



Testimony in SUPPORT of HB884- STATE CONSERVATION LAND – OLD GROWTH FORESTS – PROTECTION

March 29, 2022
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT of HB884** on behalf of ShoreRivers. ShoreRivers is a river protection group on Maryland's Eastern Shore with over 2,000 members. Our mission is to protect and restore our Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, and education.

HB884 will fill a current protection gap for old-growth forests located on State conservation land. Old growth forests are very rare and only .01% of forest are considered old growth in Maryland. Not only do these forests sequester carbon and provide vital biodiversity, they also provide great benefits to our local water quality by reducing stormwater runoff, uptaking nutrients, and preventing erosion.

The Wye River in particular, located in Queen Anne's and Talbot County, features the unique 2,800-acre Wye Island, a vast majority of which is a State Natural Resource Management Area. The island is home to the impressive old growth Schoolhouse Woods – which provide habitat to a variety of species including the recently delisted endangered Delmarva fox squirrel. While there are currently no threats to log these woods, this bill would ensure a formalized protection for such vital habitat.

We do urge an amendment to the bill to include Natural Resource Management Areas within the bill again, ensuring the protection of vital old growth forests such as Schoolhouse Woods.

For these reasons stated above, ShoreRivers urges the Committee to adopt a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on **HB884**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elle Bassett".

Elle Bassett
Miles-Wye Riverkeeper, on behalf of:

ShoreRivers

Isabel Hardesty, Executive Director
Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper | Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper
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