

HOUSE BILL 959

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6lr2741

CF 6lr3662

By: **Delegates Ruff, Amprey, Lewis, Rosenberg, Stinnett, and Wells**

Introduced and read first time: February 6, 2026

Assigned to: Environment and Transportation

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Natural Resources – Establishment of Gwynns Falls State Park**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring the Department of Natural Resources to establish Gwynns
4 Falls State Park as a partnership park between the Department and Baltimore City;
5 altering the authorized uses of a certain part of the Park System Capital
6 Improvements and Acquisition Fund; prohibiting the Department from charging an
7 entrance fee to Gwynns Falls State Park; requiring that Gwynns Falls State Park
8 consist of a certain area; requiring the Department, in consultation with Baltimore
9 City, to hire an independent consultant to complete a certain comprehensive park
10 master plan; requiring the Governor to include certain appropriations in the annual
11 budget bill for a certain fiscal year; and generally relating to the establishment of
12 Gwynns Falls State Park.

13 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

14 Article – Natural Resources

15 Section 5–221(a)(1) and (2) and (b) and 5–1012(a), (b), and (f–1)

16 Annotated Code of Maryland

17 (2023 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

18 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

19 Article – Natural Resources

20 Section 5–221(l) and (n)

21 Annotated Code of Maryland

22 (2023 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

23 BY adding to

24 Article – Natural Resources

25 Section 5–1012(f–2)

26 Annotated Code of Maryland

27 (2023 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



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

3 **Article – Natural Resources**

4 5-221.

5 (a) (1) In this section the following words have the meanings indicated.

6 (2) “Fund” means the Park System Capital Improvements and Acquisition
7 Fund.

8 (b) There is a Park System Capital Improvements and Acquisition Fund.

9 (l) The first **[\$70,000,000] \$74,000,000** received by the Fund may be used only
10 as follows:

11 (1) At least \$5,000,000 for infrastructure projects that mitigate the effects
12 of climate change, including:

13 (i) Flood barriers;

14 (ii) Forest buffers;

15 (iii) Green spaces;

16 (iv) Building elevation;

17 (v) Stormwater infrastructure;

18 (vi) Wetlands restoration; and

19 (vii) Addressing environmental justice concerns;

20 (2) At least \$5,000,000 for historic preservation, in accordance with
21 subsection (m) of this section;

22 (3) At least \$20,000,000 for transportation improvements, including:

23 (i) Improving bike lanes and trails, increasing walkability, and
24 expanding parking availability; and

25 (ii) Targeting transportation investments to avoid capacity
26 shutdowns;

27 (4) At least \$10,000,000 for increasing water access, including kayak and
28 boat launches and areas for picnicking near water and swimming; [and]

5 (6) Up to \$30,000,000 for land acquisition, including:

6 (i) Areas in the central and southern regions of the State that will:

10 (ii) Sites of significance to the history of African American, Asian,
11 Indigenous or Native American, and Hispanic or Latino populations in the State; and

12 (iii) Beachfront or waterfront property for public access.

13 (n) If the Fund receives more than [\$70,000,000] **\$74,000,000**, the Department
14 may use up to \$10,000,000 for any of the purposes identified under subsection (l) of this
15 section, including:

16 (1) Land activation;

17 (2) New structures;

20 (4) Up to \$100,000 for the Maryland Recreation Communication Boards
21 Pilot Program.

22 5-1012.

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

26 (b) The Department may enter into:

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

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

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

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

9 1. Capital improvements;

2. Critical maintenance;

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

4. Historic site restoration;

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

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

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

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

8 (F-2) (1) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ESTABLISH GWYNNS FALLS STATE
9 PARK AS A PARTNERSHIP PARK BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT AND BALTIMORE CITY
10 THAT SEEKS TO PROVIDE VISITORS WITH ACCESSIBLE OUTDOOR, NATURE-BASED
11 RECREATION AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.

12 (2) Gwynns Falls State Park shall be held by the State as a
13 State Park under the protection and administration of the
14 Department.

15 (3) THE DEPARTMENT MAY NOT CHARGE ANY ENTRANCE FEE TO
16 GWYNNS FALLS STATE PARK.

21 (II) THE DEPARTMENT, IN CONSULTATION WITH BALTIMORE
22 CITY, SHALL HIRE AN INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT TO COMPLETE A
23 COMPREHENSIVE PARK MASTER PLAN FOR GWYNNS FALLS STATE PARK THAT
24 WILL:

4 (6) THE GWYNNS FALLS STATE PARK STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY
5 COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED UNDER SUBSECTION (F-1) OF THIS SECTION SHALL:

6 (I) MEET QUARTERLY; AND

7 (II) ADVISE THE DEPARTMENT ON THE SCOPE, MANAGEMENT,
8 AND IMPROVEMENTS TO GWYNNS FALLS STATE PARK.

11 (I) AN APPROPRIATION OF \$2,880,354 FOR THE
12 ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION COSTS OF GWINNS FALLS STATE PARK; AND

16 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June
17 1, 2026.