



OLD-GROWTH FOREST NETWORK

Connecting people with nature by creating a national network of protected, mature, native forests

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Education, Health and Environment Affairs Committee
Senate Building
Annapolis MD

Re: HB884-State Land Conservation-Old-Growth Forest Management --**Favorable**

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I represent thousands of Marylanders who are members of the Old-Growth Forest Network. We urge you to vote in favor of HB884, as most of the House has (123-9).

Please be aware that the bill has been amended significantly since it was first introduced to the house. The few previous objections to the bill were focused on the original wording that included protection of old-growth forests on lands with conservation easements (“eased” lands). As the bill passed, and as it stands now, it includes protection ONLY for identified old-growth forests on two categories of state land: state parks, state wildlife management areas. We also hope to include Natural Resource Management Areas, which have only 62 acres of old-growth forest on them, but that acreage includes the School House Woods, the old-growth forest that was displayed on the front page of the March 13th Baltimore Sun.

It is a very small and simple bill. According to the most recent survey of old-growth forests on state-owned land (2007) the total area protected by this bill would come to only 350 acres (412 acres if including the Natural Resource Management areas) -- less than 0.1% of all state-owned land. Surely, we can preserve this small bit of ecologically important, irreplaceable, forest!

The definition for “old growth” used by DNR was decided by representatives from forestry, parks, heritage, and independent scientists. Threats of ‘wildfire’ in the old-growth are completely unfounded, as research has shown that younger forests are more flammable than old-growth forests.

I do not think anyone in the state, including the Maryland Forestry Association and the Department of Natural Resources, would want to see the last of our ancient forests cut, and at present there is no plan to cut them. This bill is merely pre-emptive to ensure that these forests stand for future generations regardless of shifts in administrations and policies.

For the forests,

Joan Maloof, PhD
Founder and Executive Director