

HB0882_DNR_SUP_EHEA_3-22-2022.pdf

Uploaded by: Bunky Luffman

Position: FAV



Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary
Allan Fisher, Deputy Secretary

Bill Number: HB 882

Short Title: Natural Resources – Pocomoke River Wildland – Alteration of Boundaries

Department's Position: Support

Explanation of Department's Position

The Maryland Wildlands Preservation System is the state's counterpart to the federal government's National Wilderness Preservation System. Protected properties are designated as State Wildlands by the Maryland General Assembly. A State Wildland is a special protected area established by legislation that "overlays" all or part of a state park, forest, wildlife management area or other land unit.

As of today, there are over 65,956 acres of Wildlands in the state that are recognized as containing wilderness characteristics and otherwise outstanding and unique natural features worthy of preservation. There are three types of Wildlands defined; currently only types 1 and 2 have been identified in the Maryland Wildlands Preservation System.

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is proposing to add approximately 80 acres of the Pocomoke State Forest as new type 2 Wildlands. This bill would also exempt approximately two acres of Pocomoke State Forest from its statutory designation to allow the construction of an elevated walk-way trail that would connect the Town of Snow Hill directly to Pocomoke State Park. The public access trail would follow one of the old logging roads for over half of its length, while attempting to hug the outer portion of the property. The department has determined that construction in the pre-sited area would have no impact on rare species in the vicinity.

The trail would create a trail network from Snow Hill to Pocomoke City and has significant social, recreational and economic benefits. The trail would be developed through a collaborative planning process between the Maryland Forest Service, Maryland Park Service, and the Town of Snow Hill. Many county and local organizations are extremely eager to see it move forward as evidenced by the letters of support. It would also expand access and trail offerings to visitors, allowing them to have a unique opportunity to experience a Wildland, in keeping with one of the statutory purposes of establishing the Wildlands system.

As required by statute, a Public Hearing was held on the proposal on October 28, 2020. A total of 122 comments were received on the proposal during the 30-day public comment period. Of the comments received, 98% were in strong support for the proposal, including multiple organizations and local governmental agencies.

Contact: Bunky Luffman, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services
Bunky.luffman1@maryland.gov ♦ 410-689-9165

For these reasons, DNR respectfully requests the committee to grant a favorable report.

For any additional information, please feel free to contact our Legislative and Constituent Services Director, Bunky Luffman.

letter of support trail HB882 3-21.pdf

Uploaded by: Diana Nolte

Position: FAV



Downtown Snow Hill Inc
"Main Street in Action"

112 W. Green Street (Office)
Snow Hill MD 21862

March 21, 2022

The Honorable Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
The Honorable Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice-Chair
Senate Education, Health, and Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for HB 882

Honorable Chair Barve, Vice-Chair Stein, and House Environment and Transportation Committee,

Please accept this letter on behalf of the Downtown Snow Hill Main Street organization of Snow Hill, Maryland ***in support of HB 882***, the Pocomoke River Wildlands Expansion and Recreational Trail proposal in Worcester County. This letter is to voice our strong support for this bill. This Trail is very important to the future of Downtown Snow Hill and to our Main Street project to make the historic downtown district more accessible and more friendly to alternative modes of transportation and outdoor recreation.

Our Main Street initiative in Snow Hill is following the Main Street America toolkit, "Navigating Main Street as Places: A People First Transportation Tool Kit". The toolkit emphasizes the need for bikeways and walking paths to and from downtown Snow Hill to promote greater access, provide access equality, increased economic vitality of the downtown area, and provide community health benefits, and more. We believe this Recreational Trail will fulfill that need.

Please pass HB 882.

Sincerely,

Diana Nolte
President, Downtown Snow Hill Inc (Main Street)

downtownsnowhill@gmail.com
<https://downtownsnowhill.org>

Visit us on Facebook! <https://www.facebook.com/downtownsnowhill/>

Assateague Coastal Trust Letter of Support HB 882_

Uploaded by: Gabrielle Ross

Position: FAV



Assateague Coastal Trust – PO Box 731, Berlin, MD 21811 – 410-629-1538

March 21st, 2022

The Honorable Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
The Honorable Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice-Chair
Senate Education, Health, and Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for HB 882

Dear Honorable Chair Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Senate Education, Health, and Environment Committee,

The Assateague Coastal Trust is in support of HB 882 and the proposal to expand the Pocomoke River Wildlands and adjust the Wildlands boundary to create a public access passageway in Worcester County.

