



March 3, 2023

Wetlands and Waterways Program - Authorizations for Stream Restoration Projects (HB0942)
Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chairperson Barve and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

Blue Water Baltimore is a nonprofit organization with a mission to restore the quality of Baltimore's rivers, streams, and Harbor to foster a healthy environment, a strong economy, and thriving communities. **We write today in support of Wetlands and Waterways Program - Authorizations for Stream Restoration Projects (HB0942).**

Stream restoration is a key strategy for Baltimore City and Baltimore County to meet their Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permits. When implemented in the right places, while controlling stormwater volumes, these projects can be effective in reducing sediment and nutrient pollution in our waterways. Unfortunately, there is limited evidence that urban stream restorations improve ecological uplift, and the models used to predict stream restoration performance rarely comport with the real-life outcomes of these projects in urban areas.¹ Additionally, upstream volume reductions do not always accompany the stream bank grading or armoring tactics employed in many stream restoration projects in the Baltimore region. Thus, poorly implemented or maintained stream restoration projects have caused ecological damage, particularly forest loss, in our watershed.

The Chinquapin Run stream restoration project is a key example. In 2018, at least 70 trees that Blue Water Baltimore and our volunteers had planted on city park property along Chinquapin Run, a tributary to Herring Run, were removed or severely damaged by a Department of Public Works (DPW) sanitary sewer realignment and stream stabilization project. We planted these trees with permission and funding from Baltimore City's Department of Recreation and Parks (BCRP) Forestry Division between 2009 and 2015. After that work was destroyed, we met with city agencies and learned that communication between DPW and BCRP Forestry was inadequate and that Forestry staff, as well as local residents, were not properly consulted about the planned project and its impacts along the stream's riparian corridor.²

This bill would implement important guardrails for stream restoration projects, including requirements for public outreach, which would reduce the likelihood of a similar outcome as occurred in Chinquapin Run. It would also incentivize Upland Best Management Practices (BMP), or Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI), which manages stormwater pollution before it enters streams and reduces flooding by mimicking the way water is soaked up, stored, and kept clean in a natural ecosystem. GSI

¹ Violin et al. 2011. Effects of urbanization and urban stream restoration on the physical and biological structure of stream ecosystems. *Ecological Applications* 21:1932-1949.

² Blue Water Baltimore. (2019). [Green Stormwater Infrastructure: Challenges and Opportunities in Baltimore](#). P. 14.

also generates many co-benefits, including improved air quality, lower ambient temperatures, increased critical habitat for birds and other important wildlife, and greater social cohesion.³

Despite its numerous benefits, GSI remains an under-utilized approach to reducing stormwater pollution and flooding in Maryland due to lack of state incentives and the overreliance on practices such as stream restoration and street sweeping. This bill will help Maryland shift its stormwater management approach toward practices like GSI that center environmental justice, water quality, and climate resilience. We urge a favorable report on HB0942.

Sincerely,



Taylor Smith-Hams
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³ Christopher Coutts and Micah Hahn. (2015). "[Green Infrastructure, Ecosystem Services, and Human Health](#)." International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, vol. 12. Pgs 9768-9798.