

Chapter 112

(Senate Bill 300)

AN ACT concerning

Natural Resources – Wildland Areas – Belt Woods Wildland

FOR the purpose of authorizing certain ~~archaeological~~ archeological, salvage, excavation, stabilization, and restoration activities within the Belt Woods Wildland; and generally relating to the Belt Woods Wildland.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
Article – Natural Resources
Section 5–1203(a) and (k)
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2023 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Natural Resources

5–1203.

(a) **(1)** In order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the State, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition, it is the policy of the General Assembly to secure for the people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of State wildlands.

(2) For this purpose there is established a State wildlands preservation system composed of areas in the State designated by the General Assembly as “wildland areas”.

(3) The wildland areas shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the people of Maryland in a manner that will leave them unimpaired for the future use and enjoyment as wildlands, to provide for their protection, preservation of their wildland character, and for gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment as wildlands.

(4) A State land may not be designated as [“wildland areas”] **A WILDLAND AREA** except as provided for in this section or by a subsequent act.

(k) (1) Under the provisions of subsection (a) of this section, that property in Prince George's County, containing approximately 610 acres and described as follows is a Type 2 State wildland and shall be named the "Belt Woods Wildland":

Beginning at a point, said point being the end of the 11th line of a tract of land which by deed dated, November 30 1984, and recorded in the land records of Prince George's County in Liber 6041, Folio 249, was conveyed by the Mercantile Safe Deposit and Trust Company to the State of Maryland, to the use of the Department of Natural Resources, and running thence with the west side of Church Road in a southeasterly direction 1810 feet more or less to a point in the north west corner of the intersection of Church Road and Central Avenue, thence running along the northern right of way of Central Avenue in a westerly direction 2433 feet more or less to a point in the 7th line of the aforementioned deed, thence continuing along said right of way in a westerly direction 573 feet more or less to a point, thence running, north 05 degrees 50 minutes 10 seconds west 2977.54 feet to a point, north 32 degrees 10 minutes 26 seconds west 2093.66 feet to a point, north 27 degrees 43 minutes 31 seconds east 1899.67 feet to a point, north 02 degrees 46 minutes 07 seconds west 701.52 feet to a point, north 83 degrees 35 minutes 23 seconds east 2989.80 feet to a point, south 03 degrees 32 minutes 21 seconds east 1073.29 feet to a point, north 85 degrees 20 minutes 56 seconds east 737.15 feet to a point in the western right of way of Church Road, thence running with said right of way in a southerly direction 2700 feet more or less to a point in said right of way, thence running, north 81 degrees 00 minutes 00 seconds west 800 feet more or less to a point, south 13 degrees 00 minutes 00 seconds west 780 feet more or less to a point, south 81 degrees 00 minutes 00 seconds east 680 feet more or less to a point in the western right of way of Church Road, thence running with the western right of way of said road in a southwesterly direction 1230 feet more or less to the point of beginning.

(2) (I) Existing agricultural fields **WITHIN THE BELT WOODS WILDLAND** will be reforested or allowed to naturally revert to a forested condition according to a management plan developed for the area.

(II) Agricultural leases may continue within the Belt Woods Wildland until such time as forestation occurs.

(III) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this title, the Department may reforest existing fields using mechanical or motorized equipment. [Existing tenancies within the Belt Woods Wildland may continue until December 31, 1997.]

(3) (I) All existing structures including the barns, houses, sheds, and electric utility lines within the [above described area] **BELT WOODS WILDLAND** shall be allowed to remain in the wildland area.

(II) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this title, the Department may allow the use of mechanical or motorized equipment to **STABILIZE OR** remove [these] existing structures and other existing debris from the wildland.

(4) **NOTWITHSTANDING ANY OTHER PROVISION OF THIS TITLE, IN THE BELT WOODS WILDLAND THE DEPARTMENT, WITH PRIOR APPROVAL OF THE MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST AND AFTER AN INTERNAL DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW, MAY AUTHORIZE:**

(I) ~~ARCHAEOLOGICAL~~ ARCHEOLOGICAL INVENTORIES, STUDIES, AND RESEARCH THAT INVOLVE SURFACE EXAMINATION OR LIMITED SUBSURFACE SAMPLING;

(II) SALVAGE AND EXCAVATION OF ~~ARCHAEOLOGICAL~~ ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES; AND

(III) STABILIZATION AND RESTORATION OF HISTORIC STRUCTURES EXISTING AS OF DECEMBER 1, 1985.

(5) PRIOR TO UNDERTAKING ANY ACTIVITIES ON THE SETON BELT BARN, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL CONSULT WITH THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION.

(6) (I) The Belt Woods Wildland contains unique ecological features including species sensitive to pressures caused by the burgeoning populations of nonnative and domesticated species.

(II) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this title, the Department may, as called for in the management plan developed for the area, remove nonnative or domesticated species of plant or animals and erect fencing, gates, and signage associated with the protection and interpretation of unique ecological features.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2024.

Approved by the Governor, April 9, 2024.