

HB1270 - Favorable - Land and Liberty Coalition.pd

Uploaded by: Adam Dubitsky

Position: FAV



Contact: Adam Dubitsky
Maryland State Director
202-247-0130
adubitsky@landandlibertycoalition.com

March 6, 2025

Hon. C.T. Wilson
Chair
Maryland House Economic Matters Committee
Rm 231 House Office Bldg.
6 Bladen Street Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Favorable report on HB1270

Dear Chair Wilson and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Land & Liberty Coalition of Maryland, of which I serve as State Director, I am writing to convey our support for HB1270.

With chapters in 12 states, the Land & Liberty Coalition is a project of the Conservative Energy Network, a national center-right nonprofit nonpartisan organization which advocates for clean energy and a modern, reliable and safe transmission infrastructure.

Families and employers across the state and of all income brackets are enraged that at a time of abundant American energy, their electric bills are skyrocketing. This is forcing many to cut back on spending and in some cases having to choose between keeping the lights and heat on or a long overdue car repair, or new clothes for their children. Already a costly state in which to do business, increased power costs mean less hiring, more layoffs and higher prices for customers. Many are predicting that western Maryland, especially Allegany County, will be among the hardest hit areas of the state when additional price hikes go into effect later this year.

While interstate energy markets are complex, the simple reason for higher prices is not enough power supply to meet current and expected demand running on an outdated grid and inefficient transmission lines. This last point can't be minimized. Our increasingly digital personal lives, education, careers, entertainment, communication, healthcare, government services and the broader economy not only require massive amounts of electricity but also the ability to deliver it safely, reliably and efficiently. Our highways need to be repaved regularly and sometimes widened to meet demand and the same is true of our transmission infrastructure, much of which is more than half a century old.



The fact is Maryland needs upgraded and additional transmission infrastructure to power our economy and our increasing reliance on digital devices and cloud computing. HB1270 and its Senate companion bill, SB0399, take the right approach when it comes to a vital new transmission line through Garrett and Allegany counties.

As conservatives, the Land & Liberty Coalition believes in the importance of responsible stewardship of our natural resources while also promoting economic growth and energy independence. The legislation, which exempts certain areas in the Big Savage Mountain Wildland, Bear Pen Wildland, and Dan's Mountain Wildland from designation as wildland areas, addresses both priorities by routing the new line parallel to an existing Potomac Edison transmission line that already runs through these wildlands. Compared to potential alternative routes, HB1270 and SB0399 would ensure that the new line has less impact on residents, farms and businesses. And because it would also be a much shorter route than alternatives it will save money, involve less forest clearing and have a smaller footprint on wetlands and trout streams.

One of the primary benefits of HB1270 and SB0399 is the potential for economic growth and job creation. By allowing the construction of overhead transmission lines in these areas, we can facilitate the development of critical infrastructure projects. These projects not only create jobs during the construction phase but also support long-term employment opportunities in maintenance and operations. In a time when many communities are struggling economically, this bill provides a much-needed boost to local economies.

HB1270 and SB0399 also play a vital role in enhancing our energy independence and security. By enabling the construction of new transmission lines, we can improve the reliability and efficiency of our energy grid. This is particularly important as we seek to reduce our dependence on foreign energy sources and ensure a stable and secure energy supply for Maryland residents. A robust and modern energy infrastructure is essential for our state's economic resilience and our national security.

While environmental conservation is important, it must be balanced with the current and future needs of our communities and economy. Importantly, the legislation ensures that any development in these wildland areas is subject to a Public Service Commission certificate of public convenience and necessity which includes rigorous environmental reviews and the opportunity for public input. As such, the CPCN process guarantees that projects are developed responsibly and with minimal impact on the environment.

As conservatives, we fully support this bill as it aligns with our values of conservation, economic prosperity, energy security, and responsible governance. I thank the Committee for this opportunity to summarize our support for HB1270 and respectfully request a favorable report on this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Adam Dubitsky,
State Director
M: (202)247-0130
E: adubitsky@landandlibertycoalition.com



Allegany County Farm Bureau, Inc._HB1270_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Elly Colmers

Position: FAV

Allegheny County Farm Bureau, Inc.

25400 Robinette Farm Lane, Flintstone, MD 21530

Dear Chairman,

The Allegheny County Farm Bureau board of directors strongly supports the passage of SB399/ HB1270. We feel it is a common sense bill. After the transmission is completed that habitat which is currently wildland will go back to wildland habitat. To go around the wildlands would take more personal property including farm land and residential areas. Please pass SB399 HB1270.

Respectfully,
T.R. Robinette
President All. Co.
Farm Bureau

Testimony in support of Transmission (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Jamie DeMarco

Position: FAV

**Favorable Testimony for
Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines**

HB1270

House Economic Matters Committee

3/6/2025

Jamie DeMarco

Chesapeake Climate Action Network Action Fund

Lobbyist

CCAN Action Fund urges a favorable report on HB1270. To address the climate crisis and transition to a clean energy economy we will have to build more transmission lines. Building these transmission lines in a way that minimizes costs and impacts to residents will speed the clean energy economy and lower energy costs.

CCAN understands that NextEra has been awarded the MARL transmission project, which would traverse Garrett and Allegany Counties. We also understand that one transmission route option would be largely parallel to an existing Potomac Edison transmission line. However, the existing Potomac Edison transmission line runs through Wildlands.

When compared to other potential alternative transmission routes the proposed Wildlands route would have less impacts to residents, farms, and businesses. In addition, the Wildlands route would affect less forest clearing, wetlands, and trout streams. It would also cost less for Marylanders as it is a much shorter route.

As you know, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and Public Service Commission (PSC) will review whether this project should move forward in Maryland and what route makes the most sense for the community and the State. Unfortunately, if SB 399/HB 1270 do not pass during the 2024 General Assembly session, then the Wildlands route will be off the table for DNR/PPRP and PSC consideration during the CPCN process, which will take place later this year.

HB 1270 merely gives the PSC the option – after weighing a multitude of factors – to use a route paralleling an existing transmission line. It is still possible even with passage of this legislation that the PSC/DNR choose an alternative transmission route.

In sum, we support advancing HB 1270 to provide this route as an option for DNR/PSC during its CPCN consideration.



CONTACT
Jamie DeMarco, Lobbyist
jamie@demarcoavocacy.com, 443-845-5601



NEETMA testimony on HB 1270.pdf

Uploaded by: Kaley Bangston

Position: FAV



FAVORABLE

Natural Resources – Wildland Areas – Overhead Transmission Lines
House Bill 1270
Before The Economic Matters Committee

March 6, 2025

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice Chair and Members of the House Economic Matters Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 1270. I am here today with my colleagues, Kaitlin McCormick and Brad Rolfes, representing NextEra Energy Transmission MidAtlantic (“NEETMA”). NextEra Energy Transmission, LLC, (“NEET”) a subsidiary of NextEra Energy, Inc., is the leading competitive electric transmission company in North America. NEET develops, finances, constructs, operates and maintains transmission assets across North America. We currently have 10 operating projects across North America with a total capex of \$3.3 billion.

NEETMA is currently in the process of developing the MidAtlantic Resiliency Link (“MARL”) transmission line. The project consists of building a new approximately 105-mile 500 kV transmission line from Fredrick County, Virginia to Greene County, Pennsylvania including a section in Allegany and Garrett Counties in Maryland. The line was selected by the regional electric grid operator, called PJM, to ensure that the region has reliable electric power for decades to come and is part of a broader initiative to enhance PJM’s electric grid. The project will help serve the region’s electricity demand and will help keep the power on during extreme weather events.

Approval by the General Assembly is required to exempt or withdraw any property from a Maryland designated Wildlands area. House Bill 1270 proposes the exemption of a small portion of land to allow for the MARL line to route adjacent to an existing transmission line owned and operated by FirstEnergy which also routes through Wildlands. While we believe this routing option provides the least impact to the region, we are actively performing a routing study and taking feedback from local stakeholders as we make these routing decisions. House Bill 1270 provides the option to route adjacent to the existing transmission infrastructure in the area.

The ultimate siting power of the transmission line sits with the Public Service Commission (PSC) during the Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) process. The passage of House Bill 1270 does not approve the MARL transmission line or any other transmission line in Maryland. It simply allows for the exemption of a small portion of Wildlands to provide an option for the MARL line to route in an efficient manner. If NEETMA determines that an alternative route is preferred after receiving additional stakeholder feedback or the PSC directs NEETMA to adopt an alternative route, MARL will not cross the Wildlands and the designation on the land will remain.

While we are in the initial stages of project development, our team has held over 50 meetings with stakeholders in Maryland to seek their feedback. We will also be hosting public meetings to obtain additional feedback on the potential routing alternatives. The project will generate an estimated \$450 million to be paid and benefit the local communities in Maryland over the 40-year life of the project. The project will provide

reliable electricity for hospitals, fire departments and other essential services. We look forward to being a community partner and successfully completing this project.

I welcome any questions or comments at this time.

Thank you,

Kaley Bangston
Director, Regulatory and Political Affairs

Garrett County Farm Bureau (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Morgan Mills

Position: FAV

MDFB - Support - HB1270 Natural Resources - Wildla

Uploaded by: Tyler Hough

Position: FAV



Maryland Farm Bureau

3358 Davidsonville Road | Davidsonville, MD 21035
410-922-3426 | www.mdfarmbureau.com

March 6, 2025

To: House Economic Matters Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: Support – HB1270 – Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines

On behalf of the nearly 8,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit written testimony in support of HB1270 - Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines. This proposed legislation would exempt certain areas in the Big Savage Mountain Wildland, Bear Pen Wildland, and Dan's Mountain Wildland from being designated as a wildland area, subject to a certificate of public convenience and necessity being obtained for a certain transmission line.

It has been brought to the attention of the Maryland Farm Bureau that NextEra Energy is constructing a transmission line in western Maryland, specifically in Garrett and Allegany Counties. It is our understanding that one possible route would be to run the new NextEra transmission line parallel to an existing Potomac Edison transmission line. Unfortunately, the existing Potomac Edison line runs through three Wildlands and without passage of HB 1270, then the Maryland Public Service Commission would not have this route option, which is less impactful to Maryland farms.

Running parallel to the existing Potomac Edison transmission line appears to be the most direct and shortest route for NextEra's transmission line. We understand that compared to potential alternative routes that the Wildlands route would have less impacts to local farms in western Maryland. As you know, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and Public Service Commission (PSC) will review whether this project should move forward in Maryland. This legislation merely gives the PSC the option – after weighing a multitude of factors – to use a route paralleling an existing transmission line.

To be clear, Maryland Farm Bureau's support of HB1270 is in no way in support of the construction of the NextEra Energy proposed transmission line through Garrett and Allegany County.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tyler Hough', with a horizontal line above it.

Tyler Hough

Director of Government Relations

Please reach out to Tyler Hough, though@marylandfb.org, with any questions

Support for HB1270.pdf

Uploaded by: William Bishoff

Position: FAV

Garrett County Farm Bureau
P. O. Box 161
McHenry, MD 21541

March 4, 2025

The Honorable C. T. Wilson
230 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD

The Economic Matters Committee

We are writing this in support of HB 1270 - Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines.

Our reasoning is that our agricultural lands are equally important as wildlands.

We are not advocating for the construction of a transmission line. We just believe that if it is built that it should follow a path that minimizes the impact on all lands.

Our concern is that efforts to avoid wildlands will impact more of our land.

Thank you for your consideration,

Billy Bishoff
Garrett County Farm Bureau

AB_HB1270 March 2025.pdf

Uploaded by: Ann Bristow

Position: UNF

HB1270 Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines

Economic Matters: March 4, 2025

UNFAVORABLE

Testimony submitted by:

Ann Bristow, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor, Frostburg State University
92 Carey Run, Frostburg, MD 21532. (Garrett County)

NextEra Energy Transmission (NEET) line(s) could be much broader than bill language suggests: (Feb. 3, 2025 phone meeting with NextEra Energy Transmission — NEET):

During a Feb. 3, 2025 telephone meeting, Kaitlin McCormick (Senior Director of Development, NextEra Energy) shared that their successful PJM bid (submitted May 2023; awarded December 2023) for a ***Mid-Atlantic Energy Link would allow for up to a 16-17 mile wide corridor that could accommodate multiple transmission lines as long as these are adjacent to current electric transmission lines' ROW.***

My reading of Sen. McKay's bill indicates that development up to this extent would not be precluded in the three Wildlands targeted by HB1270, though NEET says their intent is one new line with a 200' wide ROW. NEET was only clear that additional lines must be exclusive to existing ROW. **Width of ROW for new lines is not specified in bill language.**

Preservation of Maryland's Wildlands, farmland and private property:

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 Wildland 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.

Additionally, NEET will need easements from private property owners in order to construct transmission corridors. **Land agents hired by NEET are already approaching property owners in Allegany and Garrett counties**, though they have not announced this publicly nor publicly revealed their proposed route for these lines.

Land agents, interested in making the best deal for the company, rather than fairly compensating landowners, operate in secrecy and with urgency. They urge landowners to sign on the spot, without attorney's advice. Once signed, the landowner(s) (or their heirs) are stuck in that contract until the project is built or cancelled, and signing a non-disclosure agreement is standard operating procedure for such contracts.

Secrecy and lack of transparency, especially from Sen. McKay, Del. Hinebaugh and NEET, are never a good sign for property owners. Property owners should have full information, including knowing that the project is fully permitted by the State and appropriate agencies. If the project isn't permitted, NEET can sell landowner easements to the highest bidder.

Opportunity for Public Input **not** provided by Sen. McKay, NEET, or DNR prior to bill submission and both Senate and House hearings:

Ms. McCormick said that property owners living within 2 miles of proposed transmission lines would be notified by postcard by the end of February 2025 with public hearings held thereafter. A much larger area of private land holdings, including agricultural and conservation-designated lands, would be affected.

Very late in the game — February 27 — DNR announced a public meeting “. . . an open house style setting to gather feedback from the public regarding impacts to wildlands. There will be no formal presentations by the Department.” DNR has decided not to share what they know about this project, including potential harms to state-protected lands — especially Wildlands — and relevant COMAR regulations.

At no point have 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.

While I am opposed to ANY ADDITIONAL development or incursion in Maryland's protected Wildlands, I am particularly concerned about HB1270 because it offers no specification of the width or number of transmission lines that could be allowed adjacent to Potomac Edison's current ROW within wildlands.

I urge an Unfavorable Report for HB1270

Thank you for this opportunity to share my concerns, Ann Bristow

OPPOSE HB1270 - Overhead Transmission Lines.pdf

Uploaded by: Bob Spear

Position: UNF

OPPOSE HB1270 – Ovrhead Transmission Lines

Good Afternoon Members of the House Economic Matters Committee,

We urge you to defeat HB1270. Admittedly our nation and our state must find ways to increase our supply of electricity and to transport that electric power to additional data centers; and one can argue that this objectives serves the common good, even if Maryland consumers are not direct beneficiaries of this proposed transmission line. However, we wish to cite three principal reasons why this particular bill is not the right answer and should be defeated:

1. We have very little completely wild, untouched lands left in Maryland, and the Wildlands of the Youghiogheny River are one of them. (We say this, even knowing that Potomac Edison has a transmission line there, which pre-dated the Wildlands designation, and so was grandfathered into the legislation that established the protected areas.) Let us not do anything to destroy this last remaining pristine area. We do have other wildlands throughout the state, and this legislation would open the door to violating those areas as well.
2. This bill makes it much easier for any utility, NextEra or any other, now or in the future, either in Garrett county or elsewhere, to circumvent the protected wildlands of the state. The wording of this bill gives too much leeway to NextEra. Among other provisions, it allows a bill to move forward without the Governor's support. Bad idea.
3. This entire proposal was initiated in a most underhanded way. The public needs to be expressly and overtly involved, consulted, and represented before we get to the stage of legislation. This type of action require public hearings, discussion, and support. We should have had newspaper stories for tha last year at least. This seems like some political skullduggery, trying to sneak this in while no one was looking.

Thank you for listening.

--Dr. Robert J. Spear and Dr. Mary Helen Spear, Swanton, Garrett County

Unfavorable Testimony on HB 1270.pdf

Uploaded by: Brenda Myers

Position: UNF

Unfavorable Testimony on HB 1270

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Brenda Myers, and I am writing today to express my **strong** opposition to House Bill 1270 (HB 1270). This bill presents a serious threat to Maryland's Wildlands, undermining critical environmental protections and violating the very statutes designed to preserve these sensitive ecosystems for future generations. HB 1270 not only weakens existing conservation laws but also establishes a dangerous precedent for the future management of Maryland's protected lands. This bill demonstrates lawmakers putting transmission line profits above Marylanders and our environment.

Major Concerns with HB 1270

1. HB 1270 Violates the Wilderness Preservation System Statute and COMAR Regulations

Maryland's Wilderness Preservation System was created to ensure that designated Wildlands remain protected and unimpaired. HB 1270 directly contradicts this mission by creating a new pathway for non-permitted activities in Wildlands. This move violates both the **Wilderness Preservation System statute** and existing **COMAR regulations**, which were established to safeguard these areas from harmful development and degradation.

2. Undermines the Foundation of the State's Protected Lands System

For decades, Maryland has maintained a **robust and transparent process** for managing Wildlands, ensuring that decisions about these areas are made with careful consideration and public input. HB 1270 **sidesteps this established process**, opening the door for arbitrary changes to Wildlands protections without the necessary scientific, legal, and community review. By doing so, this bill weakens the very foundation of Maryland's conservation efforts.

3. Creates a Dangerous Precedent for Wildlands Management

Under current law, **only the Governor, with public input, has the authority to propose changes** to Wildlands management. HB 1270 disrupts this framework by allowing any delegate to submit bills that alter Wildlands protections, stripping the process of its necessary safeguards. This move undermines the integrity of environmental governance and could open the floodgates for future legislative efforts to weaken Wildlands protections.

4. Cedes General Assembly Stewardship Responsibility to the Public Service Commission

The management of Wildlands should remain in the hands of conservation professionals, not regulatory bodies focused on utility infrastructure. HB 1270 effectively transfers decision-making power over Wildlands to the **Public Service Commission**, an entity with no specific expertise

or mandate to protect sensitive natural habitats. This shift threatens to prioritize energy and development interests over conservation goals.

5. Lack of Transparency and Public Engagement

One of the most troubling aspects of HB 1270 is the **lack of prior disclosure or public engagement before its submission**. Maryland's Wildlands are public resources, and any changes to their status should involve robust public discussion and stakeholder involvement. By bypassing these critical steps, HB 1270 disregards the principles of transparency and accountability that should guide any decision-making regarding protected lands.

6. Environmental Harm and Irreversible Damage

Wildlands are designated to remain **unimpaired for future generations**, providing vital ecosystem services such as habitat preservation, water quality protection, and carbon sequestration. HB 1270 is **fundamentally counter to the intent of the Wildlands Preservation statute**, as it opens the door for industrial activities that could cause irreversible environmental damage. Allowing new pathways for non-permitted activities in these areas would **fragment ecosystems, threaten wildlife, and degrade the natural landscapes that Maryland has worked so hard to preserve**.

HB 1270 is a Step Backward for Conservation

HB 1270 is a **direct attack on Maryland's commitment to environmental stewardship**. By violating established statutes, undermining conservation laws, and removing necessary protections, this bill sets a dangerous precedent for the future of Maryland's Wildlands. Instead of weakening these safeguards, we should be strengthening them to ensure that our most sensitive natural areas remain protected for generations to come.

I strongly urge this committee to **reject HB 1270** and uphold Maryland's longstanding commitment to protecting its Wildlands.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Brenda Myers

Hampstead, Maryland

HB1270 UNFAVORABLE Walls.pdf

Uploaded by: Brent Walls

Position: UNF



3070 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20007
202.888.2037 (main)
www.prknetwork.org

HB1270 - Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines
Hearing Date: Wednesday, March 6, 2025

UNFAVORABLE

***Potomac Riverkeeper Network:** Our mission is to protect the public's right to clean water in the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers and their tributaries. We stop pollution to enhance the safety of our drinking water, protect healthy river habitats, and enhance public use and enjoyment.*

Background of MD Wildlands Preservation System

The preservation of Wildlands in Maryland began in 1973. Since the start of the program, the General Assembly has designated 38 separate Wildland areas totaling 65,956 acres. The purpose of preserving a Wildland is stated in COMAR 08.01.02.02:

“A. Purpose. There is a State wildlands preservation system composed of areas in the State designated by the General Assembly as wildlands areas. The wildland areas shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the people of Maryland in a manner that will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wildlands, to provide for their protection, for the preservation of their wildland character, and for gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment. For a description of the boundaries of an individual wildland, see Natural Resources Article, §5-1203, Annotated Code of Maryland.”

There are two types of Wildlands. Type 1 is a primitive area untouched by urban civilization that protects watersheds that are ecologically vulnerable to human interference. Type 2 Wildland signifies an area of “importance for natural sciences and ecology with outstanding value for education, research and appreciation of natural processes.” Wildlands are separate from watershed management areas and State forests which allow activity such as forestry for lumber. These Wildlands are not only for the use and enjoyment of Maryland residents and tourists, but are key areas that allow protections for endangered species.

These state-owned Wildlands have been set aside and placed into preservation to maintain the wildness of these areas, which can only continue to occur by keeping urban infrastructure from fracturing the wildlands and threatening the habitats of aquatic and terrestrial species. Over 57% of the 65,956 acres are in the three western Maryland counties totaling 36,827 acres, many of which are in the Upper Potomac Watershed.



Potomac Riverkeeper Network is the trade name of Potomac Riverkeeper, Inc.
a 501(c)3 tax-exempt nonprofit organization #54-1982624 - EarthShare/CFC # 87828



SB399 Threatens the Preservation of Wildlands

HB1270 threatens the intent of the Wildland Preservation System that was instituted by the Maryland legislature. The bill claims that there is a public need to run overhead transmission lines through three Wildland areas: Big Savage Mountain, Bear Pen, and Dan's Mountain. These three Wildland areas preserve 8,443 acres. Big Savage Mountain was the first Wildland designated in 1973 and has maintained its Wildland Preservation Type 1 status for 52 years.

SB399 undermines the intent of the Wildland Preservation System to protect wildlife and habitat of sensitive and endangered species for the public good to experience an untouched natural setting with no urban civilization; which includes the construction of overhead power lines that will cut a 200 foot path through Preserved Wildlands; fracturing the vitality of the three Wildland areas. HB1270 proposes to sacrifice one "public good" for another. The overhead transmission lines are claimed to be a necessity for the public good. In actuality, the overhead transmission lines proposed by NextEra are intended to power the growing development of data centers that have their own environmental impacts on natural resources. It is not necessary to fracture preserved Wildlands when alternate routes are available. The only reason this bill is being proposed by NextEra is to reduce the costs associated with the construction of the overhead power lines. NextEra is recommending increasing their profits by sacrificing Maryland's system of preserving Wildlands.

Unfavorable Report for HB1270

As the Upper Potomac Riverkeeper, my mission is to protect the right for communities to have clean water for drinking, fishing and recreation and protect healthy river habitats. The Wildlands preserved in the State of Maryland have protected thousands of acres from the destruction of urban infrastructure, thereby protecting critical habitat. HB1270 will undermine the integrity of legislation that has been in place for 52 years and set a precedent that any for profit company can legislate a taking of Wildlands. I am requesting the Committee return an unfavorable decision.

Brent Walls
Upper Potomac Riverkeeper
15307 Dellinger Rd
Williamsport, MD 21795

Testimony in opposition to HB1270.pdf

Uploaded by: Brigid Kenney

Position: UNF

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.

Brigid Kenney
Accident, MD

HB 1270 Price.pdf

Uploaded by: Brysn Price

Position: UNF

Good Afternoon, Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee.

My name is Bryan Price, and I am here today to strongly oppose HB 1270, a bill that threatens Maryland's Wildlands, conservation laws, and long-term environmental and financial interests.

As a lifelong Marylander, I grew up learning about the importance of Wildlands, conservation, and the Chesapeake Bay. I had many formative experiences growing up in the mountains of western Maryland, and it is a place that is dear to me. Like me, my peers were, and our students today are taught an early age, that protecting our natural resources is not just a responsibility but a core part of our state's identity. Programs in our schools instill in us the importance of stewardship, reminding us that these lands, waters, and ecosystems belong not just to us, but to future generations. I was actively involved in FFA's Conservation Club, where I worked on projects that reinforced these values. Additionally, I have secured grants to teach children about environmental stewardship, helping instill in young Marylanders the same principles that previous generations passed down to me. HB 1270 is a massive course reversal from these long-standing priorities, undermining the conservation ethic that has guided our state for decades and is in conflict with our state's soul.

One of the areas at risk under this bill is Big Savage Mountain, home to over a dozen rare species. These Wildlands provide critical, undisturbed habitats for sensitive plant and animal species that rely on large, contiguous tracts of forest to survive. If transmission lines are constructed here, it would fragment these ecosystems, disrupt rare and at-risk wildlife, and permanently alter one of Maryland's most biodiverse landscapes. Conservation isn't just about protecting what we can see today, it's about ensuring that the next generation can experience the same rich, thriving ecosystems that we were entrusted with.

Another critical area at risk is Dan's Mountain, home to the northern long-eared bat, a federally protected species. Bat populations in Maryland have already been devastated by a deadly fungal infection known as white-nose syndrome, which has pushed the northern long-eared bat to the brink of extinction. Transmission line construction in this critical habitat would further threaten one of Maryland's most imperiled species, adding habitat destruction to the many challenges it already faces. Bats play a crucial role in Maryland's ecosystems, controlling insect populations and maintaining ecological balance. If we allow this destruction, we may be accelerating the disappearance of a species already on the edge. And need we be reminded of the chaos inflicted upon the world by one sick bat in China.

Bear Pen Run, another area under threat, is a large, unbroken tract of forest that provides essential habitat for forest interior dwelling species such as many songbirds, American black bears, bobcats, fishers, and salamanders. These species thrive best in large, contiguous patches of undisturbed forest. Fragmenting this habitat for industrial infrastructure such as transmission lines would devastate these sensitive species by increasing human encroachment, altering microclimates, and inviting invasive species. Maryland has worked hard to preserve these ecosystems, and HB 1270 threatens to undo that progress.

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources has warned that this bill jeopardizes federal funding Maryland receives for Wildlands protection. Allowing overhead transmission lines in these protected areas means Maryland must replace the lost land within three years, or risk losing vital federal conservation dollars. If suitable replacement land cannot be found, our state's conservation funding will be reduced, putting future environmental projects and land protection efforts in jeopardy. This is an irresponsible financial gamble that could cost taxpayers in the long run while offering little real benefit in return.

For decades, Maryland has had strong, science-based environmental laws designed to protect sensitive ecosystems. These laws require rigorous scientific, legal, and community review before making changes to Wildlands designations. HB 1270 undermines this careful process, creating a dangerous precedent where conservation laws can be weakened without adequate public input or environmental review. If this bill is passed, what's to stop future carve-outs for even more development in Wildlands? It opens the door to further rollbacks of conservation protections.

Supporters of HB 1270 claim the bill is necessary to meet energy demands, particularly for data centers. However, recent analyses suggest that Maryland's energy capacity has been underestimated, and that the actual demand for new transmission lines is questionable. Before permanently damaging Wildlands, we must conduct a comprehensive review of our existing energy infrastructure. New construction projects, especially those that harm conservation lands, should be pursued only when absolutely necessary, not based on outdated or exaggerated forecasts, especially those typical of companies like PSEG who was found liable in courts for millions of dollars in over stating the need for such transmission programs.

Currently, land management decisions for Wildlands are made by conservation experts with deep ecological knowledge. HB 1270 takes that authority away and hands it to the Public Service Commission, an entity with no specific expertise in conservation. The Public Service Commission's primary responsibility is utility regulation, not environmental

protection. If this bill passes, energy interests will be prioritized over conservation, directly contradicting the purpose of Wildlands protections. The General Assembly has a duty to protect these lands, and HB 1270 is an abdication of that responsibility.

Maryland's Wildlands belong to the people, and any decision affecting them should involve robust public participation. However, HB 1270 was introduced without sufficient stakeholder engagement, meaning that conservationists, hunters, anglers, outdoor enthusiasts, and local communities had no opportunity to weigh in. This lack of transparency raises serious concerns about the bill's intent and who stands to benefit. If major policy changes affecting public lands are being made, they should happen openly, with input from Marylanders, not behind closed doors at the request of private energy interests.

Wildlands are meant to remain unimpaired for future generations, protecting biodiversity, water quality, and carbon sequestration. HB 1270 directly contradicts the intent of Maryland's Wildlands Preservation statute, exposing these areas to industrial activities that could cause permanent environmental damage. Allowing transmission lines in Wildlands would fragment critical ecosystems, reducing habitat connectivity for wildlife. It would disrupt sensitive species, including the northern long-eared bat and over a dozen rare species in Big Savage Mountain. It would harm Maryland's water resources, as Wildlands serve as natural filters for our watersheds. It would degrade scenic and recreational value, threatening tourism, outdoor recreation, and local economies.

HB 1270 is an unnecessary and irresponsible bill that undermines conservation laws, weakens environmental protections, and threatens Maryland's financial and ecological future. Big Savage Mountain, Dan's Mountain, Bear Pen Run, and Maryland's Wildlands are irreplaceable. If we allow transmission lines today, what will we justify tomorrow? For these reasons, I urge the committee to reject HB 1270 and uphold Maryland's commitment to preserving its Wildlands for generations to come. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Bryan S. Price, Jr.

21221 York Road

Parkton, Maryland 21120

Bryan.s.price@gmail.com

410.302.8074

HB 1270 Natural Resources - Wildland Areas -Overhe

Uploaded by: Cait Kerr

Position: UNF

Thursday, March 6, 2025

TO: C.T. Wilson, Chair of the House Economic Matters Committee; and Committee Members

FROM: Cait Kerr, The Nature Conservancy, State Policy Manager; Michelle Dietz, The Nature Conservancy, Director of Government Relations

POSITION: Oppose HB 1270 Natural Resources – Wildland Areas – Overhead Transmission Lines

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) opposes HB 1270, offered by Delegate Hinebaugh. This bill proposes to exempt portions of the Big Savage Mountain Wildland, Bear Pen Wildland, and Dan’s Mountain Wildland from their current designation as protected wildland areas to facilitate constructing overhead transmission lines.

TNC is a global conservation organization working to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Maryland, our work focuses on delivering science-based, on-the-ground solutions that secure clean water and healthy living environments for our communities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and increasing resilience in the face of a changing climate. We understand the need to deploy clean energy and build new transmission lines that will secure resilient energy resources in our state, but our approach must minimize harmful impacts on communities and the environment.

Preserving Maryland’s Wildland areas is incredibly important—not only for protecting biodiversity and ecological health, but also for providing unique recreational opportunities and climate resilience for current and future generations. HB 1270 weakens protections for Maryland’s Wildlands, setting a precedent for allowing infrastructure projects on these protected lands without study or community input. TNC recognizes the importance of addressing energy transmission needs; however, enacting a precedent-setting exemption to Wildlands protections prior to community or other stakeholder engagement should not be the path forward. There should be an exhaustive process to find alternative pathways and technological solutions before compromising protected areas. While it might be possible that a project running parallel and contiguous to existing transmission lines may be found to have a reduced impact on local communities in comparison to new routes, there is currently insufficient evidence to confirm this as the best alternative. Therefore, we consider that at this stage these exemptions should not be granted. These types of exemptions should follow the collection of strong evidence that align with current scientific knowledge, environmental justice perspectives, and present-day conservation and mitigation strategies.

While the Public Service Commission (PSC) cannot consider or analyze alternative routes without legislative action, it is important to first engage with communities before enacting a change to Wildlands. Including this route as an option within an open and transparent review process, rather than preemptively carving out protected lands, ensures that conservation and community priorities are maintained. Setting this precedent would diminish the incentive to explore innovative transmission solutions that better align with the state’s long-term environmental protection goals.

TNC urges the committee to reject HB 1270 and instead promote solutions that align with Maryland’s commitment to environmental stewardship and climate action. Let us work together to find alternatives that meet energy transmission needs without sacrificing our cherished natural landscapes.

Therefore, we urge an unfavorable report on HB 1270.

HB1270 transmission lines testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Christine Price

Position: UNF

Testimony: HB1270 – Natural Resources – Wildland Areas – Overhead Transmission Lines
Committee: Economic Matters
Hearing Date: March 6, 2025
Position: OPPOSE

Dear Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

I am a resident of Garrett County and ask you in the strongest terms to vote NO on HB1270.

Maryland's designated Wildlands represent the most sensitive and pristine lands in the state. They have been designated as Wildlands and protected by our laws because they are so special. The three Wildlands (Big Savage Mountain Wildland, Bear Pen Wildland, and Dan's Mountain Wildland) that are threatened by this bill are very close to my home. I have visited all of them; as a student with experts, as a volunteer, and as a hiker. They are unique places that live up to the high level of protection currently afforded to them.

HB1270 violates the Wilderness Preservation System statute and existing COMAR regulations that protect the Wildlands. The bill would create a new pathway for non-permitted activities in Wildlands all over the state, not just in western Maryland. This bill undermines the foundation of the state's protected lands system.

The bill would allow a new transmission line "parallel" to the existing Potomac Edison transmission. Although the bill's sponsors and NextEra have suggested that this means their proposed lines would be adjacent to the existing line, the bill just says parallel. As the bill is written, new lines could be built parallel but a mile away, creating a brand new enormous corridor through these pristine lands! This language is deceiving and dangerous.

The sponsors of this bill and the cross bill SB0399 have misrepresented the views of many of the Garrett County citizens that they claim to represent. In his presentation of the cross bill SB0399, Senator McCay perpetuated several disturbing falsehoods, along with the representatives from NextEra Energy, the company that stands to benefit from this bill. He suggested that the 50 meetings held have involved the community and represent real outreach. This is false. They have not had any meetings that were publicized and open to the public. The citizens of Garrett County have not had an adequate chance to express their concerns. Senator McCay and NextEra have provided economic benefit estimates with no explanation of the assumptions behind the numbers, so it is impossible to analyze those generous estimates and know if they have any connection to the real financial impact to Garrett County. Further, they suggest that the bill will not even matter if the project does not receive regulatory approval, when in fact, the bill would change the regulatory rules in NextEra's favor. The exemption that the bill would provide is vital to NextEra's vision for their transmission lines. There have been no public discussions of alternative routes and use of existing right of ways. This is big business manipulating the facts, dodging questions, and not providing sufficient information to evaluate this bill or their building plans.

Just days ago my household received a postcard from NextEra promoting an online survey. At first, I was pleased to be able to have a chance to express my opinion. But upon reading the brief survey, I realized that it was written in such a way that responses could easily be manipulated and it did not provide a way to express my concerns or opinions. I declined to complete it.

I support Maryland's clean energy goals, but allowing industry to build in our most protected lands is an abomination.

I have not been able to get a clear answer as to why new power lines cannot be strung along existing transmission towers. I realize that the owner of the existing large transmission towers is not NextEra Energy, but why wasn't the contract given to the existing ROW owners so that more state or private land would not be industrialized? Why not utilize existing ROWs? If actual dialog had been happening, I might know the answer to some of these questions.

My husband and I purchased our property in 2007 specifically because of the abundance of protected lands all around it. We border New Germany State Park and live in walking distance of Savage River State Forest. Our home, along with these state lands and the three targeted Wildlands are all within NextEra's "Routing Study Area". We will be directly impacted if this bill passes.

You have a responsibility to protect the natural resources of Maryland. I am afraid that some public officials are just being swayed by false narratives perpetuated by industry. We need more energy, but that doesn't mean that this is the only way to solve that problem. Industry lobbyists and public relation specialists are always going to overestimate economic benefits and power grid benefits, while simultaneously underestimating environmental degradation. Blasting through protected Wildlands

would be much cheaper and easier than negotiating and paying for land leases elsewhere. NextEra does not care about clean energy, they do not care about global warming, they do not care about our environment, they do not care about Garrett County's economy, and they do not care about Marylanders' quality of life.

Our public officials are supposed to protect the people. We depend on you to carefully weigh all of the issues and make a reasoned decision. Please consider these issues carefully.

Please vote NO on HB1270.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Campe-Price
Grantsville, MD

Opposition to HB1270.pdf

Uploaded by: Clare Buckle

Position: UNF

Subject: Opposition to HB1270

I am reaching out to discuss House Bill 1270, which seeks to exempt certain areas within Big Savage Mountain Wildland, Bear Pen Wildland, and Dan's Mountain Wildland from wildland designation. This exemption would allow for the construction of a transmission line and is subject to a certificate of public convenience and necessity being obtained for this transmission line. I believe this proposal warrants careful consideration, considering both the potential benefits and the importance of preserving our natural resources.

I want to express concerns regarding Bear Pen Run, a remote area of our Wildlands. This region currently boasts no facilities and no established trails, and it features valuable old-growth forest that supports the threatened leatherwood species, a rare plant in need of conservation efforts. The leatherwood is classified as likely to become endangered in Maryland in the near future and holds a state rank of S2, which is at high risk of extinction or extirpation due to restricted range, few populations or occurrences, steep declines, severe threats, or other factors. This classification reflects its vulnerability.

I believe it is essential to emphasize the importance of preserving this unique ecosystem for future generations.

The rocky, cool mountain springs and streams that flow into Bear Pen Run and the Savage River provide a habitat for a rich diversity of salamanders and native brook trout. The native brook trout is the only trout species native to Maryland.

What implications and long-lasting ecological impacts does the declassification of our wild lands have for future generations?

The diverse wildlife, flora, and natural beauty of the mountains in Western Maryland deserve strong protection, and this responsibility should not be taken lightly in legislative decisions.

Is there a plan for an independent environmental study that could affect our wildlands? How do you intend to mitigate risks for threatened species? Will there be a GIS map detailing the clear boundary lines outlined in House Bill 1270?

Thank you for addressing my concerns regarding this matter. I look forward to your response on protecting our lands for future generations.

Sincerely,

Clare Buckle

Resident of Western Maryland

Testimony in Opposition to HB1270.pdf

Uploaded by: DAWN BEITZEL

Position: UNF

Testimony in Opposition to HB1270
Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines
Economic Matters Committee
March 6, 2025

Chairman Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Members of the Committee,

I respectfully submit this testimony in **strong opposition** to HB1270, which seeks to exempt portions of the Big Savage Mountain Wildland, Bear Pen Wildland, and Dan's Mountain Wildland from their current protected designation to allow for the potential construction of overhead transmission lines.

Maryland's designated wildland areas are among the state's most pristine and ecologically significant landscapes, offering critical habitat to diverse plant and animal species while providing invaluable recreational and scenic opportunities for residents and visitors alike. The Wildlands Preservation System was created to ensure these natural areas remain undisturbed for future generations — a commitment that must not be undermined.

By allowing exemptions to these protections, HB1270 sets a dangerous precedent that could open the door to further degradation of our state's precious wildlands. Construction of overhead transmission lines in these sensitive ecosystems would have **irreversible impacts** on wildlife habitats, water quality, and the natural beauty that defines these areas. Fragmentation caused by infrastructure projects can disrupt species migration, introduce invasive species, and permanently alter the landscape.

Additionally, there are **alternative routes and technologies** available to deliver necessary energy infrastructure without compromising protected wildlands. Advancing such options would align with Maryland's commitment to conservation and sustainability while still meeting the state's energy needs.

I urge the committee to reject HB1270 and uphold Maryland's dedication to preserving its wildland areas. Protecting these landscapes is not only an environmental imperative but also a reflection of our state's values and commitment to future generations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Dawn Beitzel

Opposition to HB1270 DBullard.pdf

Uploaded by: Desiree Bullard

Position: UNF

Subject: Opposition to House Bill 1270

I am writing to express my opposition to House Bill 1270.

Bear Pen Wildland is home to the leatherwood, a rare and threatened plant species. It is expected to become endangered soon. This area's streams provide habitat for diverse salamanders and brook trout, the only trout species native to Maryland. These species, and all those in this vulnerable area, deserve to be protected.

There is sound reason behind this area's designation as wildlands. It is nothing short of alarming that the necessary studies have not been completed to ensure this can be done safely, without harm to the species that are meant to be protected in the first place.

Wildlands are defined as "areas of state-owned land or water that have retained their wilderness character or contain rare or vanishing species of plant or animal life or similar features worthy of preservation."

Rare or vanishing species deserve to be protected, not trampled over for transmission lines. I urge you to carefully consider this exemption and the long-lasting impact it could have on our spectacular surroundings here in Western Maryland.

Thank you for your consideration regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Desiree Bullard
Resident of Western Maryland

RE_ HR1270 UNFAVORABLE.pdf

Uploaded by: DONALD STORCK

Position: UNF

RE: HR1270 **UNFAVORABLE**
WRITTEN TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO;
ECONOMIC MATTERS COMMITTEE
MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
BY: DONALD STORCK

I, Donald Storck, served as Executive Director of several organizations, namely 1989 World Whitewater Championships Inc, the Adventure Sports Institute, the 1992 Whitewater Olympic Trials and the Adventure Sports Center International. In doing so, I acquired a deep understanding and appreciation of the significant importance of the availability, access and preservation of the abundant natural resources in Garrett County and surrounding areas for the welfare of its inhabitants and economic viability.

The natural resources and related scenic beauty of this area are the underpinning attractions that bring people here to enjoy and recreate in the great outdoors which serves as the primary driver of a sustainable year round economy. This is Garrett County's greatest asset and accounts for the majority of its revenue. Any effort to degrade or deface these natural resources and beauty can have a detrimental effect in this regard. While this is the primary basis of objecting to HR 1270, it also violates existing statutes protecting sensitive and scenic areas from this type of incursion and conflicts with Garrett County's Comprehensive Plan and related Vision Statement to "enhance the quality of life by preserving the County's rural character and natural beauty — "

It is, therefore, recommended that Legislative Committee Members vote to oppose HR 1270.

Respectfully,

Donald Storck,

HB1270_AudubonMidAtlantic_WildLands_UNF.pdf

Uploaded by: Jim Brown

Position: UNF



Maryland Office
2901 E. Baltimore St
Baltimore, MD 21224

March 4, 2025

To: Chair Wilson and members of the Maryland House Committee on Economic Matters

From: Jim Brown, Policy Director, Audubon Mid-Atlantic

Subject: HB 1270 Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines - Opposed

Audubon Mid-Atlantic submits this testimony in opposition to House Bill 1270. Audubon Mid-Atlantic is the regional office of the National Audubon Society, representing over 35,000 Marylanders who advocate for the protection of birds, bird habitat, and policies aiming to protect both birds and human communities in the face of increasing environmental challenges, habitat loss, pollution, and climate change.

HB 1270 threatens some of Maryland's most sensitive and pristine Wildlands, including: the first Wildland designated in 1973 on Big Savage Mountain, Bear Pen Wildland in Savage River State Forest and Dan's Mountain Wildland. The proposed alignment also threatens several Important Bird Areas (IBAs). IBAs are identified by the National Audubon Society as places of critical local and hemispheric importance to the survival of both resident and migrating birds for the habit they provide. In Maryland, IBAs represent the highest quality remaining habitats for vulnerable bird species. IBAs should therefore be given the utmost protection from development pressures. This proposed transmission line threatens the following IBAs: Savage River, The Glades, Allegany-Garrett Grasslands, and Dan's Mountain.

The Avian Science tells us birds are in decline due to habitat loss and habitat fragmentation. 1/3 of eastern forest bird species experienced significant population declines in the past 50 years. That represents almost 3 billion birds lost in that time. Audubon's work therefore focuses on policies and land-use plans that bring bird populations back. Having reviewed the proposed legislation and route mapping currently available, we can confidently say that the proposed alignment and HB 1270 is not a project that brings birds back.

The Science also tells us:

- Eastern U.S. habitat is becoming increasingly fragmented
- Fragmentation leads to lower productivity in bird populations

Forests such as those in and adjacent to Savage River State Forest, Dan's Mountain, and Meadow Mountain provide critical landscape diversity for birds to nest, rest, breed, and feed. The benefits to birds and people of the ridges, slopes and riverine valleys will be reduced if continued forest fragmentation is allowed. Some of the most at-risk species for the impacted region and associated IBAs are Blackburnian Warbler, Canada Warbler, Wood Thrush, and Winter Wren, Blue-headed Vireo, Louisiana Waterthrush, Hermit Thrush and Cerulean Warbler.

As noted in Audubon's 2023 report *Birds and Transmission*, Audubon supports the rapid deployment of appropriately sited transmission to update the nation's grid, but these upgrades must place an emphasis

on mitigating the impact to birds, and be sited and designed in a way that does not threaten rare, protected and ecologically sensitive areas. HB 1270 will accelerate Maryland's habitat loss while removing critical protections to some of the last wild places in Maryland and our special forested Appalachian woodland ridges.

Audubon urges the Committee to consider the following while considering this proposed legislation:

- The passage of HB 1270 would mean that the Legislature has pre-approved an exemption and an alignment for the development of the transmission line through the State Wildlands if the PSC issues a Certificate. This legislation is unnecessary as a process exists for authorization of a transmission line exemption in a Wildland, but requires public notice and a hearing.
- The ridges of Western Maryland's ridge and valley province are home to some of our best, most contiguous forest habitat - a key feature for breeding and migratory birds.
- Audubon Mid-Atlantic always advocates for avoiding fragmentation and reducing edge effects in these forested flyways as dividing forest parcels has been shown to dramatically reduce habitat quality for our priority forest dwelling birds, including rare and threatened warblers.
- The fragmentation will particularly affect declining species designated as species of greatest conservation need like wood thrush and cerulean warblers because of their reliance on large patches of uninterrupted woodlands. These forested ridgelines of western Maryland are of global significance for the population of cerulean warblers.
- Audubon opposes habitat fragmentation particularly in this sensitive area of Western Maryland which is home to some of the last contiguous forest blocks in the region, particularly when alternative routing and retrofitting existing infrastructure corridors, or exploring a new tunnel are all viable alternative options.

Audubon Mid-Atlantic respectfully urges an unfavorable review of this legislation and this proposed transmission alignment

Thank You,

Jim Brown

Policy Director, Audubon Mid-Atlantic

UNFAV_HB1270_StopMPRPInc.pdf

Uploaded by: Joanne Frederick

Position: UNF



WRITTEN TESTIMONY

BILL NO.: House Bill 1270 – Wildlands Protection and Transmission Line Exemptions

COMMITTEE: Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment

HEARING DATE: March 6, 2025

SPONSOR: Delegate Hinebaugh

POSITION: Unfavorable

Testimony of Stop MPRP, Inc. in Opposition to House Bill 1270

Stop MPRP, Inc. respectfully submits this testimony in **opposition** to House Bill 1270. As an organization committed to protecting Maryland’s land, heritage, and communities from unnecessary and harmful transmission projects, we find this bill deeply concerning. HB1270 seeks to modify the designation of certain protected wildlands—Big Savage Mountain, Bear Pen, and Dan’s Mountain Wildlands—to allow for the construction of overhead transmission lines. This legislation sets a dangerous precedent by prioritizing transmission expansion over conservation protections that have been in place for decades.

Threat to Maryland’s Wildlands and Conservation Efforts

Maryland’s wildlands program was designed to safeguard the state’s most ecologically significant landscapes from industrial development. HB1270 undermines these protections by allowing a carve-out for transmission lines, which could invite further exemptions for other industrial projects in the future. If one exemption is granted, what will prevent additional requests to remove protections from other areas?

Severe Environmental and Ecological Consequences

The construction of high-voltage transmission lines requires extensive clearing of trees, soil disturbance, and habitat fragmentation. These wildlands provide crucial environmental services, including carbon sequestration, biodiversity preservation, and watershed protection. Transmission line projects introduce irreversible damage to these delicate ecosystems, displacing wildlife, increasing erosion, and threatening water quality.

Flawed Approach to Energy Infrastructure Planning

Maryland does not need to sacrifice its most protected lands to improve grid reliability. Smarter, more sustainable alternatives exist, including:

- **Placing transmission along existing rights-of-way** such as highways or rail corridors



- **Investing in grid optimization** to improve efficiency without expanding transmission footprints
- **Exploring undergrounding options** where new transmission is truly necessary

By preemptively removing wildland protections, HB1270 promotes an outdated and destructive model of transmission expansion instead of forward-thinking, responsible energy planning.

No Justification for Wildland Exemptions

HB1270 lacks a compelling rationale for why these wildlands should lose their protections. The bill does not provide evidence that alternative routes have been exhausted or that the proposed transmission infrastructure is the only possible solution. Granting this exemption without fully vetting all other options would be irresponsible and detrimental to Maryland’s environmental legacy.

Take Action: Submit Unfavorable Testimony

We urge the Committee to issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB1270. This bill is unnecessary, environmentally harmful, and sets a dangerous precedent for conservation rollbacks in Maryland. Wildlands exist to be **permanently** protected—not selectively deregulated when it becomes convenient for developers.

Conclusion

Stop MPRP, Inc. strongly opposes HB1270 and calls on legislators to reject this misguided exemption. Maryland must remain committed to protecting its natural landscapes and seeking responsible, modern energy solutions that do not come at the expense of its most valuable ecological treasures.

Recommendation: We respectfully urge the Committee to **reject HB1270** and uphold Maryland’s conservation protections.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne Frederick

President

Stop MPRP, Inc.

joanne.frederick@stopmprp.org

443.789.1382

pdfHB1270.pdf

Uploaded by: John Bambacus

Position: UNF

Senator John N. Bambacus (Senate of Maryland 1982-1990)

61 Frost Avenue
Frostburg, Maryland 21532
301-707-8985
jbambacus@verizon.net

March 6, 2025

**HB 1270 NATURAL RESOURCES-WILDLAND AREAS-OVERHEAD
TRANSMISSION LINES** By: Delegate Hinebaugh

UNFAVORABLE

This bill undermines legislative intent by proposing an exemption to build a controversial high-powered electric transmission line through three protected areas (COMAR 08.01.02.02) in the Big Savage Mountain Wildland, Bear Pen Wildland, and Dan's Mountain Wildland, an area of 8,443 acres located in Garrett and Allegany Counties.

An **UNFAVORABLE REPORT** is requested for the following reasons:

1. There was no open, transparent, or comprehensive civic engagement prior to the bill's submission. None of the comprehensive planning involved the general public.
2. The bill is premature and oversteps State authority as demands for high-voltage electricity supply are overstated and not proven. There is a fear that unnecessary disruption would occur near the existing and expanded ROW.
3. Farmers, landowners, environmentalists, and political leaders were not made aware by Delegate Hinebaugh that this legislation was being considered for introduction. There have been no public meetings or opportunities for public input on this project.
4. There has been a firestorm of criticism from farmers, landowners, homeowners and those holding agricultural and conservation easements who fear their land could be taken from them through *EMINENT DOMAIN*.
5. There needs to be a *MAP* of the exempted transmission line routes being proposed in the bill throughout the affected Wildlands and the protected Youghiogheny Scenic and Wild River Corridor.
6. There has been no determination that these high-voltage electrical lines will serve the interests of the State and its people when there are other forms of energy being considered by the governor and legislative leadership
7. Granting exceptions to protected land use through established Wildlands and the Scenic and Wild River corridor should follow the established statutory and regulatory framework, and not circumvent the existing process.

20250225 Testimony Written HB1270 Transmission Lin

Uploaded by: Judy A. Carbone

Position: UNF

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON HB1270

DATE: 3/4/2025

TO: Maryland State House of Delegates, Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Judy A. Carbone, Resident of Swanton, Garrett County, MD
Founding and Past Board Member of Engage Mountain Maryland
871 Harvey Peninsula Road, Swanton, MD, Garret County
(301) 616-5036, judy@corgi-cottage.com

RE: **STRONG OPPOSITION TO HB1270 -- Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines**

My name is Judy A. Carbone, and I am a 25+ year resident of Garrett County. I write to you today in strong opposition to HB1270 -- Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines, which, if passed, will directly affect the public, environmental, and economic health of my county. Additionally, it is a bill inappropriately filed and one that is against COMAR regulations. It should not proceed forward and should be stopped with a strong vote of opposition from committee members.

There are several reasons I believe my request of a no vote from you is warranted and right. HB1270 proposes to give NextEra Energy a right-of-way to build a transmission line in three designated wildland areas in Garrett County. Basically, the bill asks the General Assembly to cede their right of review to the Public Services Commission in their Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity process. The Senate version of this bill was submitted by the Senator McKay on January 21, 2025, and the House version by Delegate Hinebaugh on February 7, 2025, with absolutely no public notification nor engagement.

Secondly, the bill contains no information on specific locations or dimensions, other than the stipulation that the lines are to run parallel to existing Potomac Edison lines grandfathered in when the wildland designation was codified by the General Assembly for these three areas. There are no stipulations on how "parallel" is to be determined and no limitations stated on how far from the original power lines "parallel can go". The "certain areas" statement provides far too much leigh way, open to interpretation.

