

Subject: Opposition to Senate Bill 399

I am reaching out to discuss Senate Bill 399, 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 Senate Bill 399?

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

