries. Each dam removal was celebrated locally and nationally.

As Maryland and other states well know, obsolete dams are dangerous and environmentally destructive. There is nearly universal support for removing non-controversial structures.

However, as our company has experienced, the multiple complex disciplines and numerous technical and physical actions required of the dam removal process are complex to manage under current government financing and contractual practices. Piecemeal contracting, bifurcated responsibilities, and liability concerns of the current approach would be reduced if the provisions of the Conservation Finance Act were in place, and an agency chooses to employ them. Restoration Systems and others would invest private capital – just as we did in the three previous removals -- to make available turn-key, ready projects at our own cost, with implementation funded on a results basis – rather than hourly invoicing.

Please consider our company a resource for your committees as the legislation progresses. The Conservation Finance Act promises policy improvements which have national implications – and Maryland’s environment will be the better for it. We would be happy to testify to our experience with dam removal or other important topics addressed by the bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "George Howard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "George" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Howard".

George Howard
Restoration Systems, CEO

cc:

Vice Chair, Dana M. Stein, Environment and Transportation Committee

Vice Chair, Mark S. Chang, Appropriations Committee

Subcommittee Chair, Marc A. Korman, Transportation and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee