

HB1270 Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines

Economic Matters: March 4, 2025

UNFAVORABLE

Testimony submitted by: Mark Skinner, Ed.D.

The intent of the Maryland's Wildlands bill, as stated in COMAR 08.01.02.02, written decades ago, was: "to provide for their protection, for the preservation of their wildland character, and for gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment."

HB 1270 contravenes the intent of the Wildlands bill. Additionally, there has been zero transparency or discussion with the public regarding proposed routes or alternatives, nor any cost comparisons between different options.

Why has neither DNR nor the bill's sponsors held any public meetings? Why are they not following proper procedure?

There have been a number of wildfires caused by transmission lines, including in California, Texas and Hawaii. The [Western Fire Chiefs Association](#) said "Between 2016 and 2020, electrical power networks caused 19% of the wildfires." We have had a number of high wind warning days. For example, Jan. 28 had gusts to 60 mph predicted for Allegany and Garrett counties. This type of weather or some of the heavy icy conditions we've seen would certainly be more alarming with major transmission lines going through our forests.

Wildfires occur on the east coast as well. While it was several years ago, Cumberland had a wildfire on Wills Mountain in February! We had "go-bags" packed in the event the fire jumped Valley Road, which fortunately it did not, thanks to a fortuitous snowstorm. The [NYTimes](#) (3/22/24) notes, "Most climate experts expect global warming to make wildfires much more likely, even in places that were not previously considered at risk, like rainforests and wetlands. While wildfires can be ignited in many ways, utilities with their networks of wires and transformers are a big source of worry."

It makes no sense to take these risks and endanger our wildlands. Given all these concerns, I urge you to OPPOSE the Overhead transmission lines that are proposed.

Thank you,

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