

Testimony: HB1270 - Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines

Committee: Economic Matters

Hearing Date: March 6, 2025

Position: Oppose

Dear Members of the House Economic Matters Committee,

I ask each of you to oppose HB1270 which would allow the construction of overhead transmission lines in three of Maryland's most valuable Wildlands, specifically Bear Pen, Big Savage Mountain, and Dan's Mountain. Each is a State designated Type1 Wildland, "a primitive area which by its size and location is in effect untouched by urban civilization and can offer the experience of solitude and self-reliance". These mountain Wildlands also protect watersheds and are ecologically vulnerable to human interference.

I moved to Frostburg in 1979 to earn an MS in Wildlife Management. Since 1981 I've lived within the Savage River watershed in Garrett County. I've worked as a naturalist and resource biologist for DNR, an environmental specialist for MDE, and a science teacher at Northern Garrett High School. In 2002, my husband and I started a private company, offering ecotours, outdoor classes, and native plants grown from seed. After closing our business for health reasons, we have continued our efforts to preserve and enhance biodiversity in our region.

When I listened to the oral testimony given for SB0399 in the hearing on February 11, I was shocked by the repeated references to public meetings being held in Allegany and Garrett Counties. This is simply not true. I read the local newspaper and listen to the local news. The first notice I received regarding this project was a postcard on Saturday February 22 from NextEra Energy. On February 28 I received an email from DNR regarding an informational meeting to be held on March 13. This lack of public engagement prior to the bills being introduced is truly appalling.

For well over 40 years, I've hiked and explored these Wildlands. For several years, starting in 1985 I coordinated Outward Bound activities at MD State Forests & Parks including the Big Savage Mountain Wildlands. Since 2005 I've co-lead volunteer efforts to remove invasive species from the Bear Pen Wildlands. Needless to say, I know these areas quite well. They are unique, irreplaceable natural areas, that were "secured by the MD General Assembly for present and future generations". It's vital for the health of our citizens and wildlife that we keep them so.

Please oppose HB1270 to prevent the construction of overhead transmission lines in these Maryland treasures.

Respectfully,

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