



Statement of the Advocates for Herring Bay
Regarding Bill 5-15
An Ordinance Concerning: Zoning – Critical Area Overlay – RCA Uses
February 28, 2015
Bill Withdrawn: March 2, 2015

Bill 5-15 would greatly expand the amount of impervious surfaces allowed in Resource Conservation Areas within 1,000 feet of our rivers and bays.

Under current law, lot coverage for certain religious and other institutions cannot exceed 15 percent of the property or 20,000 square feet (which is a little less than half an acre), whichever is smaller. Bill 5-15 would drop the acreage limit for those users, thereby allowing the amount of impervious surfaces to grow with the size of the property.

For example, a church with 20 acres of land would be allowed lot coverage as large as 15% of that property — 3 acres of impervious surface. For a 100-acre property, the bill would allow **15 acres of impervious surface**—an area almost as large as the Harbor Center complex in Parole. This proposed expansion would also apply to research institutions, service organizations and non-profits with large parcels – a significant change in land use.

What is especially troubling is that these new impervious surfaces would replace forests and other vegetated lands that protect our waterways. That will increase pollution from stormwater runoff and degrade already fragile habitats. Resource Conservation Areas account for less than 5 percent of the county's land area, but represent some of the only land that is managed to preserve local fisheries, conserve forests, and provide habitat for wildlife.

There are already procedures in state law for reallocating land from conservation to development purposes. We should not circumvent that process by weakening the development standards for these vitally important and sensitive lands.

We urge you to vote against Bill 5-15.