



March 31, 2026

House Bill 1267

**Patuxent Research Refuge and Beltsville Agricultural Research Center -
Zoning Classification (Protecting Patuxent Research Refuge Act)**

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Anne Arundel County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 1267 – Patuxent Research Refuge and Beltsville Agricultural Research Center - Zoning Classification. This Bill, with the adopted amendments, will preserve the natural habitats in both the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center and the Patuxent Research Refuge, which are currently federally owned.

The Beltsville Agricultural Research Center and the Patuxent Research Refuge contain thousands of acres of high quality forests, wetlands, streams, and plant communities. Many of these environmentally valuable communities are not just highly rare or unique in Maryland, but also globally. Some specific expressions of pitch pine - scarlet oak - black huckleberry mixed woodland communities, once more common in the greater Anacostia watershed region, are now only preserved in the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center and the Patuxent Research Refuge. It is our duty to protect and preserve these undeveloped natural areas, which provide significant ecological benefits to Marylanders and the State, for generations to come.

The portion of the Patuxent Research Refuge located in Anne Arundel County is currently zoned OS- Open Space, as part of the County's adopted comprehensive land use plan and adopted Green Infrastructure Master Plan for the purpose of conservation. If the federal government divests itself of ownership, new entities could assume ownership of the land and seek rezoning, through either the comprehensive zoning process or administrative rezoning, for some other use. This Bill prohibits the conversion of these undeveloped natural areas for uses other than preservation, ensuring the protection of these key natural areas and habitats. For those reasons, Anne Arundel County respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 1267.