Third, the bills violate current state statutes and COMAR regulations. This includes the Maryland Wildlands Statue (MD Natural Resources Code S. 5-1203) which states that the 38 designated wildlands areas will be left "unimpaired for the future use and enjoyment as wildlands, to provide for their protection, preservation of their wildlands character". Granting an exception to these wildlands is no small matter. It fundamentally changes the nature of these areas in Garrett County and the intent on leaving all such areas as pristine and unimpaired. On top of it, it opens the door as precedent for exceptions "generally relating to wildland areas in the State (page 1, line 6)."

In terms of COMAR, permitted activities for transmission lines (08-01.02.03) specifically states (1a.) that "easements for above ground lines that were present at the time of designation are permitted" and that (2a.) "upgrading or expansion of the lines is permitted if the rights were in effect of the time of designation." Furthermore, under Restricted and Conditional Uses (08.01.02.06) it states that there will be "no temporary roads, no motorized equipment, no cutting of trees or shrubbery", all of which would be required for the construction and operation of transmission lines.

Additionally, COMAR also states (08.01.02.05B) that only the Governor – not the General Assembly – can request exceptions and change boundaries to wildlands and only after a specific public need is identified and public notifications and hearings take place. None of this has happened. SB399/HB1270 would go against these COMAR regulations by putting the proverbial horse before the cart and creating a new pathway for changes to wildlands management and boundaries. This, too, is unacceptable.

Fourth, HB1270 is contrary to the public interest in Garrett County. Our economy is based on nature and outdoor tourism. The wildlands are a huge draw to the visitors that generate income so that many our citizens can have jobs, earn income, buy houses, invest in our community, and so much more. The health of our local environment is an economic investment, as pristine, undisturbed areas provide opportunities for the hiking, hunting, fishing, camping, etc., enjoyed by all the citizens of Maryland. Sensitive habitats and species found in no or few other places are protected by these wildlands in Garrett County. Also, the wildlands protect headwater streams in the Savage River for not only recreational activities but also for health drinking water and Potomac River drinking quality. Protecting our public health as well as our economic and environmental health, must be a consideration in whether to support or oppose this bill.

Which brings me to my final point. Talk about the proverbial cart before the horse! There is so much that we don't know about the transmission line project for which this exception has specifically been designed. It seems to me to be foolish and against the best interests of the citizens of Maryland, especially those of us in Garrett County, to grant such a profoundly consequential exception without having all information about the intended project specifically laid out. Questions that must be answered before an exception to the wildlands statutes can be granted include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Is this transmission line project needed and why?
- What are alternative routes that should be considered before going directly to the option that violates our wildlands? Cost to the project cannot be the most prioritized consideration.
- Exactly how much land will be impacted and what limitations need to be put into place to ensure the minimum impact?
- How will this project impact our farms and our homes and, of course, those who own them?
- How will this project impact our tourism economy?
- What are the impacts on the environmental health and the public health of Garrett County?
- Could the existing right of ways be used, even if it means negotiating with Potomac Edison?
- What exactly are the benefits to Garrett County and are they worth the negative impacts that will be done to the wildlands, our economy, our environmental health, and the health of our citizens?

The citizens of Garrett County deserve to have specific, fact-based answers to these and other questions before any exemption to our wildlands statutes is codified into Maryland Law. The citizens of Maryland, current and future, also deserve these answers, and they deserve your protection by voting against this bill.

Thank you in advance for your opposition to HB1270.

Thank you.

HB1270 Natural Resources - oppose.pdf

Uploaded by: Judy Stone

Position: UNF

HB1270 Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines

Economic Matters: March 4, 2025

UNFAVORABLE

Testimony submitted by: Judy Stone, MD

Wildlands are intended to be preserved, learned from, and enjoyed. That was the intent of the Maryland's Wildlands bill, as stated in COMAR 08.01.02.02, written decades ago: "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 bastardizes the intent of the Wildlands bill. 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? What are they trying to slip through before people notice?

Additionally, 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. There are an average of 123 wildfires per year in Maryland, per the [DNR](#). We just had a major wildfire in South Carolina! 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,

Judy Stone, MD
Cumberland, MD
drjudystone@gmail.com

Opposition to HB1270 KRepp.pdf

Uploaded by: Karen C Repp

Position: UNF

Subject: Opposition to House Bill 1270

I am writing to express my disgust with and opposition to House Bill 1270. Particularly concerning to me is the presumptuous and cavalier attitude of Senator McKay, who doesn't "have details including the construction plan for the lines," despite their potentially endangering the following areas; Big Savage Mountain Wildland, Bear Pen Wildland, and Dan's Mountain Wildland, as it "aims to exempt" them from protection.

It appears to me that the cart is ahead of the horse as they have not completed their study of "sensitive habitats and cultural resources." These habitats include old growth forests with the threatened leatherwood plant species and mountain springs and streams which are home to salamanders and native brook trout. They are irreplaceable. Once destroyed, they are gone.

As stewards of these precious natural resources, we citizens have a responsibility to protect these designated wildlands. I urge lawmakers to be consistent. If you want to attract tourists to enjoy our natural wonders, don't place a mustache on the Mona Lisa.

My sincere hope is that the responsibility to protect these natural treasures for future generations is our primary motivation.

I appreciate your consideration regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Karen Repp
Resident of Western Maryland

HB1270.pdf

Uploaded by: Kenny Braitman

Position: UNF

Kenny Braitman
92 Carey Run Rd.
Frostburg, MD 251532
(Garrett County)
301 707-2584

Subject: Unfavorable HB1270

Dear Economic Matters Committee Members,

The Wildlands of western Maryland are just that, wild lands. However, the wildlands of western Maryland are also an entire ecological system consisting of above and below ground elements comprising the whole. Wild lands forest soils are comprised of many forms of life, micro-organisms, interacting with mycorrhizal fungi, interacting with root systems of plants of an entire ecosystem unique to that area and unspoiled by human intervention. These areas are not replaceable, repairable or duplicative. The wild land ecosystems are large enough to be considered an ecosystem and, as wildlands, support and provide the essential requirements for all forms of life.

Mountain Maryland, in particular Garrett County, is the most heavily forested county in the state. That being said, the amount of wild lands in Garrett County are sufficiently small thus rendering them all the more vital and valuable.

As populations continue to grow and technology continues to change, demand on these resources will only grow. Where will the line be drawn? I say, here! Wildlands are non-negotiable assets upon which we are completely dependent.

HB1278.pdf

Uploaded by: Kenny Braitman

Position: UNF

Kenny Braitman
92 Carey Run Rd
Frostburg, MD 21532
Garrett County resident
Subject: UNFAVORABLE SB0878
Dear Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee Members,

I am Kenny Braitman and a resident of Garrett County. I am writing to the Committee today to voice my strong opposition to SB0878 Oil and Natural Gas - Hydraulic Fracturing - Authorization. I am asking you to vote no on this bill. Western Maryland and Garrett County, in particular, has already demonstrated to the State of Maryland that hydraulic fracturing is unwanted and considered dangerous to both human and non-human life. It removes permanently from our already limited potable water supply millions of gallons of water per well. We banned fracking in 2017 and nothing has changed to support that.

This bill was submitted without public input or public notice and likely for good reason, Senator McKay was and is not representing his constituents views and opinions on this topic.

Western Maryland has been the source of extractive industry since its beginning.

Of course, regarding hydraulic fracturing being allowed in Garrett County, our representatives know full well that we have already been through this fight, during which the majority of Garrett Countians made it crystal clear that fracking is not welcomed here or anywhere in Maryland. The majority's strong opposition to fracking was voiced in the years that led up to the decision to ban fracking in 2017. This legislative decision was supported and signed by then-Governor Larry Hogan.

I am angry that SB0878 was filed without public knowledge and an opportunity for us to express our concerns and ask questions about its filing. I do not want to see Garrett County, where the Marcellus Shale intersects with Maryland, fracked to the detriment of our economic, environmental, and public health. These aren't my only concerns.

While Maryland's budget and energy crisis are complicated and require bold solutions, allowing hydraulic fracturing in Maryland does not help either situation. In the end, fracking will cost the state more than it generates in terms of costs to local governments, lost income and the resulting loss in taxes, a more significant cost required to attend to public and environmental health consequences, and future reclamation and clean-up.

Fracking will drain our resources and ultimately contradict the state's future goals and path to economic, environmental, and public health, most severely here in Garrett County. I urge you to vote no on SB0878. Thank you.

MARL Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Keryn Newman

Position: UNF

Testimony in Opposition

House Bill HB1270

Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines

Hearing: Economic Matters Committee

Date: March 6 at 1:00 PM.

A cross-filed Senate bill (SB0399) was heard on February 11.

New legislation for the express purpose of enabling an out-of-state transmission company, like NextEra, to take the cheapest path through Maryland's Wildlands has great impacts that are not limited to the Wildlands themselves. The proposed legislation will set into motion a series of unfortunate events that will have long-reaching impacts across the State of Maryland, including impacts to one of Maryland's most treasured national parks, as well as impacts to Maryland landowners as far east as Frederick and Montgomery Counties. MARL is nothing more than a high-voltage extension cord for the purpose of powering new data centers in Northern Virginia. There are no benefits to Maryland, or any of the other states it flies over on its way to bolstering Virginia's economic development.

I have been participating in regional grid planner PJM Interconnection's Transmission Expansion Advisory Committee meetings and have watched the planning and approval of the MARL project unfold over time. The legislature has not been presented with all the facts about MARL.

In February of 2023, PJM opened a competitive planning window for new transmission proposals to solve a need for 7,500 megawatts of new energy supply at data centers in Loudoun County, Virginia.



2022 RTEP Window 3 Purpose and Timeline

- **Purpose:**

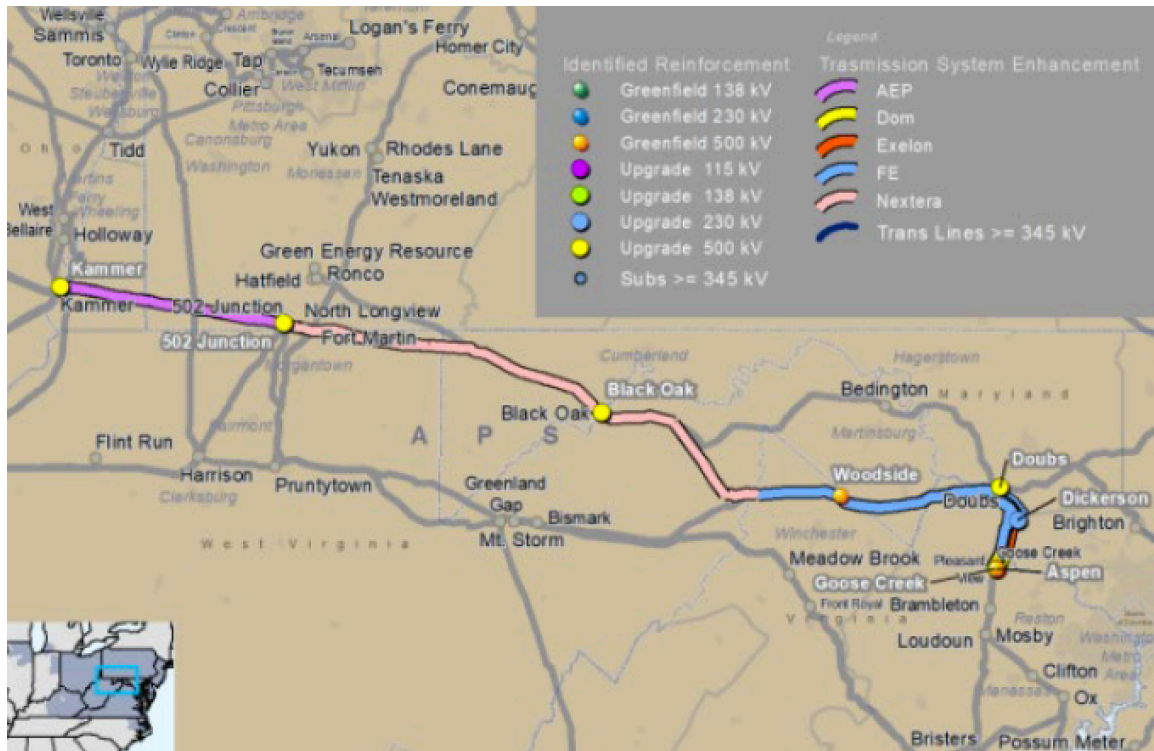
- Address reliability needs in the Dominion and APS zones primarily associated with Data Center Load forecasts (up to 7,500 MWs by 2027-28)
- Seeking robust and flexible solutions to address the reliability needs in those specific areas

- **Window Opened; February 24th 2023 / Closed May 31st 2023**

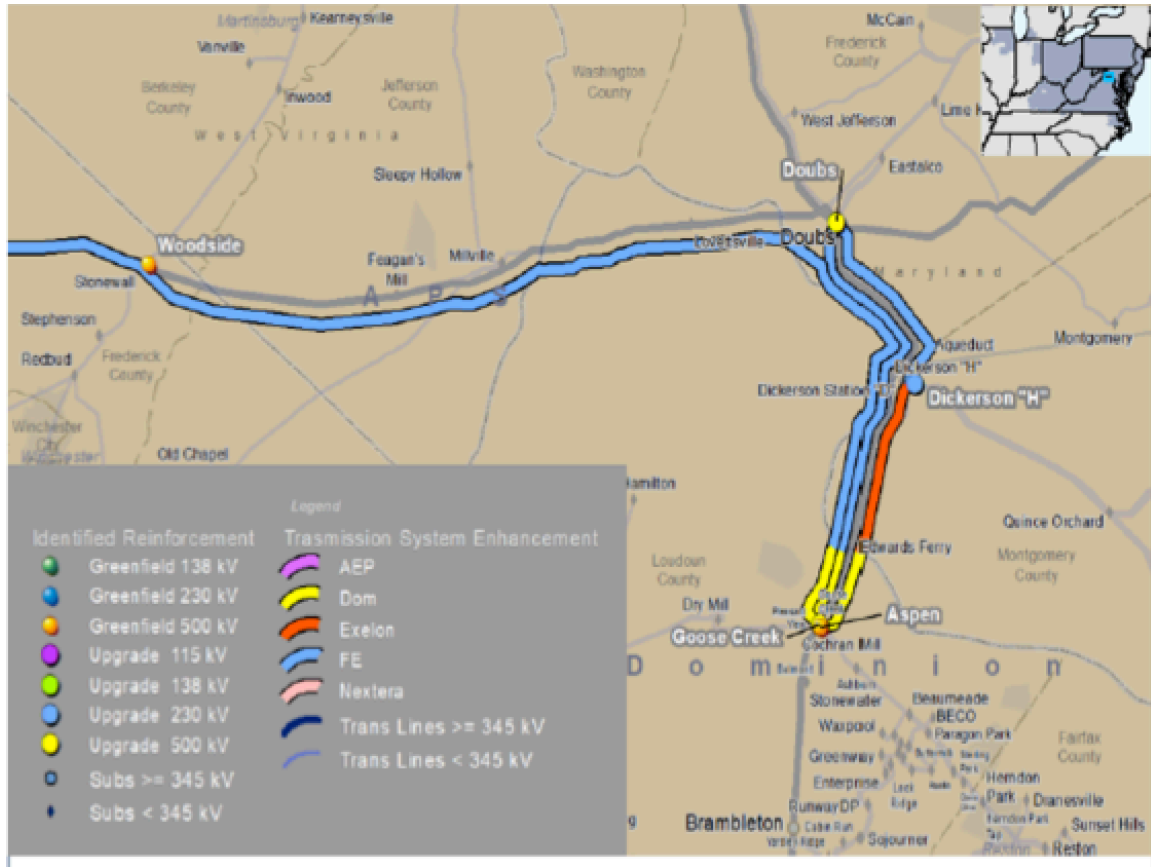
- PJM posted preliminary planning basecases on January 31st 2023
- 90 Day Window – Extended from April 25th to May 31st 2023

PJM selected NextEra's MidAtlantic Resiliency Link (MARL) project because it was the cheapest project that met the need. The MARL project offered several cost containment and financial metrics not offered by other projects. NextEra's MARL has a very tight cost cap that the company cannot exceed without losing money.

However, MARL proposed rebuilding existing transmission lines owned by another utility, FirstEnergy (Potomac Edison parent company), for a portion of its route and therefore PJM reassigned the eastern portion of MARL to FirstEnergy. Both segments of MARL must be built in order to meet PJM's need. MARL does not end in Frederick County, Virginia, but proceeds east through Virginia and West Virginia's eastern panhandle before landing at the Doubs substation in Frederick County, Maryland. From Doubs, MARL will continue south on a path parallel to the Potomac River and the C&O Canal National Historical Park in Frederick and Montgomery Counties before crossing the Potomac River back into Virginia at Edwards Ferry. The entire project map looks like this:

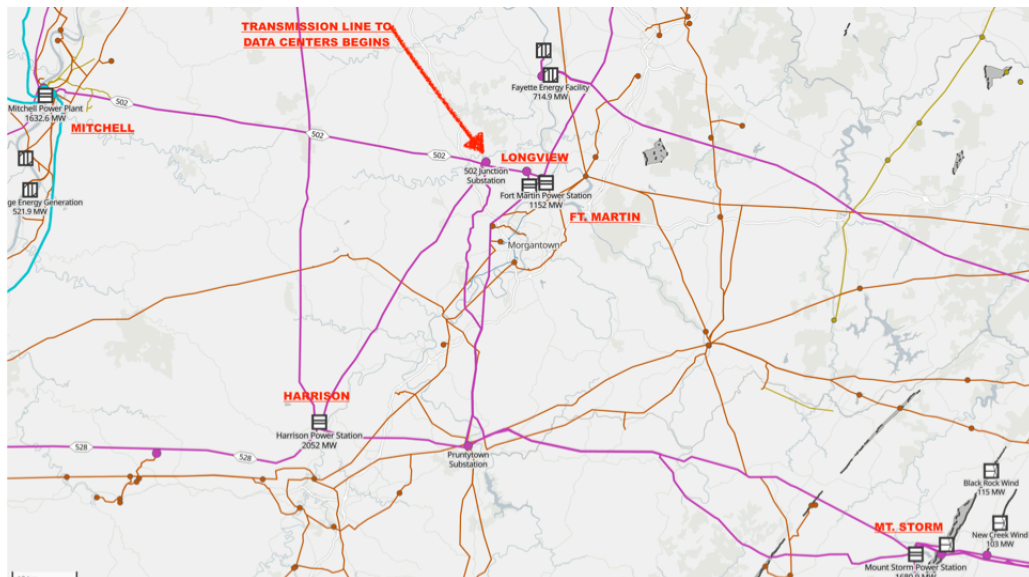


This is a zoomed in map of MARL's impact to Frederick and Montgomery Counties:



The 7,500 megawatts of new electricity for Virginia's data centers comes from coal-fired power plants in northern West Virginia that connect with MARL's western terminus at the 502 Junction substation in Greene County, Pennsylvania. The below map of the electric transmission system shows how feeder lines from these existing power plants converge at 502 Junction.

MITCHELL, LONGVIEW, FT. MARTIN, HARRISON AND MT. STORM COAL-FIRED POWER PLANTS ALL CONNECT WITH THE 502 JUNCTION SUBSTATION WHERE THE NEW TRANSMISSION LINE BEGINS - OVER 7,000 MW OF GENERATION POTENTIAL!



The increased generation of electricity from coal-fired power plants in West Virginia will have a devastating impact on Western Maryland's Wildlands (and the rest of the state) as the pollution drifts eastward. Several of these plants were slated for retirement by 2030, but after PJM approved MARL, their retirement dates have been extended until 2045.

The legislative proposal to enable the building of MARL by gutting current protections for Maryland's Wildlands has been mired in secrecy. The current law that protects the Wildlands allows the Governor to make exceptions, but only after public notice and consultation. Instead of allowing the public to engage on this issue, HB1270 thwarts the designated process for considering new transmission lines, and shuts the public out of the discussion.

The public has not yet been allowed to see any maps of MARL's proposed route, and without transparency on the available alternatives, it is impossible to determine if a path through the Wildlands is the best possible alternative. All alternative routes should be on the table before a decision is made. Ultimately, the decision of whether MARL and its route is acceptable falls on the Maryland Public Service Commission, not the legislature.

If there is a routing issue that necessitates choosing between a route through the Wildlands or a route elsewhere, only the PSC has the authority to make that determination. HB1270 jumps the gun to allow a route through the Wildlands before a proper consideration of routes by the PSC is allowed to take place.

Western Maryland contains some of the most beautiful, unspoiled land in our region, and that is because Maryland has worked very hard to protect it through the years. It is unfathomable that the legislature would be so quick to allow it to be ruined by an out-of-state company who wants to make a quick buck constructing a transmission superhighway for the benefit of a neighboring state's economic development. NextEra did little to no investigation into the proposed route it selected for MARL before making its proposal to PJM, and took no consideration of Maryland's Wildlands. A recent report by Developers Advocating Transmission Advancements (DATA) revealed that "[i]n the stakeholder process associated with Window Three, NextEra acknowledged that they had simply used Google Maps to identify a possible corridor [for MARL]. No rigorous siting analysis had been done..."¹ Don't let NextEra's failure to fully vet its proposal before submitting it to PJM cause the destruction of protected land in Maryland. At the end of the day, NextEra's executives in Florida can't see if from their house, but Maryland will be on the front lines to feel its impacts for decades.

Please keep Maryland's Wildlands wild. Don't replace our real world with a virtual one. I urge you to oppose this legislation.

Keryn Newman
6 Ella Drive
Shepherdstown, WV 25443

¹ Recent Experience With Competitive Transmission Projects and Solicitations, DATA: Developers Advocating Transmission Advancements, February 2025, available at: https://www.modernizethegrid.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/DATA-Whitepaper-2024_2-5-25_vF_edit.pdf

HB1270_Maryland Native Plant Society_Hoffman_UNF.p

Uploaded by: Kirsten Hoffman

Position: UNF



Maryland Native Plant Society

APPRECIATION CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Testimony: HB1270, Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines
Committee: Economic Matters
Hearing Date: March 6, 2025
Position: Oppose

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and honorable members of the Committee,

The Maryland Native Plant Society (MNPS) strongly opposes House Bill 1270, which would exempt certain areas in three State designated Wildlands (Big Savage Mountain, Bear Pen, and Dan's Mountain) for construction of overhead transmission lines.

In November 2013 MNPS sent comments to then Department of Natural Resources Secretary Gill, agreeing with his description of Maryland Wildlands as "the best of the best." Wildlands in Maryland provide:

- protection for rare, threatened, and endangered plants and animals
- habitat for forest interior dwelling birds
- important core areas for species with large home ranges
- unmatched water quality benefits
- outdoor classrooms for students of all ages
- quiet areas for reflection seemingly far from development and technology
- unique hunting and fishing opportunities

MNPS endorsed the expansion of Maryland's Wildlands at that time so that additional irreplaceable natural areas would be "secured by the MD General Assembly for *present and future generations*." Just a few years later the *forever* protections on three of Maryland's most valuable Wildlands are threatened by the construction of overhead transmission lines.

These three Wildlands are State designated as Type1, "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." In addition to their other irreplaceable natural wealth, these areas contain remnant old growth forests, according to the MD State Wildlife Action Plan. This plan highlights a Table Mountain Pine in the Dans Mountain Wildlands that dates to 1678 and is part of the national Old-Growth Forest Network.

Maryland must continue to protect all our Wildlands, which make up less than 1% of our total land area (as specified in the DNR Lands Acreage Report). Please safeguard the Maryland Wildlands Preservation System by protecting these intact ecosystems and their priceless functions so critical for the health of Maryland's citizens and environment. The Maryland Native Plant Society requests that you oppose HB1270.

Respectfully,
Kirsten Hoffman
Treasurer, Maryland Native Plant Society

References:

Maryland Department of Natural Resources. 2015. Chapter 4, Maryland's Key Wildlife Habitats, 2015-2025 Maryland State Wildlife Action Plan.

https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Documents/SWAP/SWAP_Chapter4.pdf

[Old-Growth Forest Network. Accessed 2025. Dans Mountain Old Growth – Dans Mountain Wildlife Management Area. https://www.oldgrowthforest.net/md-dans-mountain-old-growth-dans-mountain-wildlife-management-area](https://www.oldgrowthforest.net/md-dans-mountain-old-growth-dans-mountain-wildlife-management-area)

[Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Land Acquisitions and Planning. 2024. DNR Lands Acreage Report, DNR Publication # 05-120320-263.](https://dnr.maryland.gov/land/Documents/Stewardship/CurrentAcreageReport.pdf)

<https://dnr.maryland.gov/land/Documents/Stewardship/CurrentAcreageReport.pdf>

MOS HB1270 Wildlands -Overhead Transmission Lines

Uploaded by: Kurt Schwarz

Position: UNF



February 7, 2025

Bill: <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2025RS/bills/hb/hb1270F.pdf>

Committees: Economic Matters

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

Position: Unfavorable –HB1270-- Unfavorable

The Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) strongly opposes HB1270. This bill would permit construction of overhead transmission lines in three state-designated Wildlands. Wildlands designation is the highest level of protection accorded to state lands. SB0399 would open portions of the Big Savage Mountain, Bear Pen, and Dan's Mountain Wildlands to overhead transmission lines. The State has determined these areas to be critical ecosystems, wildlife habitat, or hold rare plant species. Any sort of development would disrupt or destroy these ecosystems, habitats, or rare plants. Wildland designation preserves the resource unimpaired for future generations.

Dan's Mountain Wildlands is an Important Bird Area¹ (IBA), and Big Savage Mountain Wildland falls within the Savage River IBA.² Bear Pen Wildland has a large, unbroken forest, making it valuable to forest interior dwelling bird species (FIDS), which are in steep decline. It also holds native brook trout, and a rare mammal, the fisher, a relative of weasels and otters. Portions of the forest show characteristics of Old Growth.³

All three wildlands are Type 1, which means they are virtually untouched by civilization, and ecologically vulnerable to human interference. They are open to passive outdoor recreation, such as hunting, fishing, hiking, birding, horseback riding, and nature interpretation. Overhead transmission lines will fragment the unbroken forest in these Wildlands that FIDS bird species depend on. Trees are felled along the line, and vegetation below the lines is permanently suppressed. Support roads destroy and fragment additional forest.

