



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Secretary
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

February 29, 2024

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 530 – First Reader

SHORT TITLE: Maryland Trails Advisory Committee and the Maryland Office of Trails - Establishment (Great Maryland Trails Act)

DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT’S POSITION

The Department supports the proposed legislation to create the “Maryland Office of Trails.” The Department is consistently engaged in a multifaceted approach to trail development across the Agency – including in several units such as the Maryland Park Service, Wildlife and Heritage Service, and the Maryland Forest Service. DNR manages trails for recreational purposes for numerous user groups including hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, and off-highway vehicles. The Department also coordinates with neighboring communities and landowners to plan for and expand connections of our public lands to local communities and regional trails. This ongoing work will allow the Department to tap into pre-existing resources to support this effort. Additionally, the Department has the Office of Outdoor Recreation which oversees our efforts to expand, fund, and support outdoor recreation across the State including trail coordination and advancement.

The Department appreciates the intent of this legislation and the focus on trail development across the State. We also appreciate the intent of the legislation to bring together the variety of Agencies that support trail development and the stakeholders focused on our trails to ensure that necessary collaboration is happening.

The Department is currently engaging in conversations with the Senate and House sponsors to figure out how to make this legislation work for DNR and our sister Agencies.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Department manages over 500,000 acres of land across the State, including approximately 1,500 miles of trails for access and preservation of our Natural Resources. As referenced above, the Department does a variety of different trail focused work that includes in the Maryland Forest Service, the Maryland Park Service, and the Wildlife and Heritage Service. Additionally, the Office of Outdoor Recreation supports the Department expanding our efforts to provide outdoor recreation opportunities across Maryland.

BILL EXPLANATION

As drafted, this legislation creates the Maryland Office of Trails in the Department of Transportation to develop and maintain the Maryland Trails Network as well as several other responsibilities. Additionally, this legislation creates the Maryland Trails Advisory Commission to oversee the Office and provide necessary guidance around trail development in the State.

Contact: Dylan Behler, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services
dylan.behler@maryland.gov ♦ 410-260-8113 (office) ♦ 443-924-0891 (cell)