NPDES MS4 permit for MDOT SHA - Public Comment 24-DP-3313

1 message

Megan Crigger <megangh@gmail.com> Mon, Jun 17, 2024 at 5:48 PM

To: Stewart.Comstock@maryland.gov

I'm writing as a concerned citizen who is impacted by stormwater from a state highway.

Our property contains a heavily eroded stream. This stream carries runoff from State Highway MD 210, north of the Livingston Rd intersection and south of the Farmington Rd intersection. During heavy rain, we have seen the high velocity of this stormwater rip down trees and cause stream banks to collapse.

Since the cause of stormwater is not being treated at the source, this unmitigated stormwater flow is causing property damage as well as increasing the amount of pollutants and sediment entering the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

In 2021, a few months after PG County received a Consent Decree from MDE for failure to meet MS4 requirements, PG County's Office of Storm Drain Maintenance completed in-stream construction without formal notice that has caused significant property damage and harm to the environment.

The construction removed a large amount of trees, increased the amount of impervious surface along the stream bank, added new swales and culverts. Natural bioretention was removed and the natural direction of water was altered so that more water would flow into the stream and closer to homes.

A Stream Section Chief at DNR stated we would see more erosion from the work completed and she was correct. Years later, with no additional plans to mitigate what was completed in 2021, what used to be a shaded stream is now hit with the full intensity of the sun during the day. This alters the temperature of the water and causes the stream to be inhabitable by aquatic life. Increased algae and dead aquatic life are now frequently seen in the stream after the project.

Please treat this 2021 stream construction project as a lesson on what **not** to do.

The goal should be to treat our local streams as ecosystems, not storm drains.

Stormwater should be stopped, slowed down, and spread out before reaching our streams. Removing forests, adding impervious surfaces to the streambank, and increasing stream flow only causes destruction downstream and increases the total maximum daily load and should not be counted towards MS4 requirements.

MS4 requirements need to be strengthened to only allow effective Best Management Practices (BMPs) to mitigate stormwater pollution. This means slowing, stopping, and spreading out stormwater before it enters streams.

MS4 requirements need to incorporate the most current climate data to account for increased storm intensity. The most erosion we have seen happened during a 30 minute pop up shower after the 2021 stream construction.

Develop plans to monitor and address pollutants like polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). Piscataway Creek has some of the highest amounts of PFAS recorded. This is also a prime fishing spot. On the Google reviews of a nearby public park you can see enormous blue catfish are being caught and eaten here. Blue catfish are invasive and need to be caught and eaten but they are also one of the 15 species of fish that MDE listed as impacted by elevated levels of PFAS.

Expand monitoring requirements to include water temperature variations and biological responses to polluted runoff. The amount of dead aquatic life and increased algae production has increased significantly since this 2021 stream project. What was once a shaded stream is now a death trap for aquatic life.

Thank you for considering my comments. I have also attached images below for your review.

-Megan

See maps and photos below:

Watershed map of stream mentioned in Accokeek. State Highway, MD 210, is a part of this watershed:

Before the 2021 in-stream construction project near Farmington Creek Rd in Accokeek.

After the 2021 in-stream construction project near Farmington Creek Rd in Accokeek.

Map showing alteration to natural flow of water. Stormwater previously flowed through a forest in the Critical Area to the eastern tributary. After the 2021 project, that stormwater was diverted from the eastern tributary to the western tributary, closer to homes. This has removed natural bioretention and increased the amount of erosion, property damage, and amount of sediment and pollutants entering the watershed.

Screenshot from *FEMA's Nature-Based Solution PDF*

Photo from 2024 showing the erosion downstream from Farmington Creek Rd. This part of the stream used to be completely shaded. The other side of the stream (not pictured)was allowed to be cleared and has not been replanted.

Photo from 2024 showing the erosion downstream from Farmington Creek Rd.

We've lived here since 2015 and had never seen Farmington Creek Rd flood before. After the 2021 construction project, in 2023, the road flooded after a 30 minute storm.