¹ Audubon Maryland—DC, Important Bird Areas, Dan's Mountain,

https://md.audubon.org/sites/default/files/dansmountain2009summary_0_0.pdf

² Audubon Maryland—DC, Important Bird Areas Program, Bird Blitz 2011-2012: Savage River, https://md.audubon.org/sites/default/files/savageriver_2011-2012.pdf

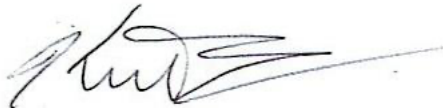
³ Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Natural Areas, Bear Pen Run, <https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/NaturalAreas/Western/Bear-Pen-Run.aspx>

There are 38 Wildlands areas in Maryland, spread among 15 counties. A total of 65,956 acres are protected as Wildlands.⁴ The Wildlands Preservation System was established in 1973.⁵

Passage of HB1270 would set a terrible precedent. If these three Wildlands can be opened up for overhead transmission lines, it will be easier to open up all other Wildlands to development, and such things as mining. The strictest standard of protection from development of any kind for Maryland State Wildlands should be preserved, as the General Assembly stipulated in 1973.

Our members visit these Wildlands to admire the birds that live there. Big Savage Mountain, Bear Pen, and Dan's Mountain Wildlands all provide valuable habitat for our declining bird populations. North America has lost almost 30% of its birds since 1970.⁶ Loss of habitat is one on the major causes of these declines.

We urge the Committee to issue an unfavorable report for HB1270, to save these Wildlands from development, and avoid setting a precedent that would encourage development in the other Wildlands.



Kurt R. Schwarz
Conservation Chair Emeritus
Maryland Ornithological Society
www.mdbirds.org

⁴ Maryland Division of State Documents, .02 State Wildlands System, <https://dsd.maryland.gov/regulations/Pages/08.01.02.02.aspx>

⁵ Maryland Department of Natural Resource, The Maryland Wildlands Preservation System, <https://dnr.maryland.gov/land/Pages/Stewardship/Wildlands-Preservation-System.aspx>

⁶ Rosenberg, Kenneth V. et al, Decline of the North American avifauna, Science, VOL 366, NO. 6451, 19 September 2019, https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aaw1313?adobe_mc=MCORGID%3D242B6472541199F70A4C98A6%2540AdobeOrg%7CTS%3D1707754028

testimony in opposition to HB1270.pdf

Uploaded by: Leslie McGorman

Position: UNF

March 4, 2025

Opposition to H.B.1270 / S.B.399: Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines

Dear Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Economic Matters Committee Members,

I'm writing to share my strong opposition to H.B.1270/S.B.399, legislation concerning overhead transmission lines through some of Maryland's most unique wildland areas.

It's difficult to understand how this legislation is anything other than a corporate giveaway - a vague and overly broad effort by NextEra Energy and its Maryland legislature supporters - to compromise delicate ecosystems and saddle Maryland taxpayers with at least half the cost of production of transmission lines - all to support massive datacenters in Virginia. The fact that the bill is referred to Economic Matters when it's clearly an environmental attack is highly questionable.

This legislation will in no conceivable way benefit Marylanders, but it will saddle us with both economic and environmental costs.

For instance:

- The preamble stating, "WHEREAS, As a result of an open, transparent, and comprehensive planning process..." is simply false. While legislators seem to know about this 18-24 month process, the public surely does not.
- SECTION 1(b)(2)(II): Adding a NextEra transmission line to run parallel to the existing Potomac Edison line does nothing to express the true scope of the project. These wildlands are Maryland's most sensitive habitat and a significant portion will be cleared and destroyed to accommodate these massive transmission lines. It's worth noting that NextEra simply wants to be able to compete with other energy companies, but rather than pay their competitors for use of existing transmission lines, they've instead created a secret backdoor plan to simply pass the cost onto Maryland taxpayers.
- SECTION 2: "That it is the intent of the General Assembly that nothing in this Act shall be construed as a recommendation that a proposed NextEra Energy Transmission MidAtlantic, Inc., transmission line be issued a certificate of public convenience and necessity from the Public Service Commission." Please don't insult our intelligence with language suggesting this is simply one step in a process that ultimately ends with the Commission. It's actually the legislature's collective job to protect wildlands - as outlined in statute - and not give away those protections while hiding behind some non-existent process for influencing the Commission. The effort to hand over our wildlands to an energy company (again - to maximize huge profits for NextEra and fund something in another state) begins and ends with this legislature.
- SECTION 3: "AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2025." In this so-called "open, transparent, and comprehensive" planning process that hasn't included a single member of the public, it's insulting to then suggest that it's ready

to go into effect on October 1. This is just additional evidence that the planning certainly has been happening for some time - but behind closed doors.

This legislation ignores the intent of wildlands protections - something upheld since the early 1970s. It also ignores the need for additional environmental impact analysis and stays silent on any potential environmental consequences the project may cause. In a time when our environment and ecosystem is more fragile than ever before in history, during a time when the Maryland climate is changing, we're seeing more high-speed winds and dry conditions that increase fire risk, we should be looking toward energy alternatives and environmental resilience. Yet, the committee is entertaining legislation strictly focused on maximizing profits for NextEra.

I urge committee members to protect Maryland wildlands and reject this lobbyist-written legislation outright.

Sincerely,

Leslie McGorman
Maryland resident

cc: Del. Hinebaugh
Del. Moon
Del. Wilkins
Del. Charkoudian
Sen. Smith

HB1270 Opposition.pdf

Uploaded by: Lisa Robinson

Position: UNF

Lisa Robinson

✉ lisarobinsoncreative@gmail.com

📍 P.O. Box 333, Oakland, MD 21550

HOUSE BILL HB1270

Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines

Hearing: Economic Matters Committee

Date: March 6 at 1:00 PM.

Dear Legislators,

My name is Lisa Robinson, a full time resident of the town of Oakland in Garrett County, Maryland. I moved here from Washington D.C. during the pandemic and work as an independent graphic arts contractor. I also am a part of the workforce in the regional outdoor tourism industry, as a whitewater guide in the summers and as a ski patroller at area ski resorts in the winters. I participate as a volunteer EMT at Southern Garrett County Rescue Squad, as well as the search and rescue organization Mountaineer Area Rescue Group (MARG) based in Morgantown, WV.

I am opposed to House Bill HB1270. My objections to this bill are overwhelmingly due to the knowledge that the perception by tourists of the quality of our wildlands here in Garrett County may directly impact my income. If transmission lines are built through sections of the region of our state that holds the greatest amount of wild area, then Garrett County will cease to hold the imagination of visitors, and they may turn elsewhere.

Next, this bill undermines the law and process by creating a new path for any delegate to submit bills for changes to wildland management, when that is only supposed to be granted to the governor with public input. The bill is counter to the intent of the Wildlands preservation statute to preserve the lands for future generations. There was also no prior disclosure or public engagement on the bill before submission, which does not follow correct procedure. It also cedes General Assembly responsibility to the Public Service Commission.

The areas that the transmission lines are proposed to go through provide protected area for headwater streams, that again, impact my ability to earn a living. Maryland recreational rivers are known for particularly good water quality and entice tourists from hours away to come here, indeed, an entire community in the Mid-Atlantic travels from far away to boat the rivers here.

I ask my legislators to oppose this bill, HB1270.

Sincerely,

Lisa Robinson

HB1270 testimony LMcD 2025.pdf

Uploaded by: Liz McDowell

Position: UNF

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,

Liz McDowell
90 Moonridge Lane
Grantsville, MD 21536
301-895-3686

HB1270 Wildlands Areas - Overhead Transmission Lin

Uploaded by: Marisa Olszewski

Position: UNF



Kim Coble
Executive Director

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Patrick Miller, Chair
The Hon. Nancy Kopp,
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Bonnie L. Norman

March 6, 2025

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

Chair Wilson and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland League of Conservation Voters (LCV) is in opposition to HB1270, which would create an unprecedented, blanket exception to one of our state's regulatory processes. If passed, HB 1270 would grant an exception for a single corporation the access to run high voltage overhead transmission lines through three of our state's Type 1 State wildlands.

Passage of this legislation would set a dangerous precedent: it would be the **first time** the state of Maryland opens up these wildlands to new transmission lines. Moreover, the legislation would explicitly circumvent the process already established on how such an exception can be made, if necessary, to use the land within these parcels to run new transmission lines. This process was established within the statute that established the wildlands designation, and should thus be followed in this case, as well. The private company supporting this legislation has yet to avail themselves of this important state process.

Indeed, HB1270 seeks an exemption to a process already in place for the benefit of a single corporate entity, making it easier and less expensive for them to move forward with a transmission route through wildlands. Defeating this legislation leaves the possibility for this project open, but ensures it goes through an appropriate process already prescribed in existing law. Passing this legislation, however, would preempt the existing robust process for this type of permission, that includes soliciting public comment necessary to make any changes to our wildlands and with agreement from the Governor, as stated in the statute.

Wildlands make up a tiny fraction of the acreage of the conserved land in Maryland, (Maryland Wildlands total 65,956 acres across 14 Counties. This is 13% of Maryland Department of Natural Resource's managed lands and less than 1% of Maryland's overall land.) They are exceptional lands, conserved as the least affected by human development and containing sensitive habitat. The fact that two of the three wildland parcels considered for exception in this legislation already had overhead transmission running through them at the time of their establishment says less about a lack of conflict with this type of land use and more about how little pristine wilderness Maryland has available to preserve. For this reason, granting exceptions to land use in



and through our established Wildlands should follow the established process as written in statute (bold text added for clarity)¹:

.05 Prohibited Activities — State Wildlands Preservation System.

A. Except when expressly permitted under Regulation .03 or .04 of this chapter, the uses and activities in §§B—G of this regulation are prohibited in a wildland.

*B. Permanent Roads, Structures, and Installations. Unless necessary to meet the minimum requirements for the purposes of the administration of the area, permanent roads, structures, or installations may not be located or constructed within a wildland. **Except following public notice and hearing, the Governor, within a specific area and in accordance with any regulations the Governor considers desirable, may determine that the following permanent structures and installations in wildlands will serve the interests of the State and the State's people, and may recommend to the General Assembly passage of a bill authorizing:***

(1) The establishment and maintenance of reservoirs;

(2) Water conservation works;

(3) Power projects;

(4) Transmission lines; and

(5) Other facilities needed in the public interest, including road construction and maintenance essential to development and use of specific areas.

Maryland LCV and the undersigned organizations are deeply concerned with the major shift in policy and establishment of poor precedent that this bill represents and we strongly urge you to give this bill an unfavorable report.

Audubon Mid-Atlantic

Chapman Forest Foundation

Baltimore Green Space

Chesapeake Legal Alliance

Beaverdam Creek Watershed Watch Group

Corsica River Conservancy

Blue Water Baltimore

Engage Mountain Maryland

Catoctin Land Trust

Friends of Nanticoke River

¹From *Code of Maryland Regulations* (COMAR). Direct access: <https://dsd.maryland.gov/regulations/Pages/08.01.02.05.aspx>



Mattawoman Watershed Society

Southern Maryland Audubon Society

Montgomery Countryside Alliance

Sparks-Glencoe Community Planning Council

National Parks Conservation Association

The 6th Branch

Potomac Conservancy

Waterkeepers Chesapeake

Sierra Club Maryland Chapter

HB1270 Wildlands Areas - Overhead Transmission Lin

Uploaded by: Marisa Olszewski

Position: UNF



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March 6, 2025

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

Chair Wilson and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland League of Conservation Voters (LCV) is in opposition to HB1270, which would create an unprecedented, blanket exception to one of our state's regulatory processes. If passed, HB 1270 would grant an exception for a single corporation the access to run high voltage overhead transmission lines through three of our state's Type 1 State wildlands.

Passage of this legislation would set a dangerous precedent: it would be the **first time** the state of Maryland opens up these wildlands to new transmission lines. Moreover, the legislation would explicitly circumvent the process already established on how such an exception can be made, if necessary, to use the land within these parcels to run new transmission lines. This process was established within the statute that established the wildlands designation, and should thus be followed in this case, as well. The private company supporting this legislation has yet to avail themselves of this important state process.

Indeed, HB1270 seeks an exemption to a process already in place for the benefit of a single corporate entity, making it easier and less expensive for them to move forward with a transmission route through wildlands. Defeating this legislation leaves the possibility for this project open, but ensures it goes through an appropriate process already prescribed in existing law. Passing this legislation, however, would preempt the existing robust process for this type of permission, that includes soliciting public comment necessary to make any changes to our wildlands and with agreement from the Governor, as stated in the statute.

Wildlands make up a tiny fraction of the acreage of the conserved land in Maryland, (Maryland Wildlands total 65,956 acres across 14 Counties. This is 13% of Maryland Department of Natural Resource's managed lands and less than 1% of Maryland's overall land.) They are exceptional lands, conserved as the least affected by human development and containing sensitive habitat. The fact that two of the three wildland parcels considered for exception in this legislation already had overhead transmission running through them at the time of their establishment says less about a lack of conflict with this type of land use and more about how little pristine wilderness Maryland has available to preserve. For this reason, granting exceptions to land use in



and through our established Wildlands should follow the established process as written in statute (bold text added for clarity)¹:

.05 Prohibited Activities — State Wildlands Preservation System.

A. Except when expressly permitted under Regulation .03 or .04 of this chapter, the uses and activities in §§B—G of this regulation are prohibited in a wildland.

*B. Permanent Roads, Structures, and Installations. Unless necessary to meet the minimum requirements for the purposes of the administration of the area, permanent roads, structures, or installations may not be located or constructed within a wildland. **Except following public notice and hearing, the Governor, within a specific area and in accordance with any regulations the Governor considers desirable, may determine that the following permanent structures and installations in wildlands will serve the interests of the State and the State's people, and may recommend to the General Assembly passage of a bill authorizing:***

(1) The establishment and maintenance of reservoirs;

(2) Water conservation works;

(3) Power projects;

(4) Transmission lines; and

(5) Other facilities needed in the public interest, including road construction and maintenance essential to development and use of specific areas.

Maryland LCV and the undersigned organizations are deeply concerned with the major shift in policy and establishment of poor precedent that this bill represents and we strongly urge you to give this bill an unfavorable report.

Audubon Mid-Atlantic

Chapman Forest Foundation

Baltimore Green Space

Chesapeake Legal Alliance

Beaverdam Creek Watershed Watch Group

Corsica River Conservancy

Blue Water Baltimore

Engage Mountain Maryland

Catoctin Land Trust

Friends of Nanticoke River

¹From *Code of Maryland Regulations* (COMAR). Direct access: <https://dsd.maryland.gov/regulations/Pages/08.01.02.05.aspx>



Mattawoman Watershed Society

Sparks–Glencoe Community Planning Council

Montgomery Countryside Alliance

St. Mary's River Watershed Association

National Parks Conservation Association

Sugarloaf Alliance

Potomac Conservancy

The 6th Branch

Sierra Club Maryland Chapter

Waterkeepers Chesapeake

Southern Maryland Audubon Society

HB 1270 Opposed_Chesapeake Conservancy_3.4.25.pdf

Uploaded by: Mark Conway

Position: UNF



Saving the Chesapeake's Great Rivers and Special Places

Earl Conservation Center | 1212 West Street | Annapolis, MD 21401

www.chesapeakeconservancy.org | 443.321.3610

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Environmental Engineer

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Gilbert M. Grosvenor
National Geographic Society

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Patrick F. Noonan
The Conservation Fund

Charles A. Stek
Environmental Stewardship Strategies

Date: March 4, 2025

Bill Number: **HB 1270 - Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines**

Committee: House Economic Matters

Position: Opposed

Chairman Wilson and Members of the House Economic Matters Committee:

Chesapeake Conservancy is opposed to HB 1270 - Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines.

Transmission line proposals can cut through established forests, natural lands, and important ecosystems. Energy generation and transmission are necessary, but they should do so with the least amount of impact on Maryland's vital ecosystems.

Wildlands set a high standard for protection, and they aren't indiscriminately determined. Simply put, this bill sets a bad precedent for the protection of Maryland's vital forests and natural resources.

We ask for your continued investment in conservation and restoration of Maryland's vital landscapes and we respectfully request a unfavorable committee report.

For further information, please contact Mark Conway, Executive Vice President of External Affairs, at MConway@ChesapeakeConservancy.org or 443-321-3610.

HB1270 Natural Resources - opposeM.pdf

Uploaded by: Mark Skinner

Position: UNF

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,

Mark Skinner, Ed.D.

mskinner283@gmail.com

EMMTestimony-HB1270.pdf

Uploaded by: Mark Stutzman

Position: UNF



HB1270: Opposed

Dear Economic Matters Committee,

As Engage Mountain Maryland's (EMM) Communications Director, HB1270 raises numerous member concerns and reeks of corporate ambitions, overshadowing common sense, good governance, and stewardship that keeps "land" in Maryland.

The entire premise of the bill caters to a bidding process, ignoring practical long-term solutions that avoid violating protected lands, not just in Garrett County but statewide. Moreover, until the bill's introduction, no engagement efforts were made to gather public opinion about overturning wildland protections in Western Maryland. It wasn't until EMM that advocates for community engagement started sharing information about the bill that a NextEra-sponsored online survey appeared, postcards arrived by mail, and DNR announced an "Open House" event for public input. These requests for public comment came too late for a bill hearing scheduled just days away.

This bill undermines land preservation goals of valuable and unique places in our state that act as setbacks to headwaters and unspoiled ecosystems. As of February 2024, more than 30 percent of Maryland's land is preserved. The state's goal is to conserve 40 percent of its land by 2040. Simply stated, HB1270 back peddles the state's respective goals, and "wildlands" by definition, are supposed to be protected for the health and well-being of present and future generations.

Unfavorable testimony is easy to qualify, leaving this committee with an unsolved problem. However, the solution to meeting the immediate energy and environmental goals is simple. The current Potomac Edison line that cuts through Garrett County's wildlands could be upgraded to fulfill the transmission capacity needs NextEra proposes to provide, avoiding unnecessary decimation of protected land. However, this solution may force NextEra to forfeit the project award to Potomac Edison.

Of the four contenders for the transmission line project, Potomac Edison submitted the highest bid and NextEra the lowest, with NextEra rated "high risk" regarding meeting their proposed below-market construction estimate. Why not accept a proven company like Potomac Edison that submitted a "low risk" cost assessment? The company already retains ROW (Right Of Way), which was established before Garrett County's wildland protections were adopted. This path forward makes HB1270 unnecessary, honors the land preservation goals of

Maryland, and justifies any added expense.

Garrett County elected officials often characterize the protected wildlands as "wasted" or impeding economic growth, providing nothing to Garrett County's people. Some things have experiential intrinsic value, not based on capitalist perspectives, such as hiking, breathing in dense forest air, or fishing a pristine stream. Garrett County's entire economy revolves around outdoor recreation, tourism, second homes, and vacation rentals, all nestled in an increasingly rare landscape. Nature's bounty is Garrett County's calling card, and ignoring that fact is misguided, ignorant, and shortsighted.

Maryland has a solid track record of respecting the environment and natural lands, broadly benefiting those who live and visit the state. HB1270 asks to bypass land protections for profit, usurping the sitting Governor's exclusive authority. The bill further invites other protected areas to be invaded at the will of overly ambitious legislators. I urge this committee to cast an unfavorable vote for HB1270, with the broader view of Maryland's development goals as grounds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Stutzman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Mark Stutzman, Communications Director
Engage Mountain Maryland

HB1270.pdf

Uploaded by: Martin Reisinger

Position: UNF

HB1270

Exempting certain areas in the Big Savage Mountain Wildland, Bear Pen Wildland, and Dan's Mountain Wildland from being designated as a wildland area, subject to a certificate of public convenience and necessity being obtained for a certain transmission line.

I am against this bill. Maryland needs to protect our wildlife areas and keep them intact. Once degraded with power lines and clear cuts, they are no longer wild. They lose their integrity and purpose.

Martin Reisinger
4064 Pleasant Valley RD
Oakland MD 21550-5607

STRONG OPPOSITIN TO HB1270.pdf

Uploaded by: Matia Vanderbilt

Position: UNF

Dear Chair and members of the committee,

March 4, 2025

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 1270, a bill that seeks to allow the construction of a transmission line through designated wildlands in western Maryland. This bill, if passed, would violate key provisions of the Maryland Wildlands Preservation System, the COMAR regulations governing wildlands, and the Maryland Natural Resources Code, and would undermine decades of conservation efforts in our state.

Violation of Maryland Wildlands Preservation System

As you may be aware, the Maryland Wildlands Preservation System, codified under MD Natural Resources Code § 5-1203, is designed to protect and preserve Maryland's irreplaceable natural areas. The lands designated as "wildlands" under this statute are recognized for their exceptional ecological, scenic, and recreational value, as well as their vital role in protecting biodiversity. These areas, such as Dan's Mountain Wildland, Bear Pen Wildland, and Big Savage Wildland, contain unique ecosystems that support rare and endangered species, making them irreplaceable natural resources that cannot be replicated or replaced once disturbed.

The proposed transmission line, as outlined in HB 1270, threatens to irreparably damage these critical habitats. The construction and maintenance of a transmission line across these sensitive areas would violate the very essence of the Wildlands Preservation System, which mandates the protection of these lands from any activity that could harm their ecological integrity.

Non-Compliance with COMAR Regulations

Additionally, the bill fails to comply with the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) on Wildlands, particularly Chapter 08.01.02. The COMAR regulations, Sections 01-06, establish strict criteria for the preservation of wildlands in Maryland. They prohibit activities that would significantly alter the natural state of designated wildlands, unless deemed necessary for public health and safety. Even then, such activities must undergo a thorough review process to ensure minimal impact.

The proposed transmission line would clearly violate these regulations by introducing an industrial infrastructure project that could lead to the fragmentation of pristine wildland habitats. This project would not only disrupt the ecological balance within these areas but would also potentially introduce invasive species, pollute local water sources, and hinder the ability of wildlife to thrive in these protected spaces.

Environmental Impact and Public Trust

The Dan's Mountain, Bear Pen, and Big Savage Wildlands are among the most ecologically significant areas in Maryland. These lands support diverse flora and fauna and provide critical corridors for wildlife migration. The proposed transmission line, part of the PJM/NextEra Energy Mid-Atlantic Resilience Link (MARL) Project, threatens to fragment these corridors and disrupt the delicate ecosystems that have been carefully preserved for generations. While the need for

infrastructure improvement is understood, the environmental cost of this project on designated wildlands is too great to justify.

Moreover, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has made it clear that these wildlands are essential for maintaining the state's natural heritage. The DNR's own descriptions of these wildlands highlight their irreplaceable value, and the agency's management of these areas reflects the state's commitment to long-term conservation efforts.

Call for Preservation

It is essential that we prioritize the preservation of our natural resources for future generations. Maryland's wildlands are not only integral to the health of our environment but also to the well-being of the communities that depend on clean air, clean water, and access to nature for recreation and tourism. The approval of HB 1270 would set a dangerous precedent, allowing corporate interests to override the public's interest in preserving our state's irreplaceable natural treasures.

In light of these concerns, I urge you to oppose HB 1270 and any legislation that seeks to authorize transmission lines or other industrial projects that threaten the integrity of Maryland's designated wildlands. I trust that you will consider the long-term environmental, ecological, and social costs of such a project and act in the best interest of all Marylanders.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical matter. I look forward to your response and your continued leadership in protecting Maryland's natural heritage.

Matia Vanderbilt

Garrett County Resident

testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Matthew Fitzpatrick

Position: UNF

My name is Matthew C. Fitzpatrick. I am Professor and Associate Director for Research at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science – Appalachian Laboratory in Frostburg, Maryland. I also serve as Host Director of the Chesapeake Bay Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit. I hold a Ph.D. in Ecology & Evolutionary Biology from the University of Tennessee and completed my postdoctoral training at Harvard University. I have authored nearly 100 scientific papers, and my research has been cited over 10,000 times. I am listed in Stanford's ranking of the Top 2% of scientists globally. My work has garnered international media attention, and I am commonly called upon by the press to speak on matters related to environmental science, natural resources, and climate change. Lastly, I am a resident of Garrett County whose property values could be directly impacted by the proposed new transmission line. **I present this testimony on behalf of myself.**

I strongly oppose HB1270 for the following reasons:

- **It is not needed.** HB1270 would create a dangerous precedent by providing a blanket exception for a single corporation to permanently alter the most pristine areas of the state of Maryland, of which designated wildlands make up less than 1%. HB1270 seeks to circumvent the process already established on how exceptions can be made to use the land within designated wildlands. This process was established within the statute that established the Wildlands designation and should thus be followed. The private company supporting this legislation has yet to avail themselves of this important state process.
- **It would harm Maryland most important natural resources.** The state's wildlands are conserved as the least affected by human development and containing sensitive habitat and endangered species. The transmission line would irrevocably diminish these unique and largely untouched places. They would create an eye sore and also frequently emit a very loud buzzing noise that would greatly impact recreation experiences and wildlife. Many of Maryland's iconic wildlife species like bears, bobcats, fishers, and brook trout require large, unbroken tracks of forest, of which the state has precious few. The 200-foot right-of-way would fragment some of Maryland's largest, contiguous tracks of primary forest, while reducing Maryland's forest cover – and would do so in high in the Chesapeake watershed. As a result, the state will be further challenged to meet its goals to improve the health of the Bay and address climate change.
- **There has been a lack of public input.** The sponsors of this bill have stated that their intention is to be open with the public, yet no public meetings have been

held regarding this legislation. In a recent interview, Senator McKay claimed the required right-of-way would be only ten to fifteen feet on either side of existing transmission lines when in fact the right-of-way is 15-20 times larger than that at 200 feet. Collectively, there is a sense a of predetermined outcomes that would undermine credibility of the scoping process and potentially skew final decision-making.

For these reasons, I am requesting that Del. Hinebaugh withdraw this bill.

Respectfully yours,



Matthew C. Fitzpatrick, Ph.D.

