



*Wes Moore, Governor*  
*Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor*  
*Josh Kurtz, Secretary*  
*David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary*

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February 17, 2026

**BILL NUMBER: SENATE BILL 667**

**SHORT TITLE: NATURAL RESOURCES - EDIBLE FORESTS AND FORAGING PROGRAM - ESTABLISHMENT**

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

### **EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT'S POSITION**

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SB 667 establishes a program that aligns with DNR's mission to lead the state toward a resilient future and improve ecological, social, and economic outcomes for all communities. The Department has collaborated with the bill's sponsor to refine the legislation by clarifying key definitions and more clearly articulating the program's purpose.

The Edible Forests and Foraging Program established in this bill does two things: 1.) creates a legal means for foraging on state land through a pilot program, and 2.) any possible revenue captured from this prgrm will be diverted to a dedicated fund, known as the "Food Forests and Foraging Fund," to help support the administrative costs of the permitting program and support the establishment of "Edible forests" on state lands where the public can harvest plant material for consumption.

While the department supports creating this legal pathway for foraging, establishing a more limited pilot program will allow the department to better understand how to manage this kind of program for foraging, the potential impacts on natural resources and revenue capture, and the implications for taking it statewide.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

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Foraging is growing in popularity as part of local food, sustainability, and environmental education movements. Current Forest and Parks regulations prohibit removing or disturbing plants and natural items on State-owned public lands, such as State parks, meaning foraging is restricted on public land for the general public. This bill would establish a legal means of foraging on state land by creating a foraging permit program, managed and regulated by the department. Additionally, it creates a possible new revenue source for the department to support the establishment of food forests.

The bill grants the department discretion in implementing the Edible Forests and Foraging fund. The department already manages an "edible forest" in Centerville, Maryland, that was funded using grant dollars. Depending on revenue from foraging permits, current department staff could deploy similar forests in other parts of the state.

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## BILL EXPLANATION

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SB 667 establishes a “Food Forests and Foraging” program within DNR; requires the establishment of a permit process; and a special, nonlapsing fund in the Department for the implementation of the new program. The bill also requires the establishment of a fee waiver process for individuals who demonstrate financial need. If amended, the bill would establish a foraging pilot program on two state lands to assess demand and potential challenges of implementing a structured program within the department.

BY:

(To be offered in the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee)

### AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL 667 (First Reading File Bill)

#### AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 1, in line 2, after “**Foraging**” insert “**Pilot**”; in lines 3, 11 and 17, in each instance, after “Foraging” insert “**Pilot**”; strike beginning with “requiring” in line 4 down through “need” in line 7 and substitute “requiring the Department to establish certain foraging areas to implement the Pilot Program; requiring the Department to operate the Pilot Program for a certain period of time; requiring the Department to publish a certain report evaluating the Pilot Program on or before a certain date;” and in line 16, strike “5-2205” and substitute “5-2204”.

#### AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 2, in lines 10 and 29, and on page 3, in line 1, in each instance, after “**FORAGING**” insert “**PILOT**”; on page 2, strike in their entirety lines 25 through 26, inclusive; in lines 27 and 29, strike “(F)” and “(G)”, respectively, and substitute “(E)” and “(F)”, respectively; and in line 29, before the first “**PROGRAM**” insert “**PILOT**”.

On page 3, in line 3, after “**THE**” insert “**PILOT**”; after line 8, insert:

**(C) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ESTABLISH TWO DESIGNATED FORAGING AREAS TO IMPLEMENT THE PILOT PROGRAM.**

**(D) THE PILOT PROGRAM SHALL BE OPERATIONAL FOR A THREE-YEAR PERIOD.**

**(E) ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 31, 2029, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL SUBMIT A REPORT TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE AND THE HOUSE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1257 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, THAT PROVIDES AN EVALUATION OF THE PILOT PROGRAM, INCLUDING SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES, AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON WHETHER THE PILOT PROGRAM SHOULD CONTINUE AND BE EXPANDED.**

**(F) THE DEPARTMENT MAY ADOPT REGULATIONS TO IMPLEMENT THIS SECTION.”**

On pages 3 through 4, strike in their entirety the lines beginning with line 10 on page 3 through line 4 on page 4, inclusive.

On page 4, in line 10, strike “5-2205” and substitute “5-2204”.