Assateague Coastal Trust has been the leader for 50 years on the shore regarding discussions with town leaders, tourism partners, other NGOs, and community members to advance opportunities for economic development for the town of Snow Hill and neighboring areas. The proposal is consistent with the mission of Assateague Coastal Trust to increase the protection of important natural resources, enhance recreational opportunities, and support efforts to engage community members and visitors to the region in passive outdoor recreation.

Birdwatching, hiking, and biking rank high among interests for residents and for visitors to the area and expanding trail opportunities and connecting communities to trails and parks has never been more important. The pandemic has shown us that access to the outdoors and nature is critical to maintain both mental and physical health during these difficult times. Assateague State Park saw its biggest numbers ever in 2020- over 2.1 million visitors and 308,000 campers. With this area being a short drive from Assateague State Park, it can be expected that this will improve tourism and visitors for Pocomoke State Park. This project also provides an exciting opportunity for Snow Hill to provide residents with new recreational opportunities.

Protecting ecological areas along the Pocomoke River is critical for numerous bird species and a variety of mammals that make their home along the river's riparian areas. The proposed expansion will protect the large landscape areas along the Pocomoke River and provide new recreational opportunities for local communities and visitors to explore and to gain greater understanding of the benefits of land conservation.

With your support, we look forward to working with the Maryland Forest Service, Maryland Park Service, the Town of Snow Hill and other groups and individuals to plan a natural and cultural destination to benefit the region for years to come.

Thank you for your consideration, we urge a favorable report on HB882.

Gabrielle Ross, Assateague Coastkeeper
Assateague Coastal Trust

HB882_MDSierraClub_fav 22Mar2022.pdf

Uploaded by: Josh Tulkin

Position: FAV



P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Testimony on: HB 882 “Natural Resources – Pocomoke River Wildland – Alteration of Boundaries”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: March 22, 2022

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club strongly supports this bill to expand and adjust the boundaries of the Pocomoke River Wildland. This adjustment would add nearly 80 acres to the protected wildlands and allow for the creation of the Eastern Shore Rail Trail, which would run over 50 miles allowing increased access to the area for outdoor recreational activities.

The Sierra Club supports increasing the area of protected wildlands by adding a parcel of State Forest lands, which will benefit the overall ecology of the Wildland. Protecting trees and forests is beneficial to storm water management, mitigation of climate change effects, providing habitat for plants and animals, and providing clean air for Marylanders. Additionally, the change in boundaries would extend uninterrupted Wildland shoreline by 3,860 feet.

Creation of a recreational trail will improve access for people to enjoy and appreciate the forest and river while hiking, biking, fishing, and birding. We recommend that habitat be only minimally disturbed during construction of the trail so that the effect of edge habitat is minimized and the forest canopy overhead is maintained. In addition to benefiting wildlife, this will also create a more shaded and pleasant trail experience for people. This new trail would connect the town of Snow Hill’s protected area to the Wildland, bringing communities together and providing economic benefits to Worcester County.

In summary, this bill would both protect forest and wetland areas as well as improve the public access to enjoy the river and forest. We ask for a favorable report.

Lily Fountain
Natural Places Committee Chair
Lily.Fountain@MDSierra.org

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org

Support for BH 882 Pocomoke Wildlands Trail.pdf

Uploaded by: Laura Scharle

Position: FAV



**Scharle Outdoor
Recreation, LLC**

Ecotourism Consulting Services

31 Juneway Lane
Berlin, MD 21811

March 21, 2022

The Honorable Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
The Honorable Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice-Chair
Senate Education, Health, and Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for HB 882

Dear Honorable Chair Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Senate Education, Health, and Environment Committee,

I would like to show my support for the proposed Pocomoke State Forest Wildlands Trail. As a resident of Worcester County, as well as a small ecotourism business owner in the area, and a current employee of Delaware State Parks, I can see the benefits of a trail like this from a variety of different angles.


