



## **HB1270 Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines**

Economic Matters: March 4, 2025

### **UNFAVORABLE**

Testimony submitted by:  
Women's Action Coalition, Allegany County, Maryland

Fifty-two years ago our legislators had foresight to protect Maryland's Wildlands, ultimately designating 38 areas, as stated in COMAR 08.01.02.02:

"A. Purpose: . . . to provide for their protection, for the preservation of their wildland character, and for gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment."

The intent of this Wildlands' preservation is undermined by HB1270. The bill claims that there is a public need to locate overhead transmission lines through three Wildlands areas: Big Savage Mountain, Bear Pen, and Dan's Mountain, an area of 8,443 preserved acres in Garrett and Allegany Counties. But the developer, NextEra Energy, could follow other corridors in our region and not sacrifice Wildlands in order to bring electricity to out of state data centers.

At a minimum, the general public should see proposed routes and cost comparisons for routes that do and do not go through wildlands, conserved acreage, other forests and farms. Are there possible routes that could traverse degraded lands from coal mining, for example?

At no point has NextEra Energy Transmission (NEET) or Sen. McKay provided an opportunity for the general public to provide feedback to their proposal or to legislation that would enshrine their project and significantly diminish protection of Maryland-designated Wildlands and potentially subject private holdings to eminent domain.

And only on February 27 did the Department of Natural Resources announce a public meeting: ". . . an informational meeting on March 13 in Frostburg to take public feedback related to the potential Mid-Atlantic Resiliency Link (MARL) power transmission line project being planned by NextEra Energy that could stretch through Western Maryland.

The meeting will be an open house style setting to gather feedback from the public regarding impacts to wildlands. There will be no formal presentations by the Department."

<https://news.maryland.gov/dnr/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/02/meeting-bubbles.jpg>

Although NEET has been in contact with DNR over the last year, it is only now — after the companion bill has been heard in the Senate — that DNR is scheduling a meeting that does not provide information,

Clearly, Sen. McKay, NEET, and DNR are NOT interested in public feedback regarding potential degradation of wildlands, or they would have sought public input before seeking legislative action.

We urge you to give this ill-timed and ill-conceived bill an UNFAVORABLE report.



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