

HOUSE BILL 701

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By: **Delegates V. Clagett, Ali, Barkley, Barnes, Beidle, Bobo, Bohanan, Boteler, Cardin, Frush, Glassman, Glenn, Healey, Holmes, Hucker, James, Kach, Lafferty, Lawton, Love, Malone, McConkey, McIntosh, Niemann, Proctor, Shewell, Simmons, Sophocleus, Sossi, Stein, Stull, and Weir**

Introduced and read first time: February 8, 2007

Assigned to: Environmental Matters

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Natural Resources – Preservation of Parkland**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring the Governor to appropriate certain funds for the
4 operation of State forests and parks; and generally relating to funding for State
5 forests and parks.

6 Preamble

7 WHEREAS, Maryland's State parks and forests provide access to ecological and
8 biological diversity, are significant scenic, historical, and cultural assets, and are a
9 fundamental element of our State's natural resources; and

10 WHEREAS, State parks and forests are part of Maryland's heritage, provide an
11 essential public service, satisfy our need to connect with the natural world, give us a
12 sense of harmony, and help us better understand the world around us; and

13 WHEREAS, Maryland's parks and forests are a treasure to the State and
14 careful stewardship of this public trust is critical if future generations are to continue
15 to enjoy them; and

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 WHEREAS, Our State parks and forests provide an educational resource that is
2 260,000 acres in size and provide lifelong learning opportunities for all citizens of our
3 State; and

4 WHEREAS, Maryland State parks and forests are home to a great variety of
5 fish and wildlife and, through proper stewardship of these species and their habitats,
6 provide hunters, anglers, and wildlife observers countless opportunities to experience
7 and continue the rich traditions of hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching; and

8 WHEREAS, Parks and forests provide a natural setting and inspiration for
9 exercise and activity that improve a person's physical fitness, and therefore help with
10 the treatment and prevention of a variety of adult and childhood diseases; and

11 WHEREAS, Our State parks and forests play an important role in many sectors
12 of Maryland's economy, including tourism industries, recreational activity, retail
13 sectors, and employment, to the extent that the economic benefit is tenfold – for every
14 \$1 budgeted for a park or forest, \$10 goes back into the State's economy; and

15 WHEREAS, During 2006, the centennial of the Maryland Forest and Park
16 Service, more than 12,000,000 visitors enjoyed the natural beauty and resources of our
17 parks and forests; and

18 WHEREAS, In the current budget, park services are being insufficiently funded
19 and provided, in that only six employees are dedicated entirely to interpretive services
20 as naturalists and historians, a 66% reduction since 2003, and in 2006, 91 rangers
21 were transferred to the Natural Resources Police without replacements for all of them,
22 and any replacements that are being hired are being funded solely through Special
23 Fund revenues, not through General Fund appropriations, which means that the
24 money comes out of the park visitor's pocket rather than being funded as a public
25 service; and

26 WHEREAS, Programs by the Maryland Park Service that provide cultural,
27 educational, historical, and recreational resources have been downsized and
28 compromised, such as the Junior Ranger program, which will soon be a completely
29 self-guided program rather than having park rangers as role models and mentors as
30 originally intended; and

31 WHEREAS, Compared to other nearby states, Maryland has the highest day
32 use and camping service charges, which prevent many people from enjoying this public
33 resource; and

34 WHEREAS, The Department of Natural Resources has incrementally used a
35 policy of raising fees to generate revenue, rather than providing the funds necessary to

1 maintain these public lands and public services for all residents of our State to enjoy;
2 now, therefore,

3 SECTION 1. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That, the Governor shall
4 include in the annual budget bill an increase in the General Fund appropriation over
5 the Governor's proposed fiscal 2008 budget for the operation of State forests and parks
6 as follows:

7 (a) for fiscal year 2009, \$5,500,000; and

8 (b) for fiscal year 2010, \$4,000,000.

9 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
10 October 1, 2007.