

Testimony in opposition to HB1270

As a resident of Garrett County, I write to oppose HB1270 because I feel strongly that State Wildlands Areas should be protected from any type of development, including the clearing of trees to create rights-of-way for powerlines. Untouched wildlands have intrinsic value, are irreplaceable, and should be preserved. Establishment of a right-of-way for transmission lines in wildlands would detract from the value of the lands. It would also facilitate the spread of non-native and invasive species.

Because acreage lost to transmission lines could not be fully restored for its original purpose, the State would have to designate additional acreage of equivalent or greater appraised value in another part of Maryland, assuming such acreage even exists. Thus there would be a permanent loss of wildlands in Allegany and Garrett Counties.

Power lines have been known to ignite fires if they are damaged by high winds or falling trees. A wildfire in the State Wildlands of Allegany and Garrett Counties would be very hard to contain and would likely destroy a large area of forest. Although we don't usually think that wildfires are a risk in Maryland, recent fires in Baltimore County and elsewhere demonstrate that wildfires occur in Maryland and that they spread rapidly in conditions of low humidity and high winds

For these reasons, I urge that HB1170 be given an unfavorable report.

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