

Chapter 272

(House Bill 404)

AN ACT concerning

Natural Resources – State Parks – Terminology

FOR the purpose of altering certain terminology relating to State parks that preserve and interpret the history of certain populations; and generally relating to State parks.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Article – Natural Resources
Section 5–2A–04(f)(3), 5–2A–05(b)(2), and 5–1012
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2023 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

Article – Natural Resources
Section 5–2A–05(b)(7) and (8)
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2023 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

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

Article – Natural Resources

5–2A–04.

(f) (3) The Department’s decisions related to the establishment of State [historical] parks or other units that preserve and interpret the history of African American, Asian, Indigenous or Native American, and Hispanic or Latino populations in the State shall be made:

(i) In coordination with the Commission; and

(ii) With input from groups active in the preservation of historical sites of underrepresented communities, including:

1. The Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities;

2. The Commission on African American History and Culture;

Affairs;

3. The Governor’s Commission on Asian Pacific American
4. The Commission on Indian Affairs; and
5. The Office of Immigrant Affairs.

5–2A–05.

(b) The Comprehensive Long–Range Strategic Plan shall include:

(2) New State [historical] parks or other units that preserve and interpret the history of African American, Asian, Indigenous or Native American, and Hispanic or Latino populations in the State;

(7) Details and updates on the creation and implementation of workforce development programs, including:

(i) Programs in collaboration with the State’s historically Black colleges and universities;

(ii) Programs modeled on the National Park Service’s diversity strategy under Director’s Order #16B; and

(iii) Programs focused on creating a pipeline of new rangers and other full–time staff from among volunteers, the State foster youth system, and historically underserved communities; and

(8) The results of:

(i) Implementing a volunteer management program under § 5–2A–02(e) of this subtitle;

(ii) Leveraging charitable funding for park enhancements under § 5–2A–02(f) of this subtitle; and

(iii) Any collaboration between the Department and the Department of Transportation and local transportation agencies to improve bicycle, sidewalk, and trail access to State parks.

5–1012.

(a) In this section, “partnership park” means a unit of the State park system managed by the Department in partnership with a local government, a bicounty agency, or a nonprofit organization.

(b) The Department may enter into:

(1) A memorandum of understanding with a local government, bicounty agency, or nonprofit organization to establish a partnership park in the State; or

(2) A partnership agreement with a local government, bicounty agency, or nonprofit organization to manage a partnership park in the State.

(c) (1) The Department shall establish the Freedman's State [Historical] Park as a partnership park that seeks to educate the public about and preserve and interpret the lives and experiences of Black Americans both before and after the abolition of slavery.

(2) Freedman's State [Historical] Park shall be held by the State as a State park under the protection and administration of the Department.

(d) Freedman's State [Historical] Park shall consist of properties in northeastern Montgomery County in or near the communities of Brookeville, Olney, Sandy Spring, Zion, and Laytonsville that are:

(1) Owned by the State and designated by the Department as part of the park; and

(2) (i) Owned by a local government, a bicounty agency, or a nonprofit organization; and

(ii) Designated as part of the park by a partnership agreement between the owner of the property and the State.

(e) (1) The Department shall establish a stakeholder advisory committee to advise the Department on the scope and management of Freedman's State [Historical] Park.

(2) The stakeholder advisory committee shall consist of the following members:

(i) A representative of Montgomery Parks, designated by Montgomery Parks' Director of Parks;

(ii) A representative of the Heritage Tourism Alliance of Montgomery County, designated by the Alliance's Executive Director;

(iii) A representative of the Sandy Spring Slave Museum, designated by the Museum's Director;

(iv) A representative of the Sandy Spring Museum, designated by the Museum's President; and

(v) Any other members as determined by the Department.

(3) To the extent practicable, the stakeholder advisory committee shall reflect the diversity of northeastern Montgomery County.

(f) On or before January 1, 2023, the Department shall submit a report to the General Assembly, in accordance with § 2–1257 of the State Government Article, on:

(1) Property owned by the State in northeastern Montgomery County that is suitable for inclusion in Freedman’s State [Historical] Park;

(2) Property owned by a local government, a bicounty agency, or a nonprofit organization in northeastern Montgomery County that is suitable for inclusion in Freedman’s State [Historical] Park and for which the landowners are willing to enter into a partnership agreement; and

(3) The funding needed to establish and promote Freedman’s State [Historical] Park.