This trail would provide a crucial connection that would make outdoors recreation more accessible to the residents of Snow Hill. It would also provide a tourism boost to the town of Snow Hill, as those camping at Shad Landing would have easy access to explore the town. I could envision the Pocomoke River Canoe Company offering one-way kayak rentals where people could return to down by foot. The new riverboat in Snow Hill could even provide tours to Shad Landing, combined with a guided walk back to town.

I can envision endless opportunities with the addition of this trail! Worcester County is lacking safe pedestrian and bicycle pathways and this trail would be a true asset to the entire region. As I saw on a poster years ago, "Roads Divide, Trails Unite!" **Please vote in support of HB 882!**

Please feel free to contact me should you wish to discuss this trail further. I can be reached at Scharle.Media@gmail.com or 410-591-8075.

Happy Trails!

Laura M. Scharle



Owner & Founder
Scharle Outdoor Rec Consulting, LLC

Letter of Support - Trail Through Wildlands March

Uploaded by: Melanie Pursel

Position: FAV



Worcester County Office of Tourism

104 West Market Street | Snow Hill MD 21863 | (410) 632-3110 | www.VisitMarylandsCoast.org

The Honorable Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
The Honorable Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice-Chair
Senate Education, Health, and Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

March 21, 2022

On behalf of the Worcester County Office of Tourism and Economic Development and as a resident of Worcester County, Maryland, I would like to offer our support of the Trail Through the Wildlands set to be location in Snow Hill. This trail has been long awaited and would be a tremendous new asset for the county to drive Tourism and Economic Development.

Our office would be delighted to see the development, to help locals and tourists alike experience a new trail and would be a natural tourism driver to the southern parts of the county, especially among those who enjoy outdoor adventures. Especially since the beginning of the pandemic, having another natural outdoor attraction showcasing the tremendous beauty and unique wildlife we have to offer will benefit the entire county! It is well known that a result of the pandemic is a much higher interest in outdoor adventures, and people want to be in open spaces to explore new things. This, too, would benefit the new and existing community of campers since this trail would connect to Pocomoke River State Park. These wildlands are not accessible any other way other than creating this hiking/biking trail between Shad Landing and Snow Hill. This would introduce a whole new segment of guests to our natural resources.

Thank you so very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Melanie Pursel, Director
Office of Tourism and Economic Development
Maryland's Coast- Worcester County

HB 882 Pocomoke River Wildland (Favorable-The Natu

Uploaded by: Michelle Dietz

Position: FAV

Tuesday, March 22, 2022

TO: Paul Pinsky, Chair of the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee and Committee Members

FROM: Michelle Dietz, The Nature Conservancy, Director of Government Relations and Cait Kerr, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation & Climate Policy Analyst

POSITION: Support HB 882 Pocomoke River Wildland – Alteration of Boundaries

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports HB 882. TNC is a global conservation organization working to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Maryland, our work focuses on delivering science-based, on-the-ground solutions that secure clean water and healthy living environments for our communities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing resilience in the face of a changing climate. We are dedicated to a future where people and nature thrive together.

HB 882 seeks to expand and adjust the Pocomoke River Wildland's boundaries by increasing natural area protection and improving public access to this space. The proposed Wildlands expansion includes a current parcel of State Forest lands that, when added to the existing boundary, would expand this protected area by over 79 acres and extend the protected area along the Pocomoke River by 0.73 miles. This increase in protected area will significantly improve the Wildland area's ecological benefits.

In addition to increasing the Pocomoke River Wildland's size, the updated boundaries will also allow for creating a recreation trail through the Wildland that will increase public access. State Wildlands offer residents access to natural areas, with the opportunities for recreation such as hiking, hunting, fishing, bird watching and horseback riding, as well as opportunities for education and environmental stewardship. Currently, access to these areas, especially when compared to state Parks and recreation areas, can be a major hurdle for citizens to actually use state Wildlands. The new recreation trail in the Pocomoke River Wildland will connect the protected land with the town of Snow Hill and provide access for many residents and visitors to enjoy old forest and wetlands previously not accessible to the public. The proposed trail and increased accessibility would dramatically improve and enhance public understanding of Wildlands' ecological significance. By allowing for mixed uses, such as hiking and biking, this expansion will also enhance outdoor tourism opportunities in Worcester County.

HB 882 will expand the Pocomoke River Wildland's ecological benefits and increase public access, thereby better connecting Maryland residents and visitors to our natural areas.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report on HB 882.

