

Support - HB 882 - VBF.pdf

Uploaded by: Brantley Tyndall

Position: FAV

February 21, 2022



Virginia Bicycling Federation

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair
The Honorable Dana M. Stein, Vice-Chair
House Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building, Room 251
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for HB 882

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

On behalf of the Virginia Bicycling Federation, I would support and commend Maryland's efforts to build the Pocomoke Wildlands Trail. **We fully support HB 882 and would respectfully request your vote to approve the bill.**

The Virginia Bicycling Federation is working closely with residents of the Eastern Shore to develop the 50 + mile Eastern Shore Rail Trail that should ultimately run the length of the peninsula in Virginia. There is a great deal of interest in this trail becoming a trail spine to connect to other trails in Maryland and Delaware.

This trail effort reaffirms the growing interest in cycling we are seeing on the Eastern Shore and DelMarVA. I believe the proposed Pocomoke trail would only enhance our Virginia trail efforts which may ultimately transform the Eastern Shore into a biking and hiking destination.

Regards,

Brantley Tyndall

Brantley Tyndall
President, Virginia Bicycling Federation
president@vabike.org
cell: (804) 625-8126

HB0882_DNR_SUP_ENT_2-23-22.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

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

the comments received, 98% were in strong support for the proposal, including multiple organizations and local governmental agencies.

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.

OC Chamber Wildlands Trail support HB 882.pdf

Uploaded by: Debbie Haas

Position: FAV



**The Greater Ocean City, Maryland
Chamber of Commerce**

Eunice Q. Sorin Visitor & Conference Center

12320 Ocean Gateway
Ocean City, Maryland 21842

February 21, 2022

To: The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair
The Honorable Dana M. Stein, Vice-Chair
House Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building, Room 251
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for HB 882

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

On behalf of the Greater Ocean City Chamber of Commerce, we would like to share our **support for HB 882** and the proposed trail through the Pocomoke State Forest Wildlands, connecting the town of Snow Hill to the Pocomoke River State Park.

This trail in the center of the county will provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike and provide a core connection that we can continue to build on going south to Pocomoke City and North to Berlin. The ecological, unique recreational and outdoor tourism opportunities would benefit not only Ocean City area residents and businesses, but those of the entire county.

Sincerely,

Lachelle Scarlato
Executive Director

letter of support trail HB882.pdf

Uploaded by: Diana Nolte

Position: FAV



Downtown Snow Hill Inc
"Main Street in Action"

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

February 21, 2022

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair
The Honorable Dana M. Stein, Vice-Chair
House Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building, Room 251
6 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

February 21st, 2022

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair
The Honorable Dana M. Stein, Vice-Chair
House Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building, Room 251
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for HB 882

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

Letter of Support- Wildlands Trail.pdf

Uploaded by: Jeremy Mason

Position: FAV

POCOMOKE CITY, MARYLAND



February 21, 2022

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair
The Honorable Dana M. Stein, Vice-Chair
House Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building, Room 251
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for HB 882

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

On behalf of Pocomoke City, Maryland and in partnership with our home County, Worcester County, I would like to express our ***enthusiastic support for HB 882*** and the proposed Wildland Cycle Trail. This trail would be a tremendous addition to the community parks and recreational programs in our County and would also bring tourism and revenue to our area. Linking Snow Hill to the Pocomoke River State Park by trail would be a great benefit to Snow Hill, the State Park and to Pocomoke City.

Pocomoke City would be the next link in the chain by connecting the Worcester County Trails system to the Rails-to-Trails path that connects Maryland and Virginia on the southernmost end of the County.

The Wildlands Cycle Trail will have a long-withstanding and positive economic impact on our surrounding communities and will also positively impact our citizens through utilizing natural resources and promoting better health and well-being for our citizens and youth.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Jeremy J. Mason
City Manager
Pocomoke City, MD

Hon. Susan Marshall Harrison
Mayor
Pocomoke city, MD

HB 882_Wildlands support.pdf

Uploaded by: Kate Patton

Position: FAV



February 18, 2022

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair
The Honorable Dana M. Stein, Vice-Chair
House Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building, Room 251
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Lower Shore Land Trust supports HB 882

The Lower Shore Land Trust is in support of the proposal to expand the Pocomoke River Wildlands and adjust the Wildlands boundary to create a public access passageway in Worcester County.