(f–1) (1) The Department and Baltimore City shall:

(i) Convene focus group meetings on the establishment of the Gwynns Falls State Park with community members and stakeholders that reside or operate in the vicinity of the proposed State park;

(ii) Develop a list of priority needs and associated cost assessments for park operations and improvements, including:

1. Capital improvements;
 2. Critical maintenance;
 3. Enhanced natural resource management and restoration, including implementation of a biohabitats study;
 4. Historic site restoration;
 5. Enhanced outdoor recreation amenities, including trail improvements;
 6. Adding park staff and procuring equipment and supplies;
- and
7. Law enforcement and public safety; and

(iii) Establish a stakeholder advisory committee to advise the Department and Baltimore City on the scope and management of Gwynns Falls State Park that consists of:

1. At least one member of the Friends of Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park;

2. At least six members representing local park advocacy organizations, local environmental organizations, local historic preservation organizations, neighborhood organizations from neighborhoods that border the future Gwynns Falls State Park site; and

3. Any additional members as determined by the Department and Baltimore City.

(2) On or before December 1, 2025, the Department shall submit a report to the General Assembly, in accordance with § 2–1257 of the State Government Article, on:

(i) Property owned by the State in Baltimore City that is suitable for inclusion in Gwynns Falls State Park;

(ii) Property owned by Baltimore City or a nonprofit organization in Baltimore City that is suitable for inclusion in Gwynns Falls State Park and for which the landowners are willing to enter into a partnership agreement; and

(iii) The funding needed to establish and promote Gwynns Falls State Park.

(g) (1) (i) The Department shall establish the Port [of] Deposit State [Historical] Park as a partnership park that seeks to educate the public about and preserve and interpret the lives and experiences of Black Americans both before and after the abolition of slavery.

(ii) Port [of] Deposit State [Historical] Park shall be held by the State as a State park under the protection and administration of the Department.

(2) Port [of] Deposit State [Historical] Park shall consist of a portion of the Bainbridge Naval Training Center site, measuring not less than 120 acres and not more than 150 acres, that the Bainbridge Development Corporation transfers to the Department, including:

(i) The historic Tome School;

(ii) The Snow Hill archaeological site; and

(iii) The adjacent wooded conservation area.

(3) (i) The Department shall establish a stakeholder advisory committee to advise the Department on the scope and management of Port [of] Deposit State [Historical] Park.

(ii) The stakeholder advisory committee shall consist of the following members:

1. One member designated by the Mayor and Town Council of Port Deposit;

2. Two members of the House of Delegates and one member of the Senate of Maryland representing Cecil County, designated by the Cecil County Delegation of the General Assembly;

3. The County Executive of Cecil County, or the County Executive's designee;

4. The President of the Cecil County Council, or the President's designee;

5. The President of the Cecil County branch of the NAACP, or the President's designee;

6. The President of the Historical Society of Cecil County, or the President's designee;

7. The Director of the Cecil County Department of Parks and Recreation;

8. The Chair of the Bainbridge Development Corporation, or the Chair's designee;

9. The Chief Archaeologist of the Maryland Department of Transportation, State Highway Administration, or the Chief Archaeologist's designee; and

10. The following nonvoting ex officio members:

A. The Secretary, or the Secretary's designee;

B. The Secretary of Commerce, or the Secretary's designee;

C. The Secretary of the Environment, or the Secretary's designee;

D. The Secretary of Planning, or the Secretary's designee;

- E. The Director of the Maryland Historical Trust, or the Director's designee;
- F. The President of the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway, or the President's designee;
- G. The Superintendent of Cecil County Public Schools;
- H. The Executive Director of the Cecil County Public Library;
- and
- I. The President of Cecil College.

(iii) To the extent practicable, the stakeholder advisory committee shall reflect the diversity of Cecil County.

(4) On or before September 1, 2024, the Department shall submit a report to the General Assembly, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State Government Article on:

- (i) Property that is suitable for inclusion in Port [of] Deposit State [Historical] Park;
- (ii) The funding needed to establish and promote Port [of] Deposit State [Historical] Park; and
- (iii) The appropriate manner of preserving property that is not identified for inclusion in Port [of] Deposit State [Historical] Park in perpetuity for its archaeological, historical, and cultural significance.

(h) It is the intent of the General Assembly that if the State acquires Carr's Beach for the purpose of making the property a State park, the property shall be a partnership park established and maintained in a manner substantially similar to the requirements established under subsections (b) through (d) of this section.

(i) (1) In this subsection, "Waldorf core zone" means a geographical area in Charles County within the following boundaries:

- (i) North of Billingsley Road;
- (ii) South of Mattawoman Creek;
- (iii) East of Bensville Road; and
- (iv) West of Maryland Route 5.

(2) It is the intent of the General Assembly that if the State acquires property in the Waldorf core zone for the purpose of making the property a State park, the property shall be a partnership park established and maintained in a manner substantially similar to the requirements established under subsections (b) through (d) of this section.

(j) It is the intent of the General Assembly that if the State acquires Hill Road Park in Prince George’s County for the purpose of making the property a State park, the property shall be a partnership park established and maintained in a manner substantially similar to the requirements established under subsections (b) through (d) of this section.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2026.

Approved by the Governor, April 28, 2026.