Professor & Associate Director of Research

University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science

Appalachian Laboratory

Garrett County Resident

(240) 803-7826

Written Testimony HB 1270_Logsdon_pdf.pdf

Uploaded by: Michael Logsdon

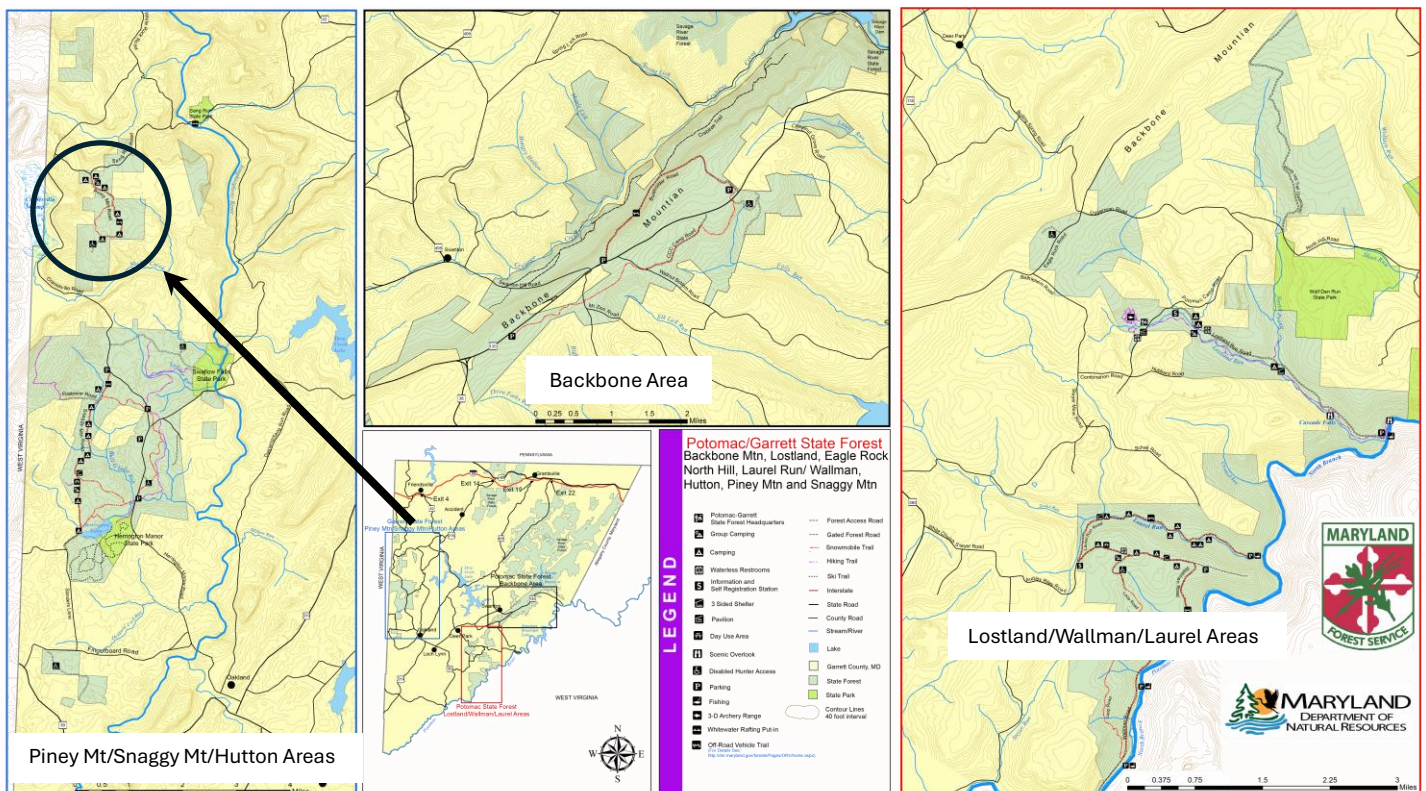
Position: UNF

UNFAVORABLE

Written Testimony Submitted to: Economic Matters Committee Maryland General Assembly HB1270_Logsdon_pdf

Overview: My name is Michael Logsdon and I am/have been involved with many aspects of Garrett County Maryland's primary industry and main economic engine Outdoor Recreation. I am concerned about the impact of Delegate Hinebaugh's submission of House Bill 1270 (concerning Natural Resources – Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines). I express this concern through several of my Outdoor Recreation related involvements.

As a current member of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' Potomac/Garrett State Forest (PGSF) Citizen Advisory Committee, I observe a map of NextEra's Draft Study Area overlaps a portion of the state forest Piney Mountain/Snaggy Mountain/Hutton Area, particularly the northern Piney Mountain portion (circled). This portion contains seven campsites, an Off-Road Vehicle Trail and a Disabled Hunter Access accommodation, all located along Piney Mountain Road. An Overhead Transmission Line strung above or near to these facilities would significantly diminish their attractive nature. In addition, the PGSF manages timber resources, resulting in timber sales. The loss of timber by the creation of access and clearance under the Overhead Transmission Line will impact this financial resource.



Potomac/Garrett State Forest areas of management.

As current Vice-President of Garrett Trails, a nonprofit, volunteer organization dedicated to the development of a well-used network of high-quality, sustainable trails that provide access to Garrett County’s historic, municipal, and environmental treasures, I am concerned about the impact of the Overhead Transmission Line to the desirability of several trails as they traverse State Wild Lands. Wild Lands are designated by the Maryland General Assembly as wildlands areas. These lands are managed for passive outdoor recreation such as **hiking, hunting, fishing, trapping, bird watching, horseback riding and nature interpretation**. Ten of the State’s 38 designated Wild Lands are in Garrett County totaling 15,909 acres. Most of these sites are classified as Type 1, meaning 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. Type 1 Wild Lands are usually lands located at higher elevations that protect watersheds and are ecologically vulnerable to human interferences.

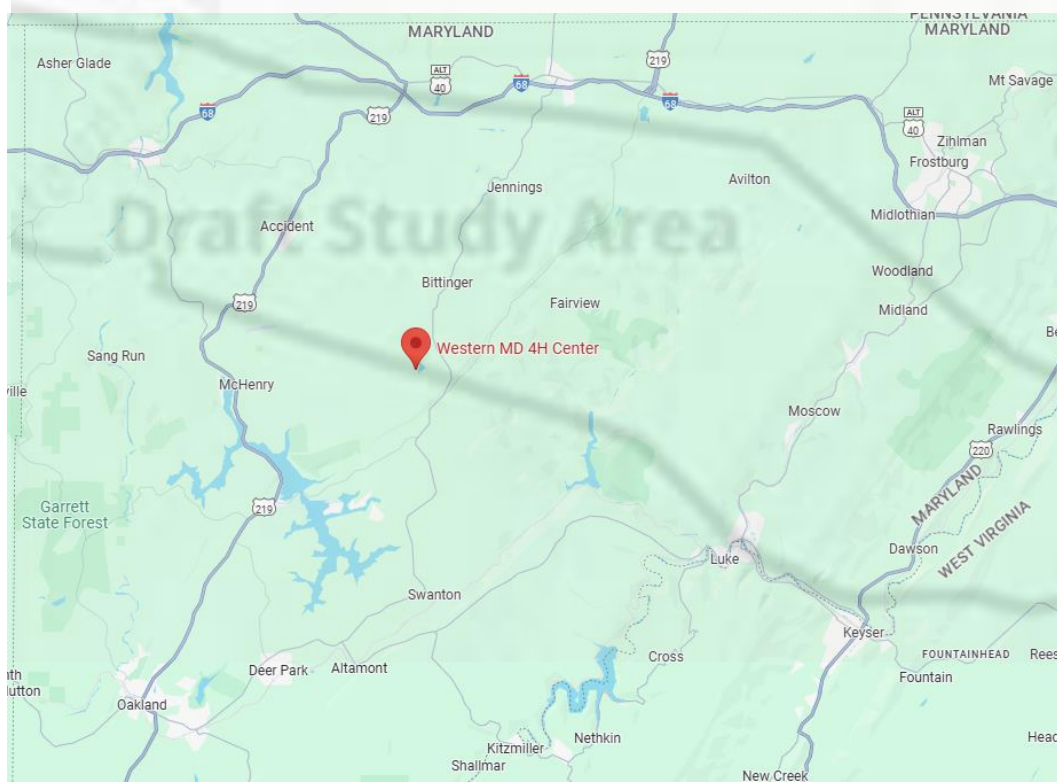
Site	Type	Project Acreage	Location	County
Big Savage Mountain	1	2,879	Savage River SF	Garrett
Bear Pen	1	1,517	Savage River SF	Garrett
Middle Fork	1	2,932	Savage River SF	Garrett
High Rock	1	650	Savage River SF	Garrett
Savage Ravines	1	2,789	Savage River SF	Garrett
Upper White Rock	1	300	Garrett SF	Garrett
Backbone Mountain	1	1,706	Potomac SF/Savage River SF	Garrett
Maple Lick Run	1	600	Potomac SF	Garrett
Puzzley Run	1	457	Savage River SF	Garrett
South Savage	2	2,079	Savage River SF	Garrett
		15,909		

Designated Wild Lands of Garrett County Maryland.

Again, Outdoor Recreation and closely related service businesses (lodging, food, fuel, etc.) are Garrett County’s primary industry and main economic engine. Maintaining the primitive nature of Wild Lands is an important component in supporting this industry.

As a past member of the Garrett College faculty and administrative staff for 44 years (1976-2020 now retired), including positions as Executive Director of Garrett College’s Adventuresports Institute® and Program Director of Garrett College’s Adventure Sports Degree Program the backcountry/primitive teaching/learning areas of Garrett County and the surrounding regions in nearby West Virginia and Pennsylvania are of utmost importance. The more frequently these areas are “developed” the less attractive and less impactful they become as effective teaching/learning venues. Infrastructures such as the proposed Overhead Transmission Line detract from the desirability and usefulness for Outdoor Recreation teaching/learning venues.

As a current member of the Local Advisory Board of the Western Maryland 4-H Education Center, a rustic facility owned by the University of Maryland and managed by our Local Advisory Board that serves hundreds of youth and adults every year, I observe the NextEra Draft Study Area map engages properties managed by our Local Advisory Board. I am concerned about maintaining the rustic nature of this facility as well as the loss of timber the harvesting of such is a significant source of revenue for the University and goes to support the 4H Center's operations.



Above, the location of the Western Maryland 4H Education Center with a transparent Draft Study Area overlay. **Below**, images of the rustic Western Maryland 4H Education Center.

In Summary, I oppose HB 1270 for the various concerns I have indicated. I appreciate the opportunity to comment.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael Logsdon
3097 Sanders Lane Road
Oakland, Maryland 21550
michael.logsdon55@gmail.com

25 HB1270 Wildlands testimony .pdf

Uploaded by: Nadine Grabania

Position: UNF

Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines

House Economic Matters Committee

March 4, 2025

Position: **UNFAVORABLE**

•Importance of PROTECTIONS for Wildlands and undeveloped land across mountain Maryland

For over 50 years, Maryland's leaders have understood the importance of protecting resources that we know are irreplaceable: our beautiful and treasured Wild lands.

Our steadfast commitment to environmental protection and conservation has allowed Maryland's mountain counties to attract visitors who ultimately invest in the region to become part of its tourism-based economy. My family's presence is an example of such an investment: for the past 29 years we have operated an agri-tourism business north of Friendsville. We welcome a lot of visitors who return regularly to explore state parks and wild areas.

Three large Wildlands areas in Garrett and Allegany Counties (totalling 8,443 preserved acres, designated in COMAR 08.01.02.02) are Big Savage Mountain, Bear Pen, and Dan's Mountain. These protected areas are now under immediate threat by claims, articulated in **HB1270**, that there is public need to expand overhead transmission lines across Maryland, through both mountain counties. The Mid Atlantic Resiliency Link (MARL), a massive power transmission line corridor proposed by Next Era Energy Transmission (NEET) is slated to slice across forests, farmland, valuable residential property, as well as these Wildlands areas.

The project's future requires **passage of HB1270**, a bill that **would completely undermine Wildlands protections, while setting the stage for future damage to forests, farmland, and valuable residential real estate.**

Garrett County's economy is based primarily on natural resources tourism. Surely the bill's sponsor, Delegate Hinebaugh, is aware that this bill threatens the interests of anyone in Garrett County whose work depends on our protected Wildlands and the beauty of our farms and forested mountains. I hope I am not the only person working in this sector to remind our representatives that our environment matters, not just in the immediate surroundings of Deep Creek Lake, but all across the

mountain counties. Allowing massive energy projects in the most rural parts of our counties will not hide them from visitors, because part of the appeal of visiting is exploring the countryside and visiting small businesses.

•The introduction of HB1270 (and companion SB0399) has taken place without appropriate public input.

These bills have been put forward in the assembly prior to making any meaningful information available to the public and potential stakeholders in this area. Claims that 50 public meetings have taken place about the MARL project, are simply not true. To the best of my knowledge, the first and only public information session about this project has been scheduled by DNR for March 13, 2025, at Savage River Lodge, an exceedingly remote venue that is not easily accessible to many area residents. (In the past, the State has convened well-attended public meetings in accessible auditoriums at Frostburg State, Allegany College, UMCES, or Garrett College. Why change to a remote retreat on a poorly maintained road?)

Information from the senate sponsor's office about the companion bill is, at best, confusing, and at worst, misleading. The senator's newsletter to constituents claims that this project would not have an impact on farmland. The newsletter says:

"NextEra Energy Transmission LLC is proposing this line; the difference would be this would NOT go through farmland whatsoever. It instead would go through wildlands that *are protected by the state or the federal government. As a result it would not be as big an issue for our counties' residents. I do want to stress that the plans for this are in the beginning stages only and NextERA, as well as myself, want to make sure that the problem that occurred with Piedmont DOES NOT repeat itself.

We are being cautious so that way we will make sure your voice is heard as well as local governments should any concern arise."

My property borders an area where an existing major transmission line crosses Garrett County, and I can assure you, that line crosses plenty of farmland. Adding multiple transmission lines to this right-of-way would certainly impact many acres of farmland, residential real estate, and potentially cross the protected Youghiogheny Wild & Scenic corridor.

Unfortunately, at the time of this hearing, I can find only a very general map of this project on NextEra's website that shows my home and property in the vague area Next Era is willing to publish. For average

citizens it is not possible to understand one's status as a potential stakeholder, yet hearings on the bill are taking place, moving toward a vote by the Assembly.

How many property owners will miss an opportunity to weigh in with this committee? You can't know what you don't know.

As a business and property owner in northern Garrett County, **I am opposed to any additional development or incursion in Maryland's protected Wildlands** (which in Garrett County have already come under threat by trail development interests and by a bridge and road project at Swallow Falls State Park). Maryland's leaders should **oppose any energy/infrastructure development that is allowed to take place without a transparent process for study and public input**, as well as full, clear disclosure to the parties facing potential impacts.

Due to lack of appropriate public input I respectfully request that this bill be withdrawn. If the committee will not choose this course, **I urge you to render an Unfavorable Report for SB399.**

Sincerely,

Nadine Grabania
Garrett County Resident, small business owner
177 Frazee Ridge Road
Friendsville, MD 21531

HB1270_Settimana_UNF.pdf

Uploaded by: Nita Settina

Position: UNF

March 4, 2025

The Honorable Delegate C.T. Wilson and Members of the House
Economic Matters Committee

**Re: Testimony - Unfavorable - House Bill 1270 - Natural Resources - Wildland Areas -
Overhead Transmission Lines**

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Economic Matters Committee,

I am respectfully submitting this testimony in opposition to House Bill 1270 - Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines. This bill will provide an exemption for a new transmission line by NextEra Energy through three sensitive State Wildlands in Western Maryland in advance of a Public Service Commission (PSC) Public Certificate of Convenience and Necessity.

The proposed exemption in HB1270 threatens some of Maryland's most sensitive and pristine public lands, including: the first Wildland designated in 1973 on Big Savage Mountain, the Bear Pen Wildland in Savage River State Forest, which supports a native brook trout stream, and the Dan's Mountain Wildland, an Audubon State Significant Bird Area. A NextEra transmission line would result in the disturbance and loss of forest and wildlife habitat in Maryland's most important ecological areas protected by the Maryland General Assembly.

The passage of HB1270 would mean that the Legislature has pre-approved an exemption for a future, yet-to-be determined alignment for the development of a NextEra transmission line through the State's Wildlands if the PSC issues a Certificate in the future. This legislation is unnecessary as the Wildlands regulations provide for a process to authorize a transmission line exemption in a Wildland, but the regulations include an important requirement for public notice and a hearing (COMAR 08.01.02.05).

The Maryland Wildlands Preservation System is the equivalent of the federal Wilderness system, preserving the most pristine and ecologically sensitive state lands remaining in Maryland. As a 28-year employee and retiree of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, I believe that our work with the citizens of Maryland and the Maryland General Assembly to designate and preserve Maryland's Wildlands for today and future generations was some of the most important conservation work of our careers. Please protect this natural resource legacy, and the requirement for public involvement in the decision making process, by voting against HB1270. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Nita Settina

1255 Crummell Avenue, Annapolis, MD 21403

Testimony HB 1270 2025 Patti Hankins 3-4-2025.pdf

Uploaded by: Patti Hankins

Position: UNF

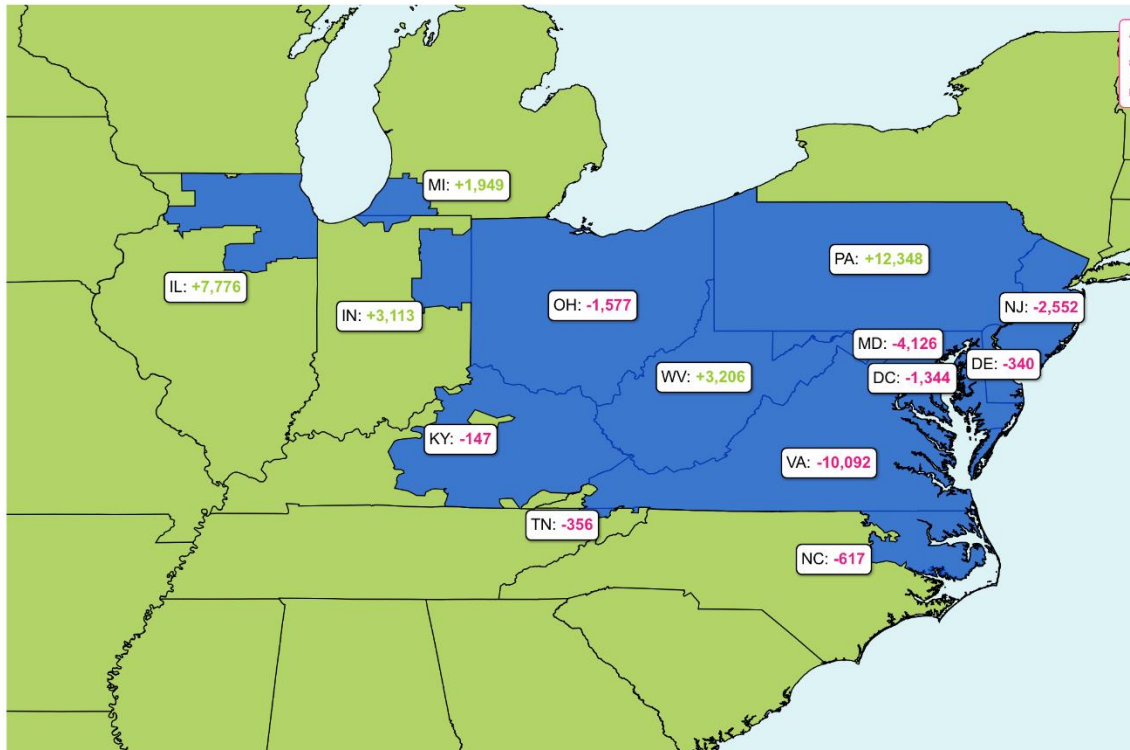
House Bill 1270 Natural Resources – Wildland Areas – Overhead Transmission Lines seeks to permanently remove 400’ (200’ new ROW for NextEra Energy on both sides of the existing Potomac Edison ROW) in the Big Savage, Bear Pen and Dan’s Mountain Wildland Preserved areas for NextEra Energy to build a new high voltage transmission line. The NextEra MARL project is for the specific purpose of moving coal generated electricity through four states (PA, WV, MD, VA) to power data centers in Loudoun County, Virginia.

The MARL - Mid-Atlantic Resiliency Link, is a 145-mile greenfield 500kV high voltage transmission line from the 502 Junction substation in Pennsylvania that connects with multiple West Virginia coal generating plants to move electricity through Western Maryland to Loudoun County, Virginia. Virginia’s Clean Economy Act 2020 prohibits fossil fuel generation to replace retiring plants. However, Virginia imports massive amounts of “dirty” electricity to power their data centers.

Tracking of Virginia’s imports of electricity is done by PJM hourly. Virginia typically imports between 3,000+ to 10,000+ MWs of electricity every hour. PJM expects Virginia’s data center needs to explode by 7,500 MWs by 2027/2028 and has ordered numerous transmission projects that impact Maryland landowners and preserved/conserved areas. These extension cords will increase the importation of electricity into Virginia instead of solving Virginia’s generation problem. PJM has yet to follow the recommendations by their Independent Market Monitor, Monitoring Analytics to compare the cost of building generation to building transmission. Instead, PJM just moves electricity generation around their RTO region via high voltage extension cords never really solving the problem of sufficient generation to power the grid. During the 2022 Window 3 RTEP, PJM ordered \$5.1 Billion in transmission projects in MD, VA, PA, and WV for the stated purpose of powering data centers. Presently PJM is looking to approve another \$6+ Billion in transmission projects again in MD, VA, and WV in the 2024 Window 1 process for even more data center electricity.

State Net Import/Export Map (Hourly)

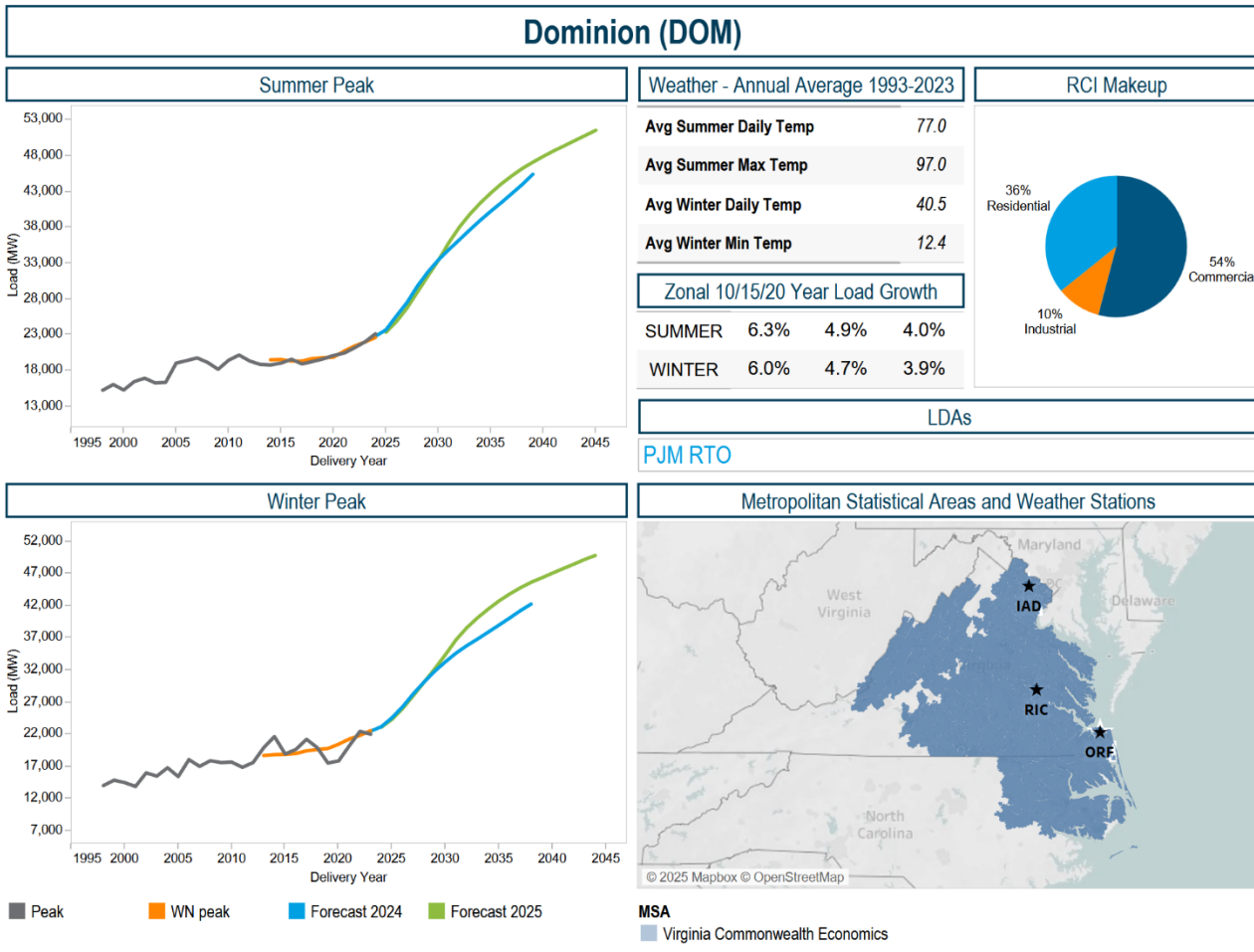
As of 1.20.2025 5:00 am EPT



On January 24, 2025, PJM released their 2025 Long Term Forecast Report – please see link:

https://www.pjm.com/-/media/DotCom/library/reports-notices/load-forecast/2025-load-report.pdf?fbclid=IwY2xjawIJ1z9leHRuA2FibQ1xMAABHZhZxakhN576FFgiq5U0kNEeUzbSp_TPpY8H44PSgBo60IXZVqVovffQ_aem_szbQn8iSDO99KSFGMNWocw

What this report shows is that the Dominion Energy zone in Virginia will continue to need more and more electricity primarily for data center growth. See the chart below from the report. At what point does Maryland say NO, we don't want to be the gateway via high voltage transmission projects for Virginia electricity?



Please see PJM's forecast for the Maryland zones. Except for the APS zone, growth is mostly at or below 1.0%. The APS zone has a higher load forecast due to data center growth in Frederick County, but by 2032 that load is predicted to only be at 1.5%.