HB 882 testimony Senate.pdf

Uploaded by: Stephanie Hawley

Position: FAV

The Honorable Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair

The Honorable Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice-Chair

Senate Education, Health and Environment Committee

2 West Miller Senate Office Building

11 Bladen Street

Annapolis, Md 21401

RE: In Support of HB 882 “Natural Resources-Pocomoke River Wildlands-Alteration of Boundaries”

Backstreet Bikes is very excited that you are considering passing HB 882. We are a new 501 3 (c) non-profit community bike shop located on the beautiful Eastern Shore in Snow Hill, Md. Our mission is to rescue, recycle and refurbish bicycles then offer them to our local community, free or at a low cost.

HB 882 when passed will allow us to offer organized rides to kids and families on a safe and scenic route, connecting Snow Hill with the Maryland State Park, Pocomoke River, Worcester County and beyond.

This pathway will allow us to offer healthy outdoor cycling activities to our local community and attract out of area cyclists, hikers and walkers to our small town while boosting the local economy and promoting good health.

We strongly urge you to pass HB 882.

Catherine Freeman-President

Backstreet Bikes

HB882 Support Letter Pocomoke Trail Alteration.pdf

Uploaded by: Susan Jones

Position: FAV



HOTEL • MOTEL • RESTAURANT • ASSOCIATION • INC.

**TESTIMONY OFFERED ON BEHALF OF
THE OCEAN CITY HOTEL-MOTEL-RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION
Support of HB882 - Natural Resources – Pocomoke River Wildland – Alteration of Boundaries**

Dear Honorable Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair, Honorable Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair and Members of the Senate Education, Health & Environment Committee,

On behalf of the Ocean City Hotel-Motel-Restaurant Association, I am writing in support of the HB882 for the Pocomoke River Wildlands alteration of boundaries. This Recreational Trail located in Worcester County would be an additional product to market to guests to Ocean City and the surrounding region, offering a unique experience each visit either by hiking, biking, or walking.

Our county's economic driver is tourism and as such, we fully support the expansion of this trail. Visitors are looking for experiences that will allow them to explore nature while being socially distanced. While the notion of "social distancing" originated to fight the spread of covid, it has clearly become a mainstay and will be something the public craves in the future.

We would greatly appreciate your support of HB882. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Susan L. Jones'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan L. Jones, Executive Director

5700 Coastal Hwy. #302 Ocean City, MD 21842

410-289-6733 www.ocvisitor.com inquire@ocvisitor.com

HB 882 - We Heart Berlin - POCOMOKE RIVER WILDLAND

Uploaded by: Tony Weeg

Position: FAV



**The Honorable Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
The Honorable Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice-Chair
Senate Education, Health, and Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401**

The mission of We Heart Berlin is to promote healthy and sustainable activities and to support the creation of, and maintenance of recreational opportunities for the benefit of Berlin and its residents.

I am writing to express strong and enthusiastic support for HB 882, proposed legislation to build a wildlands trail through the Pocomoke State Forest connecting to the Town of Snow Hill, and then on to Berlin, and Ocean City in the years to come.

Providing access to the wildlands of Pocomoke River will be good for the people and good for our environment by raising awareness of and appreciation for this important natural and cultural area. Connecting this natural area with the towns of Snow Hill, Berlin, and Ocean City will also be mutually beneficial for those towns and the wildlands.

On behalf of We Heart Berlin, I request that your committee vote in favor of HB 882 to move this project forward.

I also look forward to speaking with you in the near future about our future bike/skatepark here in Berlin! We've begun funding this, and the Town of Berlin is on board, so we're already over some hurdles!

Thanks again for your time, and I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "TONY WEEG". The signature is stylized and written in all caps.

Tony Weeg, President and CEO of We Heart Berlin, Inc.

We Heart Berlin, Inc. | 302 Bay St, Berlin, MD 21811 | weheartberlin.org

Please note: In accordance with IRS regulations, any donations for We Heart Berlin, Inc. are tax deductible, based on our 501(c)(3) public charity status under Federal ID #86-1817856. The tax-deductible value is based on the full market value of any assets, because we can disclose to you that We Heart Berlin, Inc. has not provided you with any goods or services as a result of your donation.