

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Senate Building
Annapolis MD

Re: Favorable for HB 884-State Land Conservation-Old-Growth Forest Management

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Growing up on the Eastern Shore I have seen significant deforestation over the last 50 years as row crop farming has dominated land use and eliminated forests throughout the Delmarva. As a Department of Natural Resources summer employee in 1979 and 1980, I helped cut the walking trail on Wye Island known as "School House Woods". School House Woods is the largest mapped Old Growth Forest left on the Delmarva at 14 acres.

While most Old Growth Forests on State owned land are protected, two years ago I discovered that Old Growth Forest, located on State Parks, Wildlife Management Areas and Natural Resources Management Areas are not protected. While these state holdings do not encompass significant acreage of Old Growth Forest, they are very rare, special and ecologically important places. HB 884's goal is to simply codify and extend the existing protections already given to Old Growth Forests on the majority of state land to State Parks, Wildlife Management Areas and Natural Resource Management Areas.

The bill as it sits today needs a minor amendment to add Natural Resource Management Areas back into the bill, those areas were accidentally removed in the House amendment process. That would include School House Woods on Wye Island; the largest Stand of Old Growth Forest left on the Eastern Shore. Hopefully, with your help, we can get the amended bill back to the house quickly, for passage. As Dr Maloof stated with the amendment this bill only affects approximately 400 acres of forested land state wide.

As of today, no one is interested in logging or mismanaging these Old Growth Forest areas, however, I think it is important and easier to put these protections in place before anyone has other designs that might adversely impact these forests. I want to thank Delegate Gilchrist for Sponsoring this bill as well as the 12 co-sponsors and the 123 House members who voted favorably.

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