Baltimore Gas & Electric (BGE)

Zonal 10/15/20 Year Load Growth

SUMMER	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%
WINTER	1.0%	1.0%	0.9%

Allegheny Power Systems (APS)

Zonal 10/15/20 Year Load Growth

SUMMER	2.5%	1.8%	1.5%
WINTER	2.6%	1.9%	1.5%

Potomac Electric Power (PEPCO)

Zonal 10/15/20 Year Load Growth

SUMMER	0.4%	0.5%	0.6%
WINTER	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%

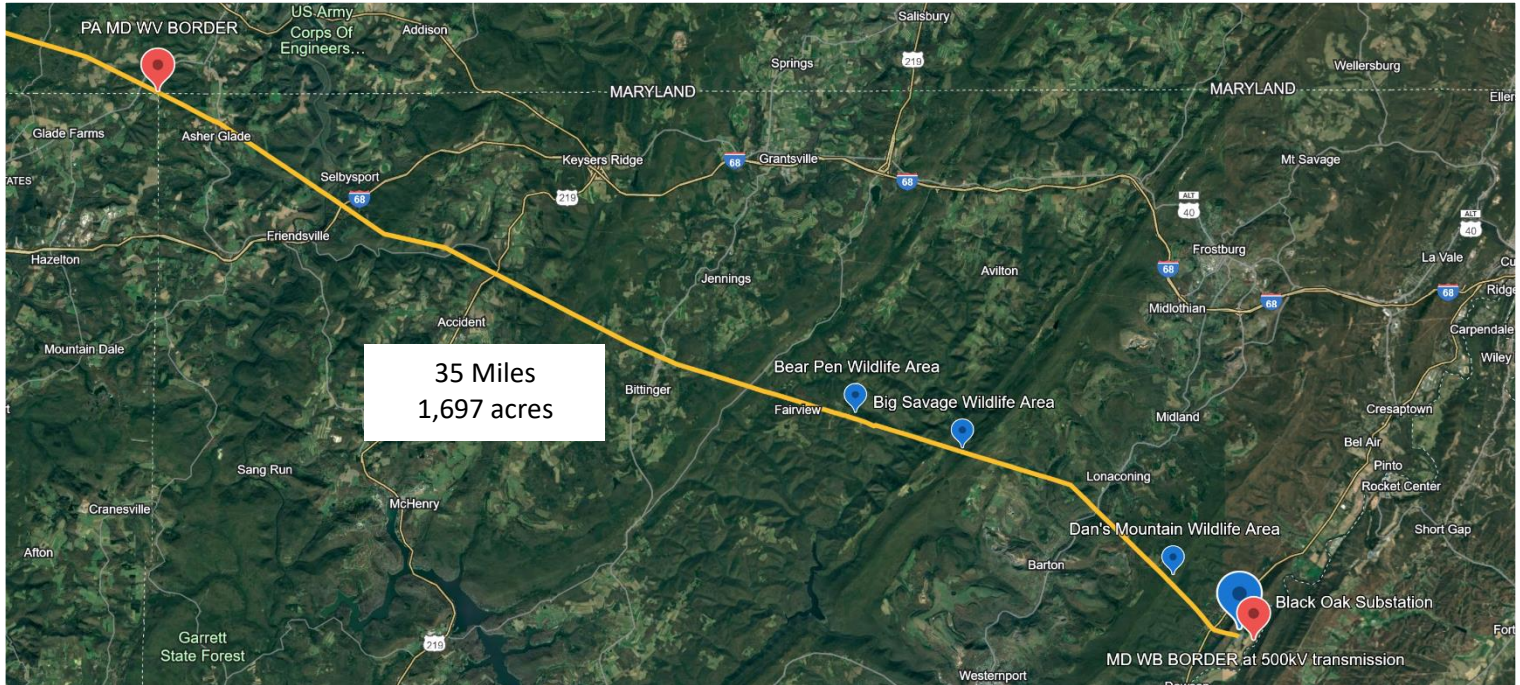
Delmarva Power and Light (DPL)

Zonal 10/15/20 Year Load Growth

SUMMER	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%
WINTER	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%

The MARL project offers no benefits to Maryland. After checking with Senator McKay's office on January 30, 2025, they confirmed that NextEra Energy wants two 200' ROW's one each on both sides of the existing approximate 175' Potomac Edison ROW through preserved wildlands in Garrett and Allegheny Counties. The 35-mile segment through Garrett and Allegheny Counties could impact approximately 1,697 acres including the wildlands preserved areas and privately owned land.

Maryland section of the MARL project – 35 miles impacting 1,697 acres



PJM 2022 Window 3 Project Approved 12-11-2023 NextEra Mid-Atlantic Resiliency Link – MARL

- 145-mile greenfield 500kV transmission line from 502 Junction substation in PA to VA via WV and MD
- Connects multiple WV coal plants to Loudoun County, VA data centers
- **35-miles is in Garrett and Allegheny Counties, MD – 1,697 acres could be impacted**
- NextEra wants two 200' ROW's impacting Big Savage, Bear Pen, and Dan's Mountain Wildlife areas
- **MD House Bill 1270 2025 wants an exclusion to MD 08.01.02.02 State Wildlands System to allow wildlands acreage to be removed to benefit NextEra Energy an out of state transmission company**

The State Wildlands Preservation System law, Section 08.01.02.03 - Permitted Activities can be found at this link:

<https://casetext.com/regulation/maryland-administrative-code/title-08-department-of-natural-resources/subtitle-01-office-of-the-secretary/chapter-080102-wildlands-in-maryland/section-08010205-prohibited-activities-state-wildlands-preservation-system>

It spells out certain perimeters that could allow for a transmission line through wildland preserved areas. The law shows that the Governor can with public notice and hearing recommend changes. However, I can find no such public notice or hearing from Governor Moore, only HB 1270 sponsored by Delegate Hinebaugh. Certainly, for a significant proposed change as outlined in Bill 1270, public notice and hearings should have already taken place before introduction of Bill 1270. Do we really think that the MARL project is in the best interests of the State and the State's people? The MARL project only benefits Virginia and NextEra. **The MARL project offers no benefits to Maryland.**

Section 08.01.02.05 - Prohibited Activities - State Wildlands Preservation System

A. Except when expressly permitted under Regulation .03 or .04 of this chapter, the uses and activities in §§B-G of this regulation are prohibited in a wildland. **B.** Permanent Roads, Structures, and Installations. Unless necessary to meet the minimum requirements for the purposes of the administration of the area, permanent roads, structures, or installations may not

be located or constructed within a wildland. Except following public notice and hearing, the Governor, within a specific area and in accordance with any regulations the Governor considers desirable, may determine that the following permanent structures and installations in wildlands will serve the interests of the State and the State's people, and may recommend to the General Assembly passage of a bill authorizing: (1) The establishment and maintenance of reservoirs; (2) Water conservation works; (3) Power projects; (4) Transmission lines; and (5) Other facilities needed in the public interest, including road construction and maintenance essential to development and use of specific areas.

As the NextEra's MARL project proposes a greenfield ROW separate and distinct from Potomac Edison's current ROW, it does not meet the parameters of Section 08.01.02.05 H (2).

Section 08.01.02.03 - Permitted Activities - State Wildlands Preservation System

H. Underground or Aboveground Lines and Related Easements. (1) Wildland areas are subject to: (a) Existing easement for electrical transmission lines, natural gas lines, telephones, or other aboveground or underground lines; and (b) Normal maintenance of lines, or of any easement held in conjunction with the lines. (2) Upgrading or expansion of lines, with necessary approval required by law, is permitted if the rights were in effect at the time of the wildland designation.

I disagree with the statement in Bill 1270 that the MARL project was selected by PJM in an open and transparent process. PJM's process solicitates projects from their member stakeholders, the transmission companies who benefit directly from awards of projects like the MARL and MPRP projects. PJM barely tolerates participation from electricity ratepayers when they do attend transmission expansion meetings and ask questions as I have at PJM TEAC meetings both in person and virtually. PJM hides information from the public with redacted proposal information. Ratepayers/consumers concerns are mostly ignored when approvals are made. PJM refuses to meet with local impacted communities or elected officials. PJM hides behind their designated entity agreements telling the public that is the job of the transmission companies to inform the public. To date, NextEra Energy has provided no information to the public about the path of the MARL project or to engage in public information sessions. Senate Bill 1270 seeks to give NextEra access to public State lands without the public having an active role or conversation about the path of MARL.

For the reasons stated above, I request that the Committee members give HB 1270 an unfavorable report.

Patti Hankins
229 St. Mary's Road
Pylesville, MD 21132
Patti.hankins@gmail.com

HB1270 testimony by Valleys Planning Council.pdf

Uploaded by: Renee Hamidi

Position: UNF



Committee: Economic Matters

Testimony on: HB1270 “Natural Resources – Wildland Areas – Overhead Transmission Lines”

Position: Oppose

Hearing Date: March 6, 2025

Valleys Planning Council, a non-profit that conserves land and resources, preserves historic character and maintains the rural feel and land uses in northwestern Baltimore County, urges an unfavorable report on HB1270, which would permit transmission lines in areas that had been designated as a wildland.

HB1270 seems to want to rewrite history so that transmission lines that would provide energy for data centers in Virginia could be approved by the Public Service Commission. Maryland land that has already been protected and designated as a wildland area would be exempted from that protection if it's part of a proposed transmission line.

Language from the Annotated Code of Maryland that provides for wildland areas says, “The wildland areas shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the people of Maryland in a manner that will leave them unimpaired for the future use and enjoyment as wildlands, to provide for their protection, preservation of their wildland character, and for gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment as wildlands.” This bill flies in the face of that intent. Existing wildlands will certainly not be unimpaired for future use and enjoyment, protection, or preservation.

Disruption to the entire wildland area from construction of a transmission line would be inevitable. The continuing disruption due to more fragmentation of the wildland is also inevitable. This bill means Maryland would agree to sacrifice yet more of its precious undeveloped land. Instead of using an existing right-of-way owned by Potomac Edison, a parallel right-of-way is proposed by NextEnergy.

How many Marylanders will benefit from this bill? Maybe some Marylanders will be hired to build the line. Once the work is done, those jobs are over. And once the land is developed, it's lost forever.

This bill sets a terrible precedent, making it entirely too easy to grab protected land for transmission lines or anything else an out-of-state energy company could make money from.

HB1270 is bad for Maryland and bad for Marylanders. Valleys Planning Council asks for an unfavorable report on HB1270.

Renée Hamidi
Executive Director
Valleys Planning Council

Oppose - HB1270 - Transmission lines through Wildl

Uploaded by: Robin Broder

Position: UNF

HB1270 - Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines

Hearing Date: Wednesday, March 6, 2025

Position: OPPOSE

Dear Chair Wilson and members of the Economic Matters Committee:

As a property owner in the path of the proposed transmission line, I respectfully request an UNFAVORABLE report on HB1270 that would allow the construction of transmission lines through three Tier 1 Wildlands in Western Maryland. Wildlands are incredibly important ecosystems that require protections into perpetuity. I invested in a home in Garret County because of the access to pristine natural lands. This bill undermines the foundation of Maryland's Protected Lands system and creates a new pathway for unpermitted activities in wildlands. Wildlands are exceptional lands and make up a tiny fraction of the acreage of the conserved land in Maryland, (Maryland Wildlands total 65,956 acres across 14 Counties. This is 13% of Maryland Department of Natural Resource's managed lands and less than 1% of Maryland's overall land.)

ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

This bill is counter to the intent of the Wildlands Preservation statute to preserve these sensitive habitats unimpaired for future generations. Western Maryland's economy is based on nature and outdoor tourism. Wildlands provide a primitive recreational experience in pristine settings for hiking, fishing and hunting. These Wildlands protect headwater streams in the Savage River for drinking water, fisheries, and Potomac River water quality. The aesthetics of natural, wild places add to the quality of life and desirability for living and visiting Western Maryland. Wildlands protect sensitive habitats and species found in few other places. Ecosystem fragmentation caused by transmission lines result in irreparable damage and allow invasive species to dominate the landscape. Despite a declaration that the transmission line(s) would be parallel to the existing legal powerlines, there are no specific locations or dimensions provided, which means the danger of fragmentation is very high. Lastly, as wildfires in California and closer to home have shown, transmission lines are a leading cause of wildfires due to the increasing frequency of high winds.

UNDERMINES THE LAW AND PROCESS

The bill creates a new pathway for any delegate to submit bills for changes to wildland management. The bill asks the General Assembly to cede their right of review to the Public Service Commission in their Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity process. Under Maryland Wildlands regulations, only the Governor can request exceptions and change boundaries, and only after a public need is identified and after public notification and hearings. The private company supporting this legislation has yet to avail themselves of this important state process.

Despite what you will hear from industry, this transmission line(s) is not serving Maryland's hospitals, schools or other needs. The transmission line(s) would supply 500kV of power to Northern Virginia, primarily for data centers. The sources of energy for the transmission line(s) are dirty fossil fuels (coal and gas) power plants in West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

NO PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Despite what you will hear from the bill sponsors and industry, there were no public disclosure, meetings, or listening sessions preceding the bill's introduction to the legislative committees in the House and Senate.

HB1270 would benefit only one company, NextEra Energy, and one industry, data centers in Northern Virginia, and would devastate pristine wildlands and a local economy. Maryland does not need this transmission line. HB1270 would set a dangerous precedent for future destruction of Maryland's other wildlands. I strongly urge an unfavorable report on HB1270.

Sincerely,
Robin Broder
Grantsville, MD

Oppose - HB1270 - Transmission lines through Wildl

Uploaded by: Robin Broder

Position: UNF



HB1270 - Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines

Hearing Date: Wednesday, March 6, 2025

Position: OPPOSE

Dear Chair Wilson and members of the Economic Matters Committee:

Waterkeepers Chesapeake respectfully requests an UNFAVORABLE report on HB1270 that would allow the construction of transmission lines through three Tier 1 Wildlands in Western Maryland. Wildlands are incredibly important ecosystems that require protections into perpetuity. This bill undermines the foundation of Maryland's Protected Lands system and creates a new pathway for unpermitted activities in wildlands. Wildlands are exceptional lands and make up a tiny fraction of the acreage of the conserved land in Maryland, (Maryland Wildlands total 65,956 acres across 14 Counties. This is 13% of Maryland Department of Natural Resource's managed lands and less than 1% of Maryland's overall land.)

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This bill is counter to the intent of the Wildlands Preservation statute to preserve these sensitive habitats unimpaired for future generations. Western Maryland's economy is based on nature and outdoor tourism. Wildlands provide a primitive recreational experience in pristine settings for hiking, fishing and hunting. These Wildlands protect headwater streams in the Savage River for drinking water, fisheries, and Potomac River water quality. The aesthetics of natural, wild places add to the quality of life and desirability for living and visiting Western Maryland. Wildlands protect sensitive habitats and species found in few other places. Ecosystem fragmentation caused by transmission lines result in irreparable damage and allow invasive species to dominate the landscape. Despite a declaration that the transmission line(s) would be parallel to the existing legal powerlines, there are no specific locations or dimensions provided, which means the danger of fragmentation is very high. Lastly, as wildfires in California and closer to home have shown, transmission lines are a leading cause of wildfires due to the increasing frequency of high winds.

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boundaries, and only after a public need is identified and after public notification and hearings. The private company supporting this legislation has yet to avail themselves of this important state process.

Despite what you will hear from industry, this transmission line(s) is not serving Maryland's hospitals, schools or other needs. The transmission line(s) would supply 500kV of power to Northern Virginia, primarily for data centers. The sources of energy for the transmission line(s) are dirty fossil fuels (coal and gas) power plants in West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

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HB1270 would benefit only one company, NextEra Energy, and one industry, data centers in Northern Virginia, and would devastate pristine wildlands and a local economy. HB1270 would set a dangerous precedent for future destruction of Maryland's other wildlands. Maryland does not need this transmission line. Waterkeepers Chesapeake strongly urges an unfavorable report on HB1270.

Sincerely,
Robin Broder, Acting Executive Director
Waterkeepers Chesapeake
robin@waterkeeperschesapeake.org

HB1270 testimony RBoyer 2025.pdf

Uploaded by: Ronald Boyer

Position: UNF

Testimony: HB1270 - Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines
Committee: Economic Matters
Hearing Date: March 6, 2025
Position: OPPOSE

Dear Members of House Economic Matters:

My name is Ron Boyer. I am a long-time resident of Garrett County and live within four miles of the existing and proposed transmission lines. This letter is to express my very strong opposition to House Bill 1270 - Natural Resources - Wildlands Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines. I am requesting that you vote NO on this bill.

The Wildlands of the State of Maryland represent less than 1% of all the land in Maryland. It would seem to me that since the State set aside this land to “preserve sensitive habitats for future and present generations”, a less impactful route could be planned.

In oral testimony for the cross-filed SB 0399 Senator McKay and NextEra representatives stated that there had been “50 public meetings” on this topic. I read our local papers and listen to local radio everyday, but I did not hear of one such meeting. This leads me to question what else is not true and/or accurate. Senator McKay and a NextEra representative also stated that Garrett and Allegany Counties would be receiving “450 million dollars in revenue over 40 years” without any explanation as to how.

At this time only the Governor has the authority (with public input) to submit changes to Wildland management and boundaries. Passage of this bill would change that, allowing any legislator to propose a bill that could threaten the long-time integrity of this policy and negatively impact Maryland Wildlands.

So in conclusion, I urge you to vote NO on HB 1270. This 1% of Maryland’s land was set aside for preservation. Placing a new transmission corridor or expanding the existing one would drastically negate the Maryland Wildlands Preservation System Statute that was approved by the General Assembly.

Thank you,

Ronald Boyer
90 Moonridge Ln
Grantsville, MD 21536
(301) 895-3686

WAC HB1270 March 4, 2025.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Parsons

Position: UNF



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.



Sarah Parsons, Chairperson
wacallegany@gmail.com
www.facebook.com/wacallegany

Storck HR1270 Written Testimony Economic Matters 0

Uploaded by: Steven Storck

Position: UNF

Dr. Steve Storck, PhD
492 Burnett Road
Oakland, MD 21550
(301) 616-0307

March 4, 2025

Written Testimony of Private Citizen
HB1270 - NATURAL RESOURCES-WILDLAND AREAS-OVERHEAD TRANSMISSION LINES
(Sponsor – Delegate Hinebaugh)
Economic Matters Committee

Request: **UNFAVORABLE** report for the following reasons:

HB1270 is a direct violation of the Wildlands Preservation System statute, [Natural Resources Article §5–1203](#), which established a system of **PRESERVATION** for special, natural places to protect them from “growing mechanization” to leave them unimpaired as wildlands for future generations.

The value of these Wildlands is as places of rich biodiversity where some of the most endangered and sensitive species and habitats in our state can live and function in a natural ecosystem. Lands that filter and guard headwater streams to support declining populations of aquatic organisms and to provide clean waters for downstream drinking water and to dilute polluted waters of other Potomac River tributaries laid to waste by historic high-sulfur coal mining, contributing to better health in downstream urban areas and the Chesapeake Bay. And as places people can go to experience nature, to walk, to fish, to hunt, to photograph, to learn, and to teach about natural processes and to experience a simpler way of life away from modern stresses. Their value is in their ecosystem services, as nature tourism assets, and as contributors to the climate resilience in our state.

I’ve been puzzled why this bill is in Economic Matters and not Environment and Transportation as Natural Resource statute amendments have historically been considered. In 2022, HB882 Natural Resources – Pocomoke River Wildland – Alteration of Boundaries was considered in that committee, the last Wildlands bill in the House. This bill followed the legislatively approved COMAR process for consideration of exceptions to construct a trail in the Pocomoke Wildlands: Originated in the Governor’s Office, public notification, public engagement, significant evaluation of resource impacts, extensive design work and consideration of alternatives, establishment of public need and a proposal brought to the House by the Governor’s staff as a proposal (see [Md. Code Regs. 08.01.02.05B](#) for the process).


This bill and proposed transmission lines follow none of these required regulatory processes. First, Delegate Hinebaugh and NextEra have bypassed the Governor’s office even though NextEra had 17 months from the time of their contract award to do so. In terms of public need, none has been given, in the Senate the only reason provided for needing to go through these Wildlands was that it was cheaper. They stated it would be 3 to 4 miles more to go around. Cheaper for whom? It is my understanding that this is a fixed cost contract of \$683 million for the 105-mile transmission line, that’s \$6.5 million per mile. The consumers who are paying for this, plus interest, will see none of these savings. The additional cost would reduce the \$300 - \$500 million in projected cash profit for NextEra by less than 4%. In terms of true cost, estimated at \$1 - \$3 million per mile, it would be less than 1%*. Do we really need to

undermine our Wildlands Preservation System to provide corporate charity to a company who earned \$6.9 billion in profits last year. Also 3-4 miles away in either direction would put the transmission line in areas of abandoned or active strip mines with virtually no reduction of impacts to legacy farms or other conserved lands in the other 24 miles of transmission line in Maryland.

Passage of HR1270 would undermine our Wildland Preservation System statute and intent. It violates COMAR regulations of prohibited activities in Wildlands and defined exception processes. It would not only cause degradation of our protected natural resources but destroy a key economic asset of our region that has been a major contributor to our economy since the 1920s. These Wildlands should be the last place to consider for this transmission line not the first in my opinion.

Thank you for protecting our state Wildland Preservation System and returning an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on HR1270.

Respectfully,



Steve Storck

* Note: Finding actual costs for the construction of transmission lines is a well-guarded secret of the industry. The numbers provided are a best guess estimate based on several sources. Here is one source that discusses some of the complicated estimates:

Renewable Energy World – What would it cost to bury all of California’s power lines?
January 27, 2025 - <https://www.renewableenergyworld.com/power-grid/outage-management/what-would-it-cost-to-bury-all-of-californias-power-lines>

Much of the cost discussion centers around the cost of reducing wildfire risk from transmission lines. Burying the lines is deemed impractical as it is high-cost with estimates at \$3-\$4 million per mile, NextEra is charging \$6.5 million for this line and PJM estimated its cost at \$12 million per mile. For comparison I found that it would cost approximately \$2 million per mile to cover a 2-lane road in 24k gold leaf purchased at retail prices. We need better independent estimates of the costs of these transmission lines. Even if my numbers are wildly off looking at annual profits for transmission line construction companies like NextEra who earned \$6.9 Billion in profits in 2024 and \$7.3 Billion in 2023 should give you some indication of the magnitude of markup and added interest charges involved.

NextEra Energy Earnings Report 4th Quarter 2024
<https://www.investor.nexteraenergy.com/~media/Files/N/NEE-IR/news-and-events/events-and-presentations/2025/2025-0124%20NEEQ42024News%20Release%20vFinal.pdf>

20250304_HB1207_CommentsOfTheresaGhiorzi_To_MGA.pd

Uploaded by: Theresa Ghiorzi

Position: UNF

Testimony In Opposition

House Bill HB1270

Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines

Hearing: Economic Matters Committee

Date: March 6, 2025 at 1:00pm

A cross-filed Senate bill (SB0399) was heard on February 11, 2025

I am writing in opposition to SB399 / HB1270 NextEra's proposal to change Maryland's Wildlands laws to allow for building the Mid-Atlantic Resiliency Link (MARL) transmission line through Garret County and Allegheny County in Western Maryland (**anywhere**). NextERA's portion of the MARL transmission line would take a new 200' easement 35 miles long through Garret County and Allegheny County in Western Maryland. This would be a brand new 200' easement through all three(3) wildlands, Bear Pen Wildland does not have any transmission line easements at all at this time. The new easement would similarly impact private property.

While SB399 / HB1270 specifically names Big Savage Mountain Wildland, Bear Pen Wildland and Dan's Mountain Wildland and specifically references NextERA, three issues strike me:

1. the plain language of the ACT includes the phrase "**and generally relating to wildland areas in the state**". **This one phrase opens up ALL of the wildland areas in Maryland - including areas within the OTHER 21 counties in Maryland the residents of which (ie. constituents) have no idea their scenic wildlands would no longer be protected.**
2. the ACT allows for **ANY number of transmission lines through wildlands as long as the lines are parallel to the existing lines** - the entire ~8000 acres of the wildlands in Garrett County and Allegheny County alone would then be "fair game" to site 500kV and / or 765kV transmission lines.
3. in granting a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity, Maryland Public Service Commission **Does Not have to consider environmental impacts for the wildlands at all.**

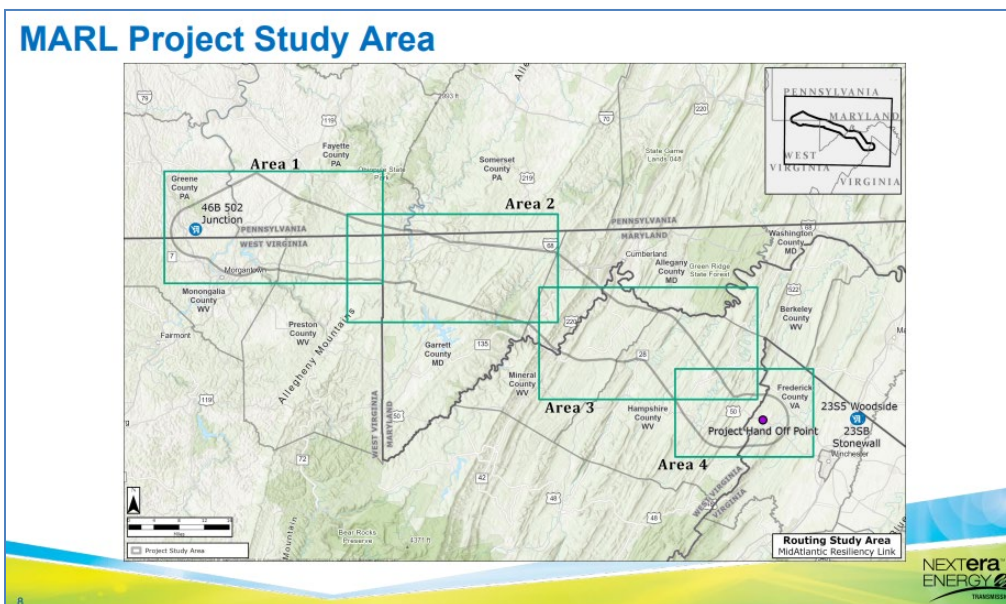


Figure 1: NextERA Routing Study Area: Notice that the study area for NextERA's portion ends in the vicinity of the West Virginia / Virginia border.

NextERA's portion of the Mid-Atlantic Resiliency Link (MARL) transmission line would take a new 200' easement 35 miles long through Garret County and Allegheny County in Western Maryland (~ 1000 acres) of property - both wildlands and private property. The thing is, NextERA's portion is the "tip of the iceberg". The MARL transmission line continues through Jefferson County, West Virginia and Loudoun County, Virginia over the Potomac River then through Frederick County and Montgomery County in Maryland over the Potomac River again and back into Loudoun County to connect to Data Center Alley. The entirety of the transmission line has far reaching impacts to four (4) Maryland counties - Garrett County, Allegheny County, Frederick County and Montgomery County.

