

DANA M. STEIN  
*Legislative District 11*  
Baltimore County

—  
*Vice Chair*  
Environment and Transportation  
Committee

*Subcommittees*  
Chair, Environment  
Natural Resources,  
Agriculture and Open Space



The Maryland House of Delegates  
6 Bladen Street, Room 251  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3527 · 301-858-3527  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3527  
Fax 410-841-3509 · 301-858-3509  
Dana.Stein@house.state.md.us

*The Maryland House of Delegates*  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Delegate Dana Stein in Support of  
HB 602 – Environment – State Wetlands – Shoreline Restoration**

This legislation encourages the creation of living shorelines, which prevent erosion and hold up better in severe weather than rip rap and bulkheads.

State law requires waterfront property owners to make improvements to their shorelines against erosion using living, or nonstructural, stabilization methods, such as marsh creation. However, we have also allowed MDE to provide waivers to property owners who demonstrate that nonstructural shoreline measures are not feasible. As a result, much of Maryland’s shoreline erosion protection is still done by rip rap and bulkheads. Such structures will eventually do more harm as sea level rises, overwhelming these structures and causing more flooding or displacing floodwaters to lower income communities unable to afford shoreline protection.

Living shorelines incorporate vegetation and living materials, along with natural structures such as rock sills or oyster reefs. They provide habitat for fish, crabs, marine birds, and other marine wildlife.

This bill encourages living shorelines in a number of ways. First, it makes using living shoreline methods the preferred method for preventing erosion. Waivers under this bill can only be made if a property is located in an area designated by MDE as inappropriate for shoreline preservation or if nonstructural stabilization methods are insufficient to protect structures on an owners’ property from damage.

Second, the bill directs MDE and DNR to map and identify priority shoreline restoration zones where conditions exist that degrade the resilience of the land and the habitat and wildlife connection between land and water.

Finally, the bill creates a “Coastal Resilience and Living Shoreline Restoration Account” within the existing Tidal Wetlands Compensation Fund. This new account will consist of money appropriated in the state budget to be used for grants for replacing structural shoreline erosion prevention measures with living shoreline measures.

The benefits of transforming bulkheads and riprap to marsh grasses and other habitats for marine wildlife cannot be overstated. There is the aesthetic benefit—what would you rather see as you sail, kayak, or sailboard around the bay: a shoreline of cement bulkheads or marsh grasses blowing with the waves?

But, more importantly, hard structures do nothing to benefit the Bay, while living shorelines provide habitat for fish, crabs, marine birds, and other marine wildlife, as well as organisms that provide food for this wildlife. Grasses and other aquatic vegetation also filter runoff before it enters the Bay.

For all of these reasons, I encourage a favorable report.