

# HOUSE BILL 404

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CF SB 280

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By: **Delegate Mireku-North**

Introduced and read first time: January 22, 2026

Assigned to: Environment and Transportation

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Committee Report: Favorable

House action: Adopted

Read second time: February 18, 2026

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## CHAPTER \_\_\_\_\_

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Natural Resources – State Parks – Terminology**

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

5 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
6 Article – Natural Resources  
7 Section 5–2A–04(f)(3), 5–2A–05(b)(2), and 5–1012  
8 Annotated Code of Maryland  
9 (2023 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

10 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,  
11 Article – Natural Resources  
12 Section 5–2A–05(b)(7) and (8)  
13 Annotated Code of Maryland  
14 (2023 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

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

17 **Article – Natural Resources**

18 5–2A–04.

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



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

5 (i) In coordination with the Commission; and

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

8 1. The Commission on Environmental Justice and  
9 Sustainable Communities;

10 2. The Commission on African American History and  
11 Culture;

12 3. The Governor's Commission on Asian Pacific American  
13 Affairs;

14 4. The Commission on Indian Affairs; and

15 5. The Office of Immigrant Affairs.

16 5-2A-05.

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

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

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

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

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

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

30 (8) The results of:

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

3 (ii) Leveraging charitable funding for park enhancements under §  
4 5–2A–02(f) of this subtitle; and

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

8 5–1012.

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

12 (b) The Department may enter into:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

24                  (f-1) (1)   The Department and Baltimore City shall:

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

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

30                           1.    Capital improvements;

31                           2.    Critical maintenance;

1                                   3.     Enhanced natural resource management and restoration,  
2 including implementation of a biohabitats study;

3                                   4.     Historic site restoration;

4                                   5.     Enhanced outdoor recreation amenities, including trail  
5 improvements;

6                                   6.     Adding park staff and procuring equipment and supplies;  
7 and

8                                   7.     Law enforcement and public safety; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 (i) The historic Tome School;

8 (ii) The Snow Hill archaeological site; and

9 (iii) The adjacent wooded conservation area.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3                   10.    The following nonvoting ex officio members:

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

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

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

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

9                   E.     The Director of the Maryland Historical Trust, or the  
10 Director's designee;

11                   F.     The President of the Lower Susquehanna Heritage  
12 Greenway, or the President's designee;

13                   G.     The Superintendent of Cecil County Public Schools;

14                   H.     The Executive Director of the Cecil County Public Library;  
15 and

16                   I.     The President of Cecil College.

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

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

21                   (i)    Property that is suitable for inclusion in Port [of] Deposit State  
22 [Historical] Park;

23                   (ii)   The funding needed to establish and promote Port [of] Deposit  
24 State [Historical] Park; and

25                   (iii)  The appropriate manner of preserving property that is not  
26 identified for inclusion in Port [of] Deposit State [Historical] Park in perpetuity for its  
27 archaeological, historical, and cultural significance.

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

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

3 (i) North of Billingsley Road;

4 (ii) South of Mattawoman Creek;

5 (iii) East of Bensville Road; and

6 (iv) West of Maryland Route 5.

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

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

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

Approved:

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Governor.

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Speaker of the House of Delegates.

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President of the Senate.