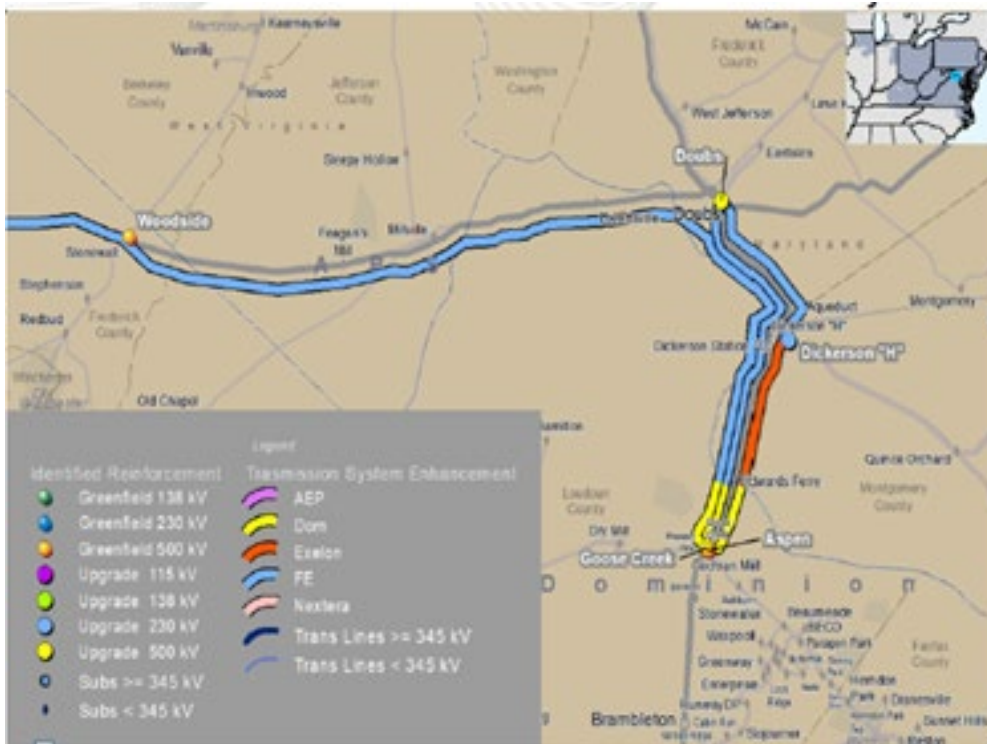


Figure 2: PJM Reliability Analysis Update - Item 10, July 9th 2024 - MARL ¹

The MARL transmission line originates at the 502 Junction in Pennsylvania, the source of the energy is the three coal-fired power plants closest to the 502 Junction that have excess capacity: Fort Martin Power Station, Harrison Power Station and the Mitchell Plant all of which are already more than 50 years old and reaching the "end of useful life" for coal generation units.

Generation Plant	Notes
Fort Martin Power Station	Two units built in 1967, 1968, 58 and 57 years old, Planned Retirement year 2035 ²
Harrison Power Station	Three units put into service 1972, 1973, 1974 (53, 52 and 51 years old), Planned Retirement year 2040 ³
Mitchell Plant	Two units built in 1971, 54 years old, Planned Retirement Year 2040 ⁴

¹ Attachment (2) Page 12, PJM Interconnection, L.L.C., Transmission Expansion Advisory Committee (TEAC) PJM Reliability Analysis Update - Item 10, July 9th 2024, Pages 42 to 44, and Background.

² Global Energy Monitor Wiki, Fort Martin Power Station, Available here: https://www.gem.wiki/Fort_Martin_power_station

³ Global Energy Monitor Wiki, Harrison Power Station, Available here: https://www.gem.wiki/Harrison_power_station

⁴ Global Energy Monitor Wiki, Mitchell Plant, Available here: https://www.gem.wiki/Mitchell_Plant

Additionally, as you well know, Transmission lines have a devastating effect on the value of the properties forced to host them as well as the properties within the view shed of the towers, a recent Virginia SCC case for a 500kV transmission line in Loudoun County may provide some insight as to the economic impact on property valuations.⁵ **The impact on property valuations due to the view shed issue on a 6.5 mile 500kV/230kV transmission line along Route 7 in Data Center Alley is between -1.0% and -19.2%. The valuation of the properties in this area, according to the expert witness hired by Loudoun County, will decrease by a combined \$252,025,000 in property value for the set of properties within the mass appraisal study area, where the differential reflects the damages that will be done by the installation of the 500kV/230kV transmission lines!** No easements were sited on residential private property for this line and the majority of the transmission line was sited along the Route 7 highway. This is the Aspen-Golden transmission line. The MARL transmission line will connect to the Aspen substation after traversing Frederick County, Maryland and Montgomery County, Maryland and crossing the Potomac River back into Loudoun.

With this level of impact a serious conversation needs to be had as to whether transmission lines to support Loudoun County's data centers should be hosted on ANY property in Maryland, be it a wildland or private property.

There does not need to be a choice between rural private property owners or wilderness conservation areas in Maryland. The choice is whether these lines are sited through Maryland at all.

NextERA's transmission solution through Garret County and Allegheny County was not the only transmission solution proposed to PJM through its RTEP process.

⁵ Direct Testimony Of William C. Harvey, H, Com, Mai And Richard N. Olsen, Mai On Behalf Of Loudoun County, Virginia Before The State Corporation Commission Of Virginia (Case Nos. Pur-2024-00032And Pur-2024-00044 Pur-2024-00032) (Collectively, The Consolidated Cases) Available here: <https://www.scc.virginia.gov/docketsearch/DOCS/80t201!.PDF>

- "The mass appraisal was to reflect the unimpaired and impaired value, if any impairment was found, of residential properties located along the approximate 4.5-mile long Route 7 segment of Harry Byrd Highway (Route 7) near Loudoun County Parkway to Belmont Ridge Road and the approximate 2.0-mile-long segment of Harry Byrd Highway (Route 7) near Ashburn Village Boulevard to Belmont Ridge Road in Loudoun County, Virginia that are expected to be affected by Class 5 (External Conditions) Detrimental Conditions caused by the planned 500/230 kV lines included in the Consolidated Cases as "overhead aerial lines and towers." " (Lines 51 - 58)
- "In this instance, the single characteristic that was isolated was the view disamenity that will be caused by Dominion's planned 500/230 kV lines and towers along the approximate 4.5-mile-long Route 7 segment of Harry Byrd Highway (Route 7) near Loudoun County Parkway to Belmont Ridge Road and the approximate 2.0-mile-long segment of Harry Byrd Highway (Route 7) near Ashburn Village Boulevard to Belmont Ridge Road in Loudoun County, Virginia." (Lines 248 - 253)
- "The case studies revealed a diminution in value due to the proximity of Dominion's pre-existing 500/230 kV lines and towers between -1.0% and -19.2% with an average (mean) diminution of -8.5%" (Lines 332 - 334)
- "The \$252,025,000 differential reflects the damages that are likely to result to the subject properties along the Route 7 segment when Dominion's planned 500/230 kV lines and towers along the Route 7 segment are constructed" (Lines 391 - 393) . Mr. Harvey used a "-8.5% adjustment attributable to the comparable Class 5 Detrimental conditions" (Line 387) but stated that "Had we used the upper end of the range of -19.2% to better reflect the impact resulting from Dominion's planned tower heights of up to 180-feet, the estimate of damages would more than double. (Line 403 - 405)
- MARL transmission line will connect to the Aspen substation

Impacted property owners in West VA and far western Loudoun County suggested a siting for the MARL transmission line along highways in West Virginia then onto Route 7 at the West Virginia / Virginia border and directly into "Data Center Alley" (which is along Route 7) ⁶.

NextERA submitted the MARL transmission line for a DOE NIETC Corridor, which also included multiple routes that did not pass through Maryland. The DOE canceled the Mid-Atlantic NIETC in December of 2024.

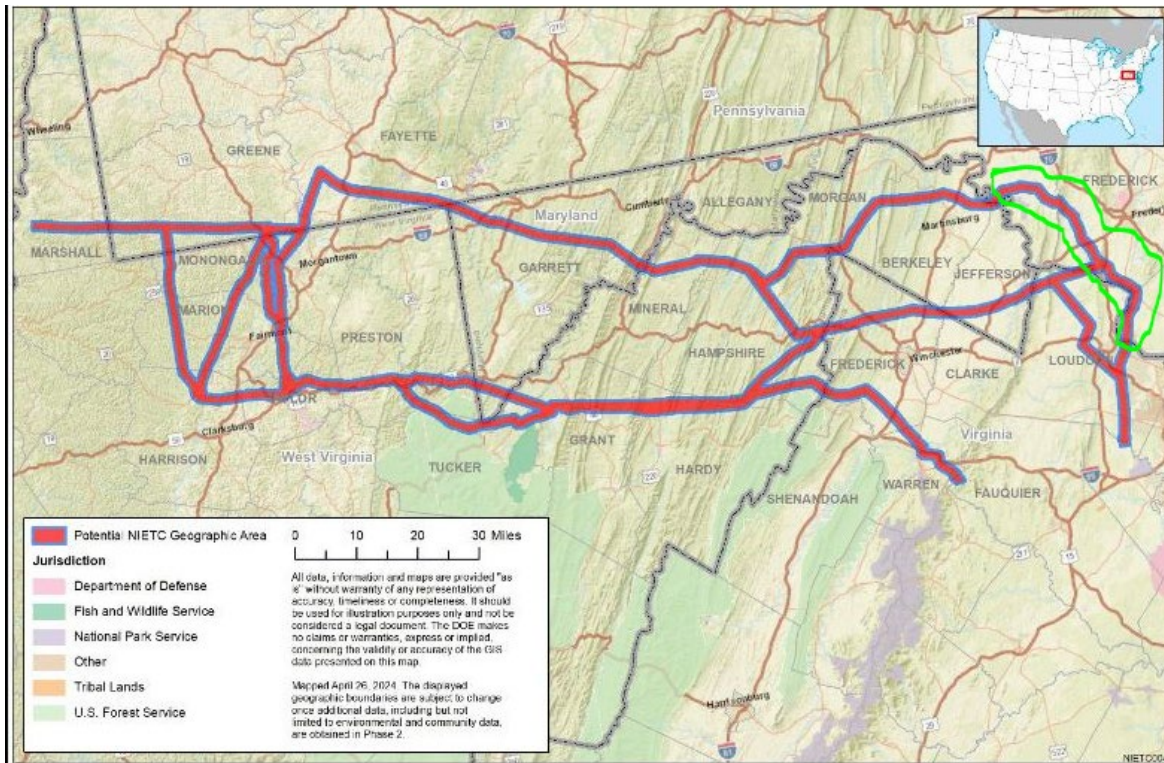


Figure 4: Mid-Atlantic NIETC⁷, The green highlighted area encompasses⁷ Garrett County, Allegheny County, Frederick County and Montgomery County in Maryland.

As I live in Loudoun County, Virginia, I wanted to provide information on the data center issue and energy situation in Loudoun County, for context on the multiple HVAC transmission lines impacting Maryland.

Data Center Alley is roughly 30 square miles in eastern Loudoun County. It consists of about 200 data centers with another ~117 additional sites in the pipeline. Data center property tax revenues comprise 31% of the Loudoun County Budget. This is not an "accident", this is a direct result of the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors continuing to approve new data centers and data center expansion. Exemptions are approved in spite of existing zoning regulations and thus far they have also refused to clarify/ fix the zoning that allows

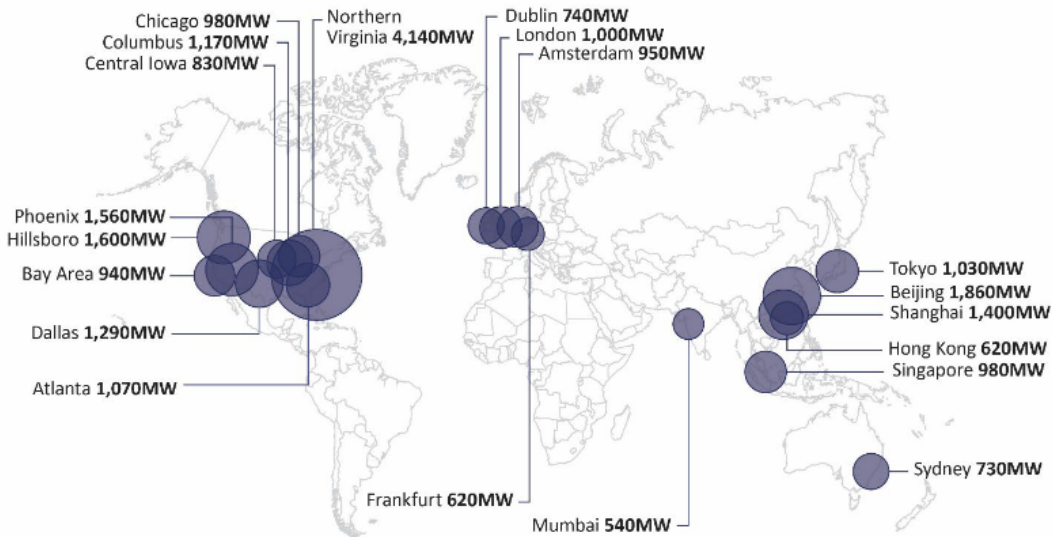
⁶ Loudoun County Virginia Data Center Capital of the World "A strategy for a changing Paradigm" by Supervisor Turner , Pg 10 : " A second line down Rte. 7 is probably next up. After that, Dominion will have likely used the last available routing to "Data Center Alley" that won't require using eminent domain."

⁷ U.S. Department of Energy Grid Deployment Office Initiation of Phase 2 of National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor (NIETC) Designation Process: Preliminary List of Potential NIETCs Mid-Atlantic NIETC, Page 54; Available here: <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2024-05/PreliminaryListPotentialNIETCsPublicRelease.pdf>

data centers "by right" under the guise of "office buildings".⁸ (As an aside note: our Supervisors are not as interested in the "by right" usage of property by private property owners, who are their own constituents, much less your constituents' "by right" use of their property.⁹)

To really understand the data center situation in Loudoun, I would recommend you read "*Loudoun County Virginia Data Center Capital of the World "A strategy for a changing Paradigm"*" written by Supervisor Turner.¹⁰ The unconstrained data center development and expansion was the subject of a recent Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission report for the Virginia Legislature¹¹.

FIGURE 1-3
Virginia has the most operational capacity of all global markets



SOURCE: JLARC analysis of Cushman & Wakefield 2024 Global Data Center Market Comparison.
 Figure 3: Virginia JLARC Data Center Report : VA JLARC Report¹²

The VA JLARC Report found that data centers' power usage in Virginia is roughly equivalent to the electricity needs of 2 million Virginia households and is expected to double within 10 years. Within a 15 year timeframe the amount of energy that would need to be imported would increase by over 50%.¹³

The VA JLARC Report continues: "Data centers are located across the state, but 80 percent of Virginia's data center industry is concentrated in three Northern Virginia localities: Loudoun, Prince William, and Fairfax... **Loudoun County alone accounts for approximately half of the state's data center industry in terms of number of sites, building square footage, and estimated energy usage. The eastern part of the county north**

⁸ *Loudoun County Virginia Data Center Capital of the World "A strategy for a changing Paradigm"* by Supervisor Turner : Pg 7 Available here: [Loudoun County Virginia Data Center Capital of the World "A strategy for a changing Paradigm"](#)

⁹ Attachment (1) Pg 2 of a 2017 Dominion Energy Transmission Right of way agreement.

¹⁰ *Loudoun County Virginia Data Center Capital of the World "A strategy for a changing Paradigm"* by Supervisor Turner: Available here: <https://www.loudoun.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/13979>

¹¹ Virginia Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission report on Data Centers, "VA JLARC Report" Page 32. See Data Centers In Virginia : <https://jlarc.virginia.gov/landing-2024-data-centers-in-virginia.asp> Report: <https://jlarc.virginia.gov/pdfs/reports/Rpt598-2.pdf> ; Summary: <https://jlarc.virginia.gov/pdfs/presentations/Rpt598Pres-1.pdf>

¹² VA JLARC Report, Page 7

¹³ VA JLARC Report, Page 32

of Dulles International Airport has become known as “Data Center Alley” because of its high concentration of data centers. The remaining 20 percent of Virginia’s data center sites are in 11 other localities, with the most notable clusters in the Richmond region and Mecklenburg County." ¹⁴

This unconstrained data center development is the direct cause of the 500kv Mid-Atlantic Resiliency Link proposal. Loudoun County has only 800MW of base load generation and no plans to build more. The Integrated Resource plan by Dominion Electric¹⁵, recently filed with the Virginia State Corporation Commission, does not include new generation in the Loudoun County area.

Early in 2024, due to the multiple inter-state transmission lines proposed to go through / to Loudoun County to support the data centers, in the 2022 RTEP Window 3 projects that were approved by the PJM board, in December 11, 2023, an engineering firm was contracted by Loudoun County to do an Electrical Infrastructure Study. This study is the Kimley - Horn Power Transmission Evaluation of Loudoun County, Virginia Due Diligence Report. ¹⁶

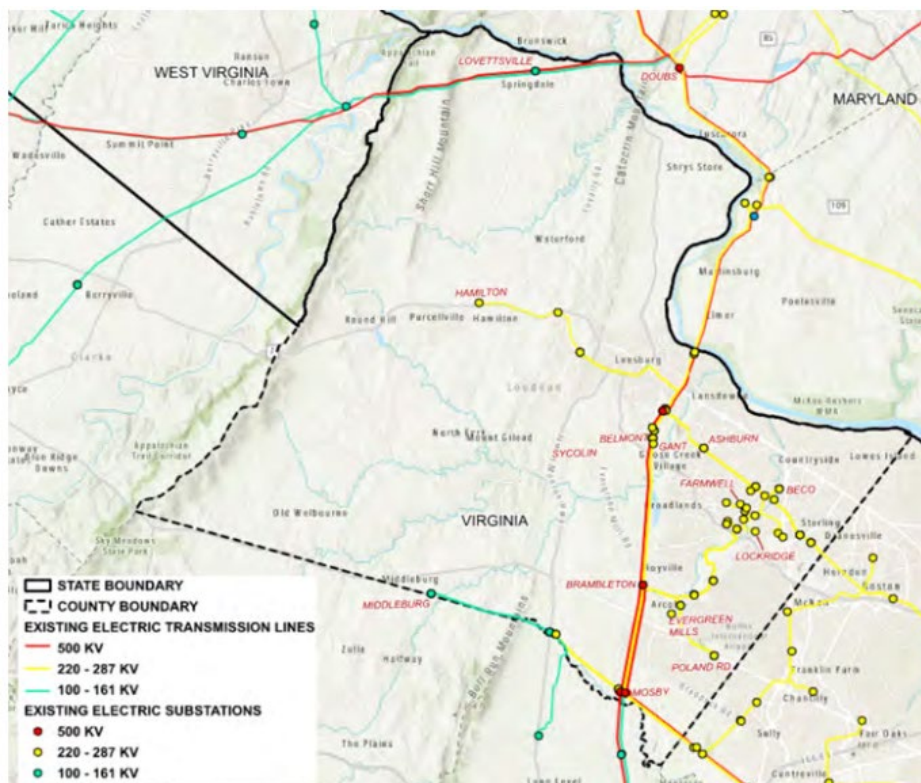


Figure 1: Existing Electric Transmission & Substations (HIFLD Modified)

Figure 5: Existing Loudoun County, Virginia transmission lines¹⁷

¹⁴ VA JLARC Report, Page 6

¹⁵ Dominion 2024 IRP, Virginia State Corporation Commission Case No. PUR-2024-00184; Available here: https://www.dominionenergy.com/-/media/pdfs/global/company/IRP/2024-IRP-w_o-Appendices.pdf

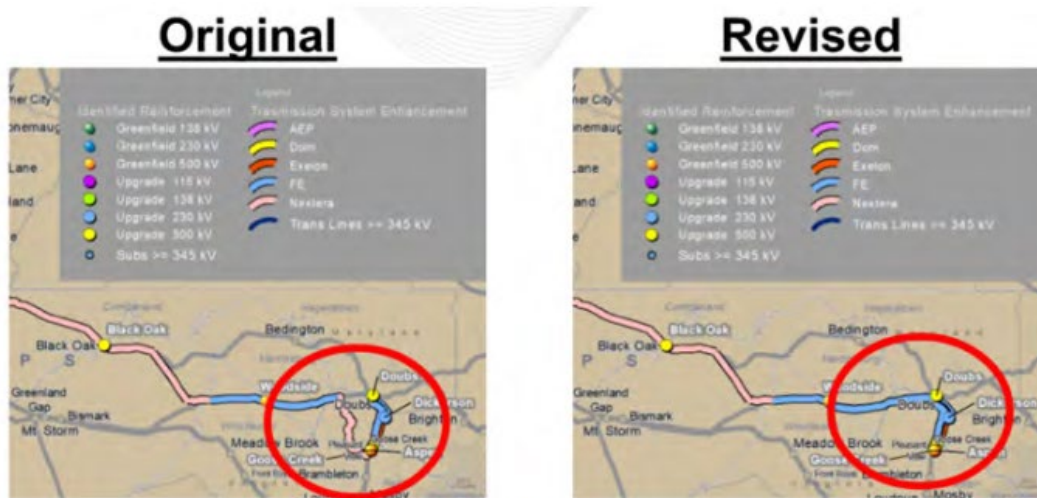
¹⁶ The "Loudoun Transmission Report" is referenced on Page 7 of *Loudoun County Virginia Data Center Capital of the World "A strategy for a changing Paradigm"* by Supervisor Turner and can be found here: <https://www.loudoun.gov/3432/Transportation-and-Land-Use-Committee> navigate to the 2024 folder , subfolder October 17, 2024 See Item 9 Electrical Infrastructure Study. The Kimley - Horn Power Transmission Evaluation of Loudoun County, Virginia Due Diligence Report is embedded in Item 9 as Attachment 2.

¹⁷ Ibid, "Loudoun Transmission Report" Attachment (2), Page 10

Loudoun County' preferred path for high voltage transmission corridors is to use/expand existing corridors - of which there are two (2) - with Maryland providing the connecting piece between the two sides of the county. Virginia is a Dillon Rule state and Loudoun County has no authority to choose interstate transmission routes but that has not prevented the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors from mapping existing corridors and laying out a plan to modify the comprehensive plan to include transmission corridors to influence the both the regional and state transmission line development processes.

As reported by Loudoun Now: "... the consultant recommended **identifying and siting preferred transmission corridors to be considered by PJM Interconnection**, the region's power coordinator and the State Corporation Commission, which give final approval on power projects." ¹⁸

Loudoun County has already influenced the interstate transmission process through PJM, to re- route of the MARL transmission line. "PJM Transmission Coordination and Analysis Manager Augustine Caven said the proposed change is the result of **"successful collaboration"** between NextEra and the power providers who own the rights of way, **stakeholders and community members.**" ¹⁹



Source: PJM "Planning Update" dated July 29, 2024

Figure 14: PJM Modification to NextEra 500kV Woodside to Aspen

Figure 6: Mid-Atlantic Resiliency Link routing change requested by Loudoun County²⁰

Loudoun County was given the proverbial "first bite" of the apple and since the Virginia SCC would not have had the jurisdiction to move the MARL transmission line into a neighboring state, PJM incorporated the requested re-route through Maryland into its RTEP as a "scope" change - with an added cost of \$167.48M to be socialized across all rate payers slipped the in-service date for that transmission line from 2029 to 2032.

¹⁸Loudoun Now, "Supervisors to establish preferred Corridors for Transmission Lines"; Available here:

https://www.loudounnow.com/news/supervisors-to-establish-preferred-corridors-for-transmission-lines/article_aafb5dcc-c47e-11ef-a07f-033bed56218f.html

¹⁹ Loudoun Times Mirror , "PJM Considers Alternate Route for Western Loudoun Powerline" available here:

https://www.loudounnow.com/news/pjm-considers-alternate-route-for-western-loudoun-power-line/article_3faf7494-3e2e-11ef-a865-bb979c92b9ce.html

²⁰ *Ibid*, "Loudoun Transmission Report" Attachment (2), Page 24

MARL will require an expansion of the existing easements. The MARL transmission line was moved into Maryland by PJM to accommodate Loudoun County's request. ²¹

Any assertion by NextERA that routing around Maryland's wilderness areas is more expensive or that avoiding Maryland all together would be more expensive doesn't hold water. Rate payers would save money simply by having PJM revert to the December 11, 2023 PJM Board approved project configuration

As Loudoun County continues its build out data centers, additional transmission lines will be needed to import energy into the county. On February 26, PJM announced its latest set of 500kV and 765kV transmission lines to support data center expansion and retiring fossil-fuel generation. ²² Included is Project 262 - #708 Amos-WeltonSprings-Rocky Point 765kV transmission line that terminates at a new substation in Frederick County, Maryland. ²³ This newly approved 765kV project this requires a new 200' easement for its entire 261 mile length through West Virginia, Virginia and into Maryland and is to be constructed using a V-frame and guyed-wire structure. **It will take at least 6,352 acres of land from rural property owners** across fourteen (14) West Virginia counties, three (3) Virginia counties and one (1) Maryland county. **It would impact 32 conservation easements. Project 262 crosses the Monongahela National Forest, Appalachian National Scenic Trail, Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail and it will run parallel down the view shed of the Potomac River.** ALL of these parks and scenic areas are also impacted by the MARL 500kv line. For communities in Jefferson County, West Virginia and western Loudoun County, Virginia, Project 262 Proposal #708 would be a THIRD HVAC transmission line through their communities and across their farms and property: the existing 500kV, a new 500kV that has not been constructed with a 138kV under built plus a 765kV guyed V-lattice structure beside it!

