



Maryland Forests Association, Inc.

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Maryland's voice for forest, wildlife, and natural resource management

Statement of the

Maryland Forests Association

Regarding

HB 723, Forest Preservation and Retention

March 2, 2023

To the Chair and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Forests Association, representing the forest industry, landowners, and forest enthusiasts from across the state, supports the goals of the Forest Conservation Act. This act requires those clear forest lands with the intent to convert them to another, non-forest use, to either plant an equivalent area of trees on non-forested land, pay into a mitigation fund or protect the perpetual use of other forest lands from conversion.

Occasionally, usually at the county zoning level, we see confusion between commercial logging and forest management where there is no intent to convert the land where this occurs to a non-forest use. In fact, logging is a function of determining what the future forest will be like and protecting or enhancing forest values on that land. While it may temporarily alter the appearance of the forest, logging per se will not convert the land to another use.

When there is confusion between logging and land conversion, regulatory requirements that may be appropriate for the soil disturbances associated with land clearing may be imposed on a commercial logging project. Logging as a part of forest management is already well-regulated by the Maryland Forest Service, Maryland Department of Environment and the local soil conservation district. Additional regulations that might be imposed by a county are redundant and often excessive.

Maryland Forests Association suggests a simple amendment to help clarify the distinction between logging and land clearing for conversion by specifying that the provisions of this chapter do not apply to commercial logging or forest management activities where there is no intent to convert the land to a non-forested use.

With the addition of such language, the Maryland Forests Association supports the legislation. Please feel free to contact Beth Hill, Executive Director, at 410-463-1755 or Joe Hinson, President, at (208) 890-2931 if we can provide any additional information.