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**Committee: Environment and Transportation**

**Testimony on: HB1184 Port of Deposit State Historical Park - Size and Scope**

**Position: Oppose**

**Hearing Date: February 28, 2025**

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club opposes HB1184 Port of Deposit State Historical Park – Size and Scope. This bill would make a significant (84%-90%) reduction in the size and scope of the park that was approved just a few years ago and would unnecessarily delay the transfer of the land to the Department of Natural Resources.

The Park was established with the enactment of the Maryland parks bill – the Great Maryland Outdoors Act (Senate Bill 541) in 2022. The Maryland Sierra Club was a strong proponent of that bill through testimony and community advocacy. This legislation would also take the historic waterfront Tome School out of the Port Deposit State Historical Park.

The Park has considerable potential for recreation and as a historic site.<sup>i</sup> It is the site of an antebellum free African American community, Snow Hill. It also includes a garden designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, who designed New York's Central Park and are preeminent figures in American landscape architecture. In addition, it is a nesting site for Northern Map Turtles (see exhibit A), which are listed as endangered in Maryland.<sup>ii</sup> There are only about 250–300 adult Map Turtles between the Pennsylvania state line and the mouth of the Susquehanna River.<sup>iii</sup> Towson University incorporates the study of these turtles into its academic programs and uses the upper level of the restored Tome Gas House for research. With such a small total population, successful reproduction of the turtles is critical. It would be a huge loss to the state if this endangered species were harmed.

Due to the environmental and historical importance of the site, as well as its recreation potential, we urge maintaining the intent of the Parks bill in preserving the waterfront site as part of the Port of Deposit Park as originally envisioned.

We urge an unfavorable report on HB1184.

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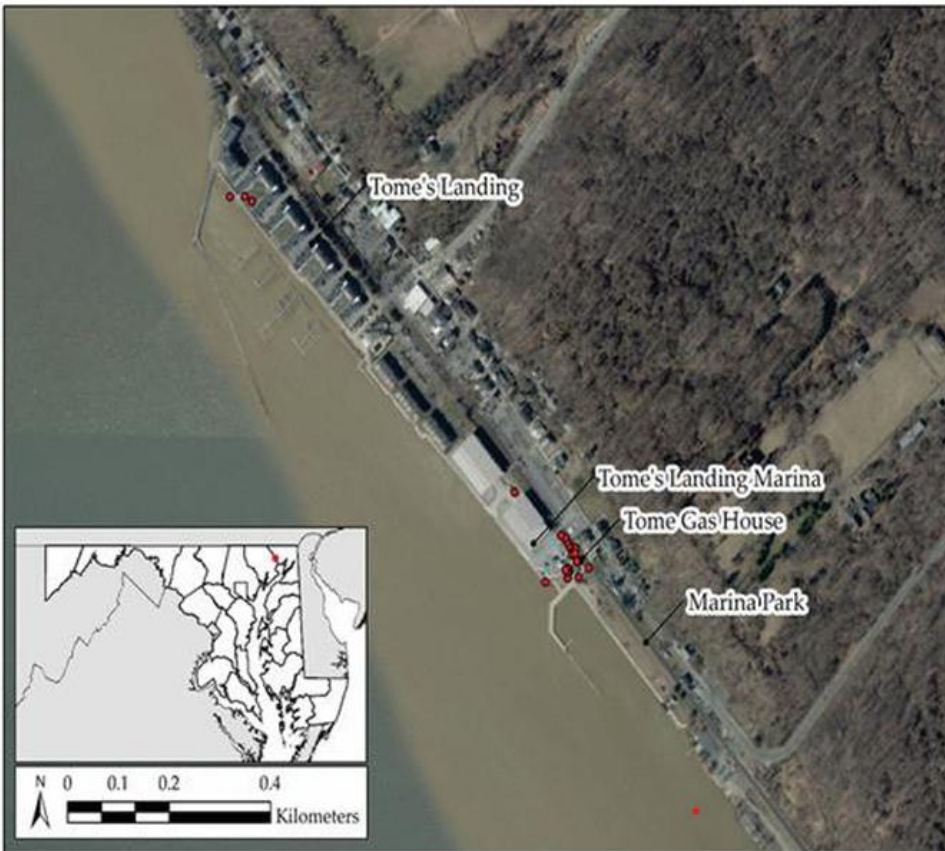
Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.

<sup>i</sup> [https://www.cecildaily.com/news/del-hornberger-explains-port-of-deposit-state-park/article\\_1f13a0be-7174-5d1f864c-8c08ed6147db.html](https://www.cecildaily.com/news/del-hornberger-explains-port-of-deposit-state-park/article_1f13a0be-7174-5d1f864c-8c08ed6147db.html)

<sup>ii</sup> Maryland State Highway Administration (2016). Research Report: Effectiveness of Nest Site Restoration for the Northern Map Turtle.

<sup>iii</sup> Durkin, B.P.; Richards-Dimitrie, T.M.; Anderson, K.P.; Howell, H.J.; Seigel, R.A. High Conservation Value of an Urban Population of a State-Endangered Turtle. *Diversity* 2022, 14, 354. <https://doi.org/10.3390/d14050354>

Exhibit A



[Aerial view of Port Deposit, MD. Red dots show active nesting areas.](#)