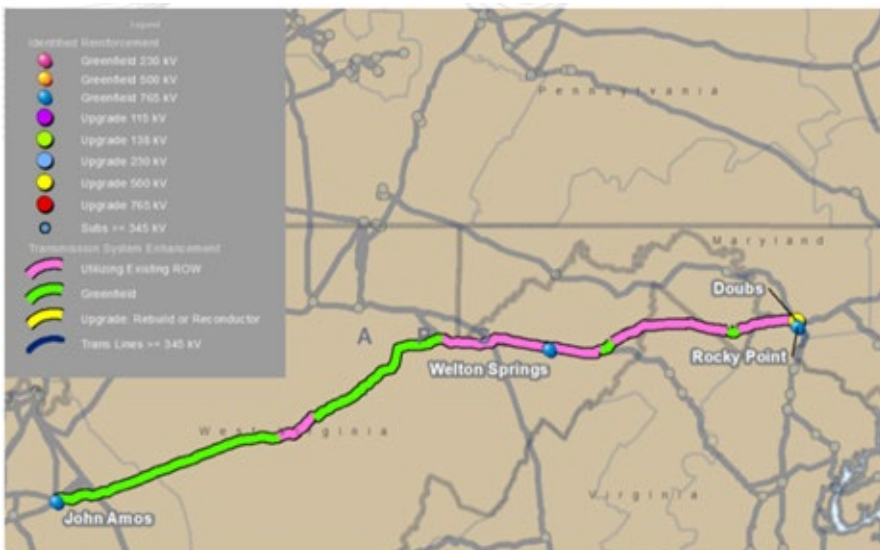


Figure 6: PJM TEAC December 3, 2024, Proposal #708 Amos-WeltonSprings-Rocky Point 765kV²⁴

²¹ Attachment (2), PJM Interconnection, L.L.C., Transmission Expansion Advisory Committee (TEAC) PJM Reliability Analysis Update - Item 10, July 9th 2024, Pages 42 to 44, and Background

²² PJM, "PJM Approves New Transmission Projects to Support Grid Reliability" Available here: <https://insidelines.pjm.com/pjm-board-approves-new-transmission-projects-to-support-grid-reliability/>

²³ Attachment (3)

²⁴ PJM TEAC 2December 3 2024 - item 11 Reliability Analysis Update Pg78 Amos-WeltonSprings-Rocky Point 765kV, Available here: <https://www.pjm.com/-/media/DotCom/committees-groups/committees/teac/2024/20241203/20241203-item-11---reliability-analysis-update.pdf>

This new 765kV ends at a new substation in Frederick, Maryland, no additional outgoing lines have been included in this set of projects. This begs the question as to where new additional transmission lines will go from the proposed new 765kV substation in Frederick County, Maryland. If the energy is for Virginia's data centers it will traverse Frederick and Montgomery Counties and cross the Potomac River again to get to Data Center Alley". If any of the energy is needed for new data centers planned in Frederick and Montgomery Counties in Maryland, I wouldn't know where those are planned. The chart below is where the similarly routed PATH transmission line, defeated in 2012, was proposed to go in 2008.

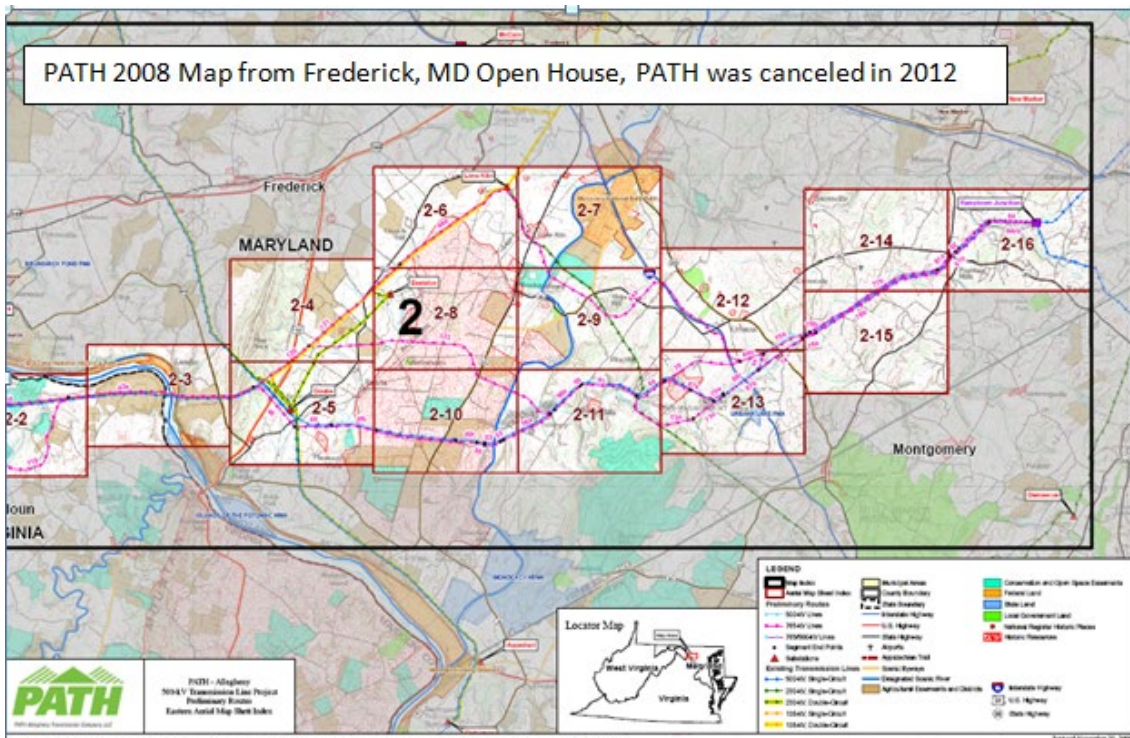


Figure 6: PATH route study area map displayed at the 2008 open house in Frederick, Maryland.

Perhaps when evaluating proposed transmission lines, the source of the energy should be considered. Project #708 originates at Appalachian Power's coal - fired John Amos Power Plant in West Virginia which has extra capacity. The John Amos Power Plant has three units that were commissioned in 1971, 1972 and 1973, at 50+ years old, it has already exceeded the average lifespan for coal fired generation plants.

It may be worth considering that while shutting down fossil-fuel generation in Maryland, PJM and its transmission owners are planning on importing coal-fired energy - over hundreds of miles of transmission lines at considerable cost to Maryland's rate payers. There are two additional PJM RTEP windows for proposing transmission line "solutions" for "retiring fossil-fuel generation" and "data centers" this year and surely more to come in the following years.

When viewed in this context you can surely see where the provision in this ACT that allows for **ANY number of transmission lines through wildlands as long as they are parallel to the existing lines as well as "generally relating to wildland areas in the state"** is cause for significant concern.

Private property owner's, particularly family farms, not wishing to hand over multiple acres to host transmission lines to support Loudoun County, Virginia's data centers, are also rightly concerned!

Interstate HVAC transmission lines are not the only solution for the unconstrained data center expansion / projected energy load in Loudoun County, Virginia. Virginia has **many options** for handling the data center energy issue. New generation in Virginia closer to the projected load would be the appropriate solution for a problem of this magnitude, as would lessening the density of the data center development in Loudoun County, Virginia.

None of Virginia's non-HVAC transmission options can be legislated by the Maryland General Assembly **BUT** the Maryland General Assembly can simply say **NO to these new transmission lines**, at which point the state of Virginia and Loudoun County, Virginia specifically will look toward developing other options to provide energy for their growing data center market.

Once again, it is not a choice between rural private property owners or wilderness conservation areas in Maryland . The choice is whether these lines are sited through Maryland at all.

I therefore recommend :

- vote **NO** on SB399 / HB1270 - NextERA's proposal to use conservation and wilderness areas for transmission lines to support data center development in Loudoun County, Virginia
- protect Maryland's private property owners from Eminent Domain takings to support data center development in Loudoun County, Virginia
- protect Maryland's scenic areas, farmland, wilderness and residential quality of life from the encroachment of data centers and the massive 500kV and 765Kv transmission lines to serve them
- provide and plan for co-located generation for data centers in Maryland or locate data centers closer to new or existing generation sources

Theresa Ghiorzi
39558 Wenner Road
Lovettsville, VA 20180

Attachment (1)

Pg 2 of a 2017 Dominion Energy Transmission Right of way agreement.



Dominion Energy Virginia

Transmission Right of Way Agreement (VA) – (Page 2)

to or extensions of the Facilities as COMPANY may from time to time deem advisable, in its sole and absolute discretion.

GRANTOR may use the Easement Area for any purpose which is not inconsistent with the rights granted to COMPANY herein, provided that no improvements of any kind (including, but not limited to, water, sewer, telephone, electric, gas, cable or other utilities or communications facilities or equipment) may hereafter be constructed, placed or installed by GRANTOR or permitted by GRANTOR to be constructed, placed or installed on, over, under, through, across or in the Easement Area, without COMPANY's prior written consent thereto, which consent may be withheld in COMPANY's sole discretion if COMPANY determines that any such use may or could injure, interfere with or endanger the construction, installation, operation, maintenance or repair of any Facilities, interfere with the exercise by COMPANY of any rights, privileges or easements granted to COMPANY in this Agreement or violate any health or safety standard, rule or regulation now or hereafter in effect.

COMPANY shall at all times have the right, without any additional payment and without any liability to GRANTOR or any third party, to keep the Easement Area clear of (a) all buildings, improvements and structures (except agricultural fences), and (b) all trees, limbs, shrubs, landscaping, vegetation and crops and all stumps, roots and undergrowth; and COMPANY shall have the further right to trim, fell, cut or remove any tree, limb, shrub, landscaping, vegetation and crops which is located outside the Easement Area which, in the sole opinion of COMPANY, may endanger the safe or proper operation of the Facilities, or which in falling or being felled, cut or removed could come within ten (10) feet of any of the Facilities. All trees, limbs, shrubs, landscaping, vegetation, crops, stumps, roots and undergrowth removed, cut or felled by COMPANY may be disposed of by COMPANY within four (4) months after they are removed or felled. All trees, limbs, shrubs, landscaping, vegetation, crops, stumps, roots, and undergrowth cut or uprooted by COMPANY and not disposed of by COMPANY within four (4) months after they are cut or uprooted shall be the property of GRANTOR. All trees, limbs, shrubs, landscaping, vegetation, crops, stumps, roots, and undergrowth cut or felled by COMPANY (whether within or outside of the Easement Area) and not removed by COMPANY may be placed in piles within the Easement Area, subject to applicable regulatory requirements, where they will not block streams or drainage ditches. Notwithstanding any provision in this paragraph to the contrary, all trees felled or cut by COMPANY outside the Easement Area one year or more after COMPANY initially cuts trees outside the Easement Area shall remain the property of GRANTOR. Under no circumstances shall COMPANY be obligated to pay or provide additional compensation of any kind to GRANTOR for any trees felled or cut by COMPANY within or outside the Easement Area in the exercise by Company of its rights under this paragraph. COMPANY shall have the right, but not the obligation, to plant trees, shrubs, and other vegetation within the Easement Area at public road crossings.

For the purposes of constructing, inspecting, maintaining, or operating the Facilities within the Easement Area or on GRANTOR's property or properties adjacent to GRANTOR's property, COMPANY shall have the right of ingress and egress on, over, through, across and upon the property of GRANTOR. COMPANY shall have the further right of ingress to and egress from the rights of way, private roads, driveways and parking areas which may now or hereafter exist on the property of GRANTOR. All rights of

Attachment (2)

PJM Interconnection, L.L.C., Transmission Expansion Advisory Committee (TEAC) PJM Reliability Analysis Update - Item 10, July 9th 2024, Pages 42 to 44, and Background.

Available here: <https://www.pjm.com/-/media/committees-groups/committees/teac/2024/20240709/20240709-item-10---reliability-analysis-update.ashx>

These scope changes on pages 42 to 44 were approved by the PJM Board of Managers on August 7, 2024

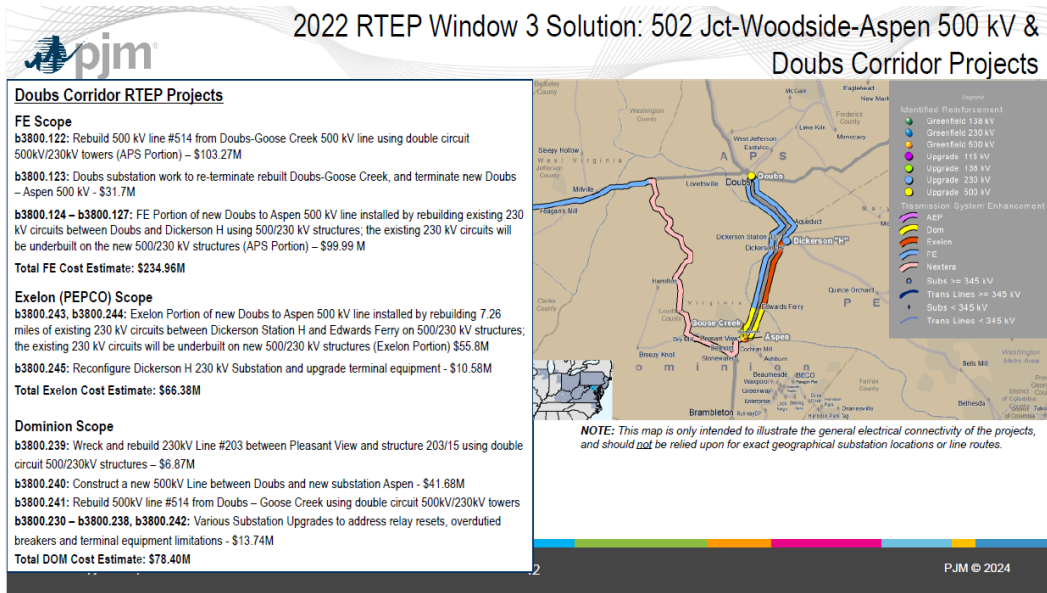


Figure 1: Pg 42: Doubs Corridor RTEP Projects This shows the original December 5, 2023 Mid-Atlantic Resiliency Link (MARL) project. It is the pink line on this slide and is entirely contained within Virginia.

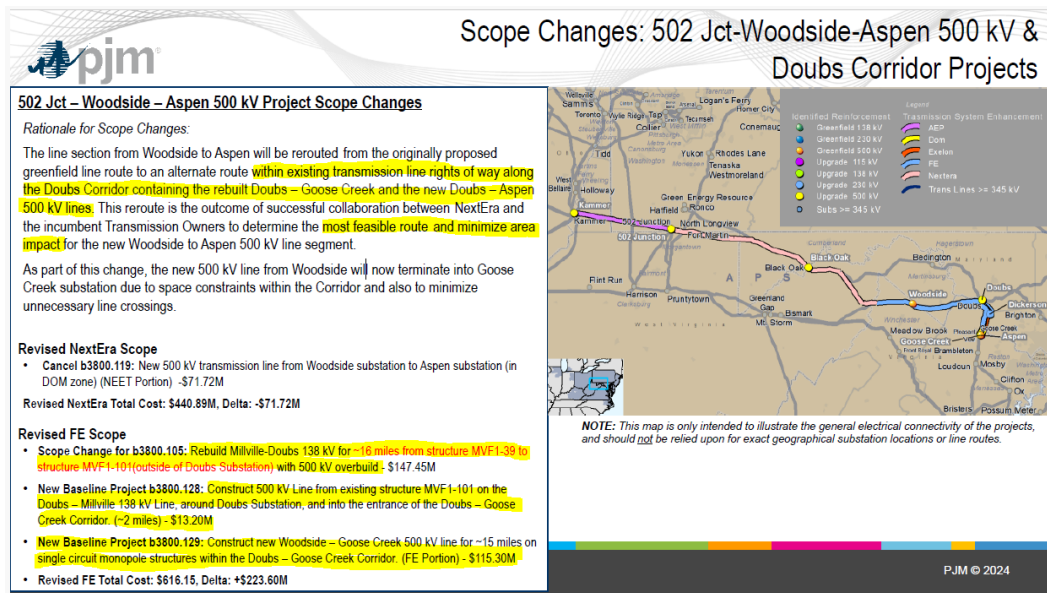


Figure 2: Pg 43. 502 Jct-Woodside-Aspen 500kV Project Scope Changes moving the route across the Potomac River and through Maryland

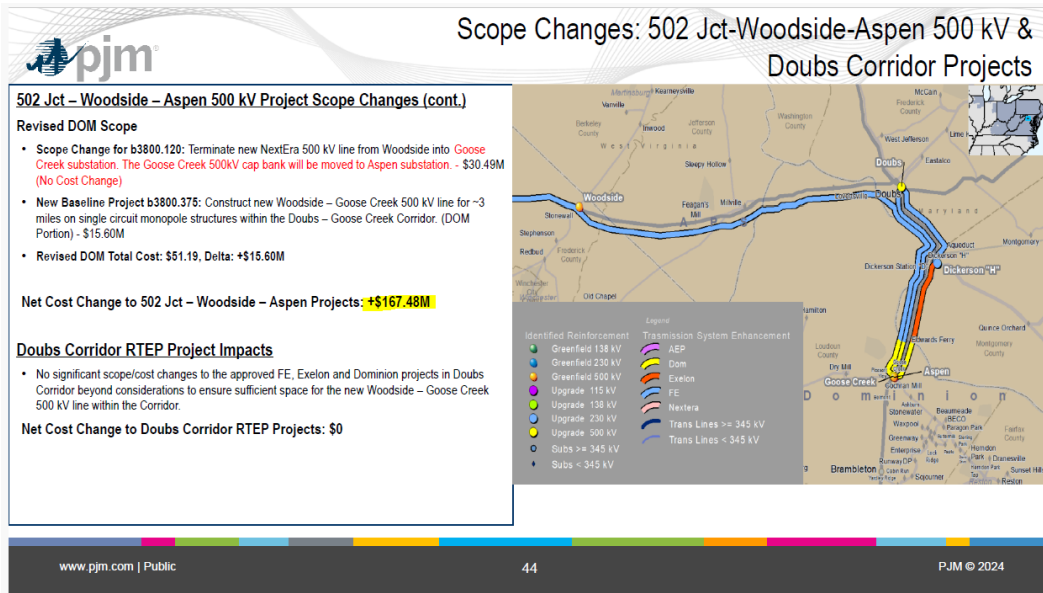


Figure 3: Pg 44. 502 Jct-Woodside-Aspen 500kV Project Scope Changes (cont.) - this shows the MARL transmission line rerouted as well as the \$167.48M cost increase.

Background

As to NextERA's proposed transmission project approved by the PJM Board of Managers, December 11, 2023, NextERA did not share routing studies or siting studies with the public in Loudoun County, Virginia. Neither did NextERA site the transmission line nor create an actual route for public comment. NextERA did not post any maps or hold any open citizen input or citizen feedback meetings at all in Loudoun County:

- no siting maps with routes to comment on,
- no alternate routes presented to the communities,
- no community meetings,
- no comment cards

In early April of 2024, the Waterford Foundation, Loudoun Transmission Line Alliance and Piedmont Environmental Council brought a resolution to the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors calling for the proposed transmission lines to be routed on existing transmission corridors.

"Echoing concerns from county residents and activist groups, county supervisors unanimously passed a resolution April 16 calling for NextEra Energy's proposed transmission lines to be routed on existing transmission corridors rather than building a new path through western Loudoun. ...

Instead of using the Woodside to Aspen route, a county staff report suggests, NextEra could "redirect the route from the Woodside substation to the Doubs substation" in Frederick County, Maryland, then cross the Potomac River going south to the Aspen substation. This would use existing Pepco and Dominion Energy corridors"

Supervisor Kristen Umstattd [stated] " One of the conversations that I've had with the NextEra folks indicates that, from their perspective, **some of the existing transmission corridors do not have adequate room to run additional lines because of how close they already are to existing residential communities**" ²⁵

On July 6, 2024 the Loudoun Transmission line Alliance released their MARL Power Line Impact Study ²⁶

- in spite of the fact that there was no actual sited route and no identified set of contiguous properties identified for the proposed transmission line easement - and still no routing or siting study maps shared with the public.

"We met with NextEra last week and we know that the impact report and the efforts that we've been making to raise community awareness have had an impact on them. They have definitely said they're giving a lot more consideration to using existing rights-of-way and working with Dominion and working with PJM," Manch said.²⁷

PJM was an active participant in negotiating the deal with utilities, elected officials, and the community that stands to benefit from the scope change. PJM and NextERA say they successfully collaborated with "stakeholders and community members".

²⁵ Loudoun Times Mirror, "Supervisors ask NextEra to use Existing Corridors for new transmission lines" by Jess Kirby April 17, 2024 , Available here: https://www.loudountimes.com/0local-or-not/1local/supervisors-ask-nextera-to-use-existing-corridors-for-new-transmission-lines/article_b85fa322-fcf3-11ee-a0d2-2f2e6ed6dcc0.html

²⁶ Loudoun Transmission Line Alliance Impact Study, Available here: <https://bloximages.chicago2.vip.townnews.com/loudounnow.com/content/tncms/assets/v3/editorial/5/92/5927e9a8-3b02-11ef-9b23-dfd96599b8cb/668845e77f836.pdf.pdf>

²⁷ Loudoun Now, "LTLA Releases MARL Power Line Impact Study NextERA to Consider Alternate Route" by Hanna Pampaloni, July 5, 2024 Available here: https://www.loudounnow.com/news/ltla-releases-marl-power-line-impact-study-nextera-to-consider-alternate-route/article_d03e72be-3b02-11ef-91c5-f3f36d46ebb1.html

“... PJM Transmission Coordination and Analysis Manager Augustine Caven said. He said the proposed change is the result of **successful collaboration** between NextEra and the power providers who own the rights of way, **stakeholders and community members**. ... Del. Geary Higgins (R-30) who has been working with residents, community groups, NextEra, PJM and Gov. Glenn Youngkin to have the line moved said, while it is still early in the process to change the route, he was hopeful.”, “We have been advocating that this is the only reasonable and acceptable alternative since day one,” he told *Loudoun Now*. ”²⁸

In his press release, Del. Higgins recounts "over the last eight months we met with NextERA six times and PJM twice ”²⁹

The majority of the replacement route (presented as a scope change) was assigned to FirstEnergy by PJM with an approximately three mile segment from the Potomac River to the Goose Creek substation assigned to Dominion. No part of the replacement route will be built by NextERA, whose proposal was selected based on a competitive bid. None of the incumbent transmission owners will be held to the original \$683.55M cost cap of the selected NextERA proposal. The replacement route avoids the mid section of western Loudoun County and shifts the impact farther west in Loudoun County and into two counties in Maryland. Additionally, the replacement route crosses the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historic Park ("C&O Canal")³⁰ twice and impacts the Chesapeake & Ohio National Park, Harpers Ferry National Park and the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. The scope change to replace the route has caused the in-service date for the project to shift out three years from 2028 to 2031 and has increased the project's cost by \$167.48M (See page 44 of the slides from PJM's July 9th, 2024 Transmission Expansion Advisory Committee meeting in Figure 3 above) . This scope change pushes this project's cost to well over \$1B .

²⁸ Loudoun Times Mirror , "PJM Considers Alternate Route for Western Loudoun Powerline" available here: https://www.loudounnow.com/news/pjm-considers-alternate-route-for-western-loudoun-power-line/article_3faf7494-3e2e-11ef-a865-bb979c92b9ce.html

²⁹ Delegate Geary Higgins Press Release Waterford, VA, July 9, 2024 Available here: <https://www.facebook.com/delegatehiggins/posts/major-transmission-line-update-most-likely-route-is-now-using-existing-right-of-122153961728153171/>

³⁰ C&O Canal Trust <https://www.canaltrust.org/about-us/about-the-co-canal/>

HB1270 Opposition PDF.pdf

Uploaded by: Will Williams

Position: UNF

Garrett County Forestry Board

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**HB1270 – Natural Resources – Wildland Areas – Overhead
Transmission Lines** By: Delegate Hinebaugh

Economic Matters Committee

UNFAVORABLE

This bill undermines legislative intent by proposing an exemption to build a controversial high-powered electric transmission line through three protected areas (COMAR 08.01.02.02) in the Big Savage Wildland, Bear Pen Wildland, and Dan's Mountain Wildland, an area of 8,443 acres located in Garrett and Allegany Counties.

An UNFAVORABLE REPORT is requested for the following reasons:

1. In spite of the opening language of the bill, there has been no open, transparent, or comprehensive civic engagement prior to the bill's submission. None of the comprehensive planning involved the general public.
2. The bill is premature and oversteps State authority as demands for high-voltage electricity supply are overstated and not proven. There is fear that unnecessary disruption and forest fragmentation would occur near the existing and expanded ROW.
3. Farmers, forest landowners, environmental groups, and political leaders were not made aware by Delegate Hinebaugh that this legislation was being considered for introduction. There have been no public meetings or opportunities for public input on this project.
4. There has been a firestorm of criticism from farmers, forest landowners, homeowners, and those holding agricultural and conservation easements who fear their land could be taken from them through *Eminent Domain*.

5. There is no map of the exempted transmission line routes being proposed by the bill.
6. There has been no determination that these high-voltage electric lines will serve the interests of the State and its people when there are other forms of energy to be considered that are less intrusive.
7. The proposed transmission line corridor through Western Maryland is part of a larger project to meet the exclusive demands of data centers in Northern Virginia.

Respectfully submitted,

Garrett County Forest Conservancy District Board

Written Testimony on Transmission Lines.pdf

Uploaded by: Winston Ernst

Position: UNF

Subject: STRONGLY OPPOSE HB1270

Dear Representatives,

My name is Winston Ernst and I am writing to the Committee today to voice my strong opposition to **HB1270** Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines. I am asking you to vote no on this bill.

Born and raised in Maryland, I have come to appreciate this great state for a variety of reasons. Like many fellow Marylanders I am especially fond of our clean water and fresh air, especially in Mountain Maryland. My love of this area began when I enrolled at Garrett College in the Winter of 2014. My immediate connection to the wild and scenic rivers and mountains of this region inspired me to be an advocate for public lands and parks.

Since graduating from Garrett College and Frostburg State University in 2019, I have built a career around education and outdoor recreation. I frequently lead 5 - 12 day expeditions canoeing on the Potomac and Youghiogheny Rivers and backpacking through Savage River State Forest, changing students' lives through challenge and discovery. Ecotourism has long been a booming industry in this part of Maryland, and will only continue to be a special attraction for future generations as more of our planet around us is developed or destroyed by human beings. Many of the areas that I frequently recreate in and led expeditions with students in would be affected by this Bill and that is very upsetting.

In closing, I strongly urge you to not pass this bill as this bill is counter to the intent of the Wildlands Preservation statute to preserve sensitive habitats unimpaired for future generations. Additionally, this bill undermines the law and process. This bill creates a new pathway for any willing delegate to submit bills for changes to wildland management, and authority is only granted to the Governor with public input. Lastly, I want to vocalize how disappointed I was to learn of no public engagement with this Bill. No public disclosure, meetings, or listening sessions have preceded the bill's introduction to the legislative committees in the House and Senate.

For the reasons listed above, and more, I urge you to vote no on HB1270. Thank you.

In Service,
Winston Ernst
723 Brookwood Road
Baltimore, MD 21229
(301)802-6120