



February 19, 2025

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: Vernal Pools Wetlands Protection Act

Position: Support: HB 878

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee

I write on behalf of the Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) in strong support of HB0878.

Vernal pools are small, under-appreciated, yet valuable wetlands that provide vital breeding places for various frogs, toads, salamanders, as well foraging sites for several species of birds and are home to an assemblage of invertebrates. One of the wonders of the transition from late winter to early spring is the sudden appearance of boldly marked Spotted Salamanders and the magical choruses of Spring Peepers and Wood Frogs. These species depend upon vernal pools to breed in. Although MOS members are birders, we also fascinated by amphibians such these. And let us not forget the delight that these illusive creatures afford to our children!

Vernal pools are also valuable to birds. Great Blue Herons visit to feed upon the breeding frogs. Red-winged Blackbirds, Rusty Blackbirds (uncommon and declining), Red-headed Woodpeckers (uncommon), Swamp Sparrows and Wood Ducks, forage in and around these pools.

Vernal pools are not accorded any protection and are therefore often filled or polluted without anyone realizing that valuable habitat has been lost. Many of these pools have been lost to development in the last 50 years.

Accordingly, we ask that the Environment and Transportation Committee give a favorable report on HB 878. This bill provides a tight definition of what constitutes a vernal pool, affording certainty to property owners and developers.

MOS is a Maryland-based volunteer organization, founded in 1945, and now with some 2000 members, organized into 15 chapters throughout the state. MOS is devoted to the study, conservation and enjoyment of birds that spend at least part of their lives in Maryland. MOS members are also keenly interested in other animals, plants, and their habitats. We own 10 sanctuaries across the state, all of which are open to the public at no charge.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robin G. Todd". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robin" being the most prominent.

Robin G. Todd PhD
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