

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2022 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**Enrolled - Revised**

House Bill 884

(Delegate Gilchrist, *et al.*)

Environment and Transportation

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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**State Conservation Land - Old-Growth Forests - Management**

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This bill requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), whenever it identifies an “old-growth forest” on “State conservation land,” to manage the land in a manner that prohibits logging. However, nothing in the bill may be interpreted to prohibit DNR from taking actions to protect old-growth forest from fire, animals, insects, disease, and erosion in a manner that has minimal adverse effects on the ecosystem and subject to conditions the Secretary of Natural Resources considers necessary.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** State finances are not anticipated to be materially affected.

**Local Effect:** It is assumed that the bill does not materially affect local government finances.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

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**Analysis**

**Bill Summary:** “Old-growth forest” means a forest (1) at least five acres in size with a preponderance of old trees, of which the oldest exceed at least half the projected maximum attainable age for the species and (2) that exhibits several of the following characteristics:

- shade-tolerant species in all age and size classes;
- the presence of randomly distributed canopy gaps;

- the presence of a high degree of structural diversity characterized by multiple growth layers reflecting a broad spectrum of ages;
- the presence of an accumulation of dead wood of varying sizes and stages of decomposition accompanied by decadence in live dominate trees; and
- pit and mound topography can be observed.

“State conservation land” means (1) State parks; (2) wildlife management areas; and (3) natural resources management areas.

**Current Law:** DNR owns and manages more than 500,600 acres of public lands and protected open space in the State. The Maryland Park Service preserves and protects Maryland’s natural and historic places for the enjoyment and appreciation of its citizens. Among other land designations, the State park system includes State parks and natural resource management areas. DNR’s Forest Service, among other things, manages State forests and State wildlands. Wildlife management areas, which are acquired by the State to protect, propagate, or manage wildlife (or for hunting purposes), are managed by DNR’s Wildlife and Heritage Service. State wildlands are protected areas established by legislation that overlay all or part of a State park, forest, wildlife management area, or other land unit.

It is the policy of the State to encourage the retention and sustainable management of forest lands by considering the protection and retention of forests through existing land conservation programs.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Garrett, Howard, and Montgomery counties; Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission; City of Laurel; Department of Natural Resources; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:**  
rh/lgc

First Reader - February 24, 2022

Third Reader - March 29, 2022

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