The Lower Shore Land Trust has an office located in Snow Hill, and we have been involved in numerous discussions with town leaders, tourism partners, other NGOs, and community members to advance opportunities for economic development for the town. The proposal is consistent with the mission of the Lower Shore Land 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. This project 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. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Patton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kate Patton, Executive Director
Lower Shore Land Trust
100 River Street
Snow Hill, MD 21863

kpatton@lowershorelandtrust.org 443-234-5587

Support for HB 882 Pocomoke Wildlands Trail.pdf

Uploaded by: Laura Scharle

Position: FAV



**Scharle Outdoor
Recreation, LLC**

Ecotourism Consulting Services

31 Juneway Lane
Berlin, MD 21811

February 21, 2022

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair
The Honorable Dana M. Stein, Vice-Chair
House Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building, Room 251
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for HB 882

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

HB 882 Pocomoke River Wildland (Favorable-The Natu

Uploaded by: Michelle Dietz

Position: FAV

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

TO: Kumar Barve, Chair of the House Environment & Transportation 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 the creation of 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 the 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.

LoS HB 882 Pocomoke Forest Trail.pdf

Uploaded by: Patricia Stevens

Position: FAV



February 21, 2022

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair
The Honorable Dana M. Stein, Vice-Chair
House Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building, Room 251
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

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.

I co-chair the Worcester County Bike and Pedestrian Coalition which seeks to improve and expand safety and resources for those who walk and bike here for recreation, for transportation, and to enjoy nature and good health. The proposed project achieves all these goals. Providing access to the wildlands of Pocomoke River will be good for people and good for the environment by raising awareness of and appreciation for this important natural and cultural area. Connecting this natural area with the town of Snow Hill will also be mutually beneficial for the town and the wildlands.

The coalition and partners in the Towns of Pocomoke City, Snow Hill, Berlin, and Ocean City are very excited about this project as it will be the middle and connecting core of Worcester County bike and hike trail that would have so much positive economic and community impact for towns in our county that often get less attention, and attract active recreation tourists, businesses, and events that would benefit our whole county and region. The Town of Snow Hill is developing a bikeways plan with the assistance of Toole Design, through a grant from MDOT. Their draft bikeway map includes a connection to the proposed trail head for the Wildland trail.

This trail in the center of the county will provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike and provide a core connection that we can build on going South to Pocomoke City (and to the Virginia Rail Trail!) and North to Berlin. It will encourage campers and visitors to the State Park to visit Snow Hill and attract those who are in Snow Hill to the Park. Pocomoke State Forest and the Chad Landing areas are already known for some of the best mountain bike trails on the Eastern Shore. The wildland trail offers access and enjoyment to a whole new group of visitors, as well as for those who live in Worcester County.

On behalf of the Worcester County Bike and Pedestrian Coalition, I request that your committee vote in favor of HB 882 to move this project forward. It will greatly benefit our county, the region improving transportation, economic development, and the natural environment.

Sincerely,

Patti Stevens

Patti Stevens, Chair
Worcester County Bike and Pedestrian Coalition

MOS HB0882 Pocomoke Wildland February 2022.pdf

Uploaded by: Robin Todd

Position: FAV



February 18, 2022

HB0882: Natural Resources – Pocomoke River Wildland – Alteration of Boundaries

Position: Support: HB0882

The Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) supports HB0882 and urges the House Environment and Transportation Committee to favorably report the bill and move it to the full House.

MOS applauds the addition of nearly 80 acres situated on the River to the Wildlands, as well as a recreational trail from Snow Hill to Pocomoke River State Park. A natural surface trail connecting Snow Hill to Pocomoke State Park will help build local support for conservation of natural resources, while expanding outdoor recreational opportunities.

The addition of 80 acres of Wildland will more than compensate for the loss of just shy of 2 acres to the trail. We have been assured by the Department of Natural Resources that habitat fragmentation will not occur at the tree canopy level, and would be minor at ground level. The addition 80 acres to the north would extend uninterrupted Wildland shoreline by 3,860 feet.

Passage of this bill would a big win for untrammled Wildland, wildlife habitat, and outdoor recreation. We support HB0882 and urge the Committee issue a favorable report, and move onto the House floor.

The Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) is a statewide nonprofit organization established in 1945 and devoted to the study and conservation of birds. Currently we have 15 chapters and approximately 1,800 members. Some are scientists and naturalists, but our membership includes people of all ages and all walks of life, from physicists to firefighters, legislators to landscapers. Birding is one of the fastest growing types of outdoor recreation. Our members visit the Pocomoke Region often to admire its birdlife.

Sincerely,
Kurt R. Schwarz
Conservation Chair
Maryland Ornithological Society
7329 Wildwood Ct.
Columbia, MD 21046
410-461-1643