

December 20, 2013

Mr. Eric Beckett  
Regional Planner  
Maryland State Highway Administration  
707 North Calvert Street,  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Dear Mr. Beckett:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft guidelines developed in response to HB797 regarding waterway access for fishing, canoeing and kayaking along Maryland's transportation facilities. We appreciate your Department's efforts to collaborate with stakeholders and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources in the development of appropriate standards, guidelines, best practices and cost-effective strategies for improving waterway access in the planning, design, construction and reconstruction of the State's transportation projects.

As the core supporters of HB797 (Chapter 140), we believe the guidelines would disqualify many, *if not most*, potential fishing, canoeing and kayaking access improvement projects at transportation facilities. We offer the following comments and recommendations to strengthen the guidelines and help achieve the intent and goals of HB797:

- 1) Contrary to the intent of HB797, the guidelines, as written, preclude any role for stakeholders and local governments in evaluating potential public water access sites. Those decisions are left solely to DNR and MDOT. Stakeholders and local communities must be involved in determining where water access along a transportation facility would be desirable, reasonable and appropriate. That can be done by MDOT providing an inventory of bridge and road projects scheduled for construction and reconstruction and giving stakeholders and local governments a seat at the table in evaluating those projects for potential access.
- 2) The \$15,000 cap on MDOT project construction costs; the requirement of funding support and an O&M agreement by the time a project reaches MDOT's 60% design schedule; and giving all other transportation improvements precedence over water access are contrary to the intent of the legislation.
- 3) Two categories of access -- passive and active -- should be established. Passive access is road-side improvements, such as safe shoulder parking and improved guardrail designs that don't obstruct access to the water. Most MDOT projects along waterways should incorporate passive access into the design, as this is the original intent of HB797 (Chapter 140). Active access would be comprised of pathways from the road to the water, which is more long-term and may involve partnerships and ADA and other requirements.

Thank you again for this opportunity to review and comment on the draft guidelines. We look forward to working with you to implement this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Gordon Robertson  
Vice President  
American Sportfishing Association



Christopher J. Trumbauer  
Councilman  
Anne Arundel County



Hedrick Belin  
President  
Potomac Conservancy



Mike Lofton  
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Isabel Junkin  
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Captain Chris Dollar  
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Mark Singleton  
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Brent Miller  
Northeastern States Director  
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

cc: Gregory I Slater, Director, Office of Planning and Preliminary Engineering