



Maryland Forestry Foundation
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Favorable HB 894
Mr. Chairman and member of the Committee :

My Name is Gary Allen, and I'm the President of the Maryland Forestry Foundation. I am speaking today in strong support of HB894. Which aims to add the Northern Long-eared Bat (NLEB) and other bat species to the list of species in Maryland authorized to have a "Habitat Protection Plan" (HCP) and incidental take permit issued by the Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources.

I thought the Secretary had such authority! Over 15 years ago, I was involved in the development of a "Habitat Protection Plan" for the Delmarva Fox Squirrel. That MORE focused plan has protected both the habit values and forestry operations on the East shore for now over a decade. You will note that the proposed legislation does not mandate the creation of an HCP but preserves the ability to establish one if necessary. This would provide a structured framework for reasonable conservation measures while allowing essential land management activities to continue.

The Foundation will support any plan that provides clear habit benefits and can be effectively implemented on the ground. While bat populations are in decline, the primary cause is white-nose syndrome—a devastating fungal disease that spreads during winter hibernation. Recent research does not indicate forestry is the driving force behind this decline, particularly in Maryland.

By passing this legislation, Maryland would align itself with the federal Endangered Species Act and join 21 other states with proactive bat management plans.

It is essential to recognize that this issue extends beyond forestry. Without proper planning measures, many routine land use activities could face unnecessary delays or restrictions. Let's plan for outcomes we all value. Please give a favorable report for HB894.

Thank you.

Gary Allen, President

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