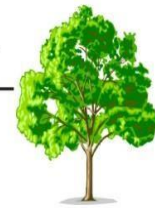


ASSOCIATION OF FOREST INDUSTRIES, INC.



P.O. Box 501
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January 14, 2025

THE HONORABLE WILL SMITH, CHAIRMAN
HONORABLE MEMBERS, SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL 203 VEHICLE LAWS -- EXCEPTIONAL HAULING PERMIT – FARM PRODUCTS SUPPORT

The Association of Forest Industries (AFI) represents Maryland's forest products industry at both the State and local government level. For the last 2 years, AFI has been working closely with the Moore Administration on this issue. We commend the Administration for its willingness to submit Senate Bi8ll 203 for consideration by the 2025 Maryland General Assembly.

Bill Miles, Advocate (billmilesmd@comcast.net).

Enactment of Senate Bill 203 would strengthen the competitive standing of Maryland's forest industry with its counterparts in neighboring states. In those states, haulers of forest material from the field to the processors can carry more weight than Maryland haulers under existing State law.

At present when hauling forested materials from the field to the processors, the following represent regional-statutorily authorized hauling weights in comparison to Maryland: (1) Maryland @ 88,000 pounds with tolerance on six axles; (2) Virginia @ 90,000 pounds with 5 axles; (3) Delaware @ 90,000 pounds with five or more axels; and (4) Pennsylvania @ 95,000 pounds with a five axles or 107,000 pounds with six axles.



Closure of the Luke Paper Mill in Luke, Maryland in June 2019 after 131 years of operation, resulted in the loss of 675 jobs. To help mitigate the impact and help ensure the continued viability of Maryland's forest industry, a study was undertaken by the Western Maryland Resource Conservation and Development Council, aka "Maryland Economic Adjustment Strategy" in 2021. Senate Bill 203 is in lock step with the findings/recommendations of the 2021 EAS study.

<https://www.wmrcd.org/economic-adjustment-strategy-for-mds-forest-products-sector-summary-document-available-now/>

For the record, not since enactment of Maryland's nationally acclaimed **Sustainable Forestry Act of 2009** has – in the opinion of AFI – the General Assembly addressed an issue of such importance as Senate Bill 203. Notably, this historic Act declared the nexus between a sustainably managed forest – primary job of the forest industry via Best Management Practices (BMP's) – and a healthy Chesapeake Bay watershed. In many, many ways, trees are the answer.

§ 5-102 of NR underscores this healthy forest/healthy Chesapeake Bay watershed nexus:

THIS TITLE SETS FORTH MARYLAND'S VISION FOR SUSTAINING MARYLAND'S COVETED FOREST LANDS INTO THE 21ST CENTURY THAT IS CONSISTENT WITH THE CHESAPEAKE 2000 AGREEMENT AND THE 2007 FORESTRY CONSERVATION INITIATIVE.

https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2009rs/chapters_noln/Ch_175_sb0549T.pdf