



February 21, 2024

Confined Aquatic Disposal Task Force – Established (HB 886)

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee:

Blue Water Baltimore is a nonprofit organization with a mission to protect and restore the quality of Baltimore's rivers, streams, and Harbor to foster a healthy environment, a strong economy, and thriving communities. **We write today to submit this favorable testimony in support of HB 886.**

Blue Water Baltimore is home to the Baltimore Harbor Waterkeeper, and our licensed jurisdiction through the international Waterkeeper Alliance includes the entirety of the Patapsco and Back River watersheds. This means that we are uniquely positioned among environmental NGOs in the region to focus on the health and prosperity of these waterways, and the people who live, work, and recreate around them. Unfortunately, these are also two of the most polluted tributaries to the Chesapeake Bay, as evidenced from our long-term routine water quality monitoring and assessments from the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science¹. **Rather than treating these rivers as dumping grounds, this means we must take extra precautions to protect these vulnerable waterways and the people living within their contributing watersheds because they are most at risk of suffering the compounding effects of even more pollution.**

As a Waterkeeper organization that patrols our local rivers for pollution by boat and recognizes Baltimore's economic value as a thriving port city, Blue Water Baltimore understands the need for maintenance dredging in our deep-water channels. Through community knowledge and our involvement in tracking and monitoring the redevelopment of the contaminated Sparrows Point peninsula, we are also deeply aware of the toxic contaminants that have poisoned our riverbeds after decades of industrial dumping. **While Confined Aquatic Disposal (CAD) cells promise to provide much-needed storage capacity for accumulating dredge spoil, it is important that the technology and process be closely scrutinized by scientists, affected community members, and other stakeholders before any further pilot sites are constructed.** The residents living adjacent to the proposed CAD site in the Patapsco River have spoken, and we write to amplify their concerns about the ecological ramifications, public health impacts, and long-term viability of these disposal sites in our precious, but vulnerable, river.

This legislation will:

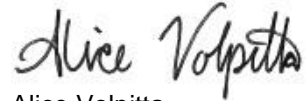
- Establish the Confined Aquatic Disposal Task Force to discuss and review the overall concept, viability, and available options associated with the CAD program and the State's requirements and long-term strategies for maintaining functional and thriving ports in Maryland.
- Give community members a seat at the table where decisions are being made about an important issue that has the ability to impact their immediate environment, their health, the value of their homes, and their quality of life.
- Increase accountability and transparency by requiring the Task Force to submit a report of findings and recommendations on or before July 1, 2025 to certain committees of the General Assembly and the Governor.

¹ 2022 Chesapeake Bay Report Card. University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science. <https://ecoreportcard.org/report-cards/chesapeake-bay/watershed-health/>

There is no “downside” to taking a cautious approach in this matter. Once these CAD sites are installed, any potential damage cannot be undone. This practice amounts to stripping the Patapsco River of its high-grade substrate for “innovative reuse” in other areas, while replacing that good-quality sand and rock with low-grade and potentially toxic dredge spoil. Passing this legislation will create a taskforce charged with investigating these practices to ensure that this is truly the best answer for all Marylanders, and that no community is left behind.

For these reasons, Blue Water Baltimore respectfully requests this committee to issue a favorable report on HB 886.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alice Volpitta". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alice Volpitta
Baltimore Harbor Waterkeeper
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