



## **Friends of Patuxent Research Refuge, Inc.**

10901 Scarlet Tanager Loop • Laurel, Maryland 20708-4011

<http://www.friendsopatuxent.org> • (301) 497-5789

Email: [friendsprr@friendsopatuxent.org](mailto:friendsprr@friendsopatuxent.org)

*Supporting wildlife conservation, education, and research at the Patuxent Research Refuge, a National Wildlife Refuge of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Eastern Ecological Science Center of the US Geological Survey*

### **Testimony of Richard Dolesh, Chair of the Board of Directors, Friends of the Patuxent Research Refuge on HB1267, Protecting Patuxent Research Refuge Act**

**March 31, 2026, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

My name is Richard Dolesh. I am the chairman of the board of directors of the Friends of Patuxent, a nonprofit all volunteer group that has supported the mission of the Patuxent Research Refuge for 32 years. We appreciate the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 1267.

This legislation is needed for three important reasons:

**First, To protect against future land use decisions that would be incompatible with the and existing character, quality, and integrity of these two federal facilities, the world-renowned, Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, and the other, Patuxent Research Refuge, a one-of-a-kind National Wildlife Refuge, that collectively protect nearly 20,000 of acres of natural land in Prince George's and Anne Arundel Counties.**

After more than a century of stability, these lands are under a series of threats so severe that the State of Maryland and its local governments must take action to prevent future land use decisions that could destroy the value and character of these protected public lands and the communities that surround them. By way of example, just witness the ongoing struggles local governments and states are having over unplanned detention centers being implemented by the federal government right now around the country.

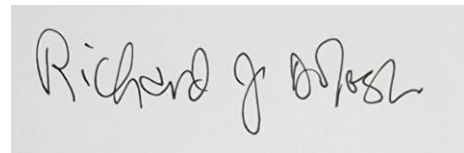
**Second, this legislation is needed to assure the long-term preservation of these important conservation lands that have been protected for a century.** It is clear from recent actions by the US Department of Agriculture to move thousands of employees out of the DC region and possibly dispose of the 6600 acres of the Beltsville Ag Center, that this facility and this land are clearly under threat, possibly in perhaps a matter of months.

The Patuxent Research Refuge has faced different kind of threats in recent years. One such example was the Super Conducting Magnetic Levitation Train, or MAGLEV, planned to take substantial amounts of refuge land by eminent domain and cause serious impacts to the Patuxent

River watershed. The Federal Railway Administration pulled the plug on this project last year, but it was a close call. Other threats abound.

**The third reason this legislation is needed is to ensure that the affected counties and the State of Maryland have a say in any critical land use decisions that would affect Maryland lands and waters, especially these long-protected conservation lands.** I cannot emphasize this point strongly enough. Maryland has a vital stake in what happens to these lands and waters in the future. What we allow to happen must be based on thoughtful well-planned decisions. The environmental and economic consequences to Maryland are profound. With this bill, Maryland intends to keep these lands as they have been for a century or more—in protected open space, preserving the ecological and environmental benefits of clean air and clean water and abundant wildlife for our communities and our citizens. And to ensure that we have the final say in how they might be changed or developed in the future.

For these reasons and more, the Friends of Patuxent Research Center support HB 1267. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important legislation and Friends of Patuxent Research Refuge encourage your support of this bill.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light gray rectangular background. The signature reads "Richard J. Dolesh" in a cursive, slightly slanted script.

Richard Dolesh  
Chair of the Board of Directors  
Friends of Patuxent Research Refuge

Home address: 19603 Aquasco Road  
Aquasco, MD, 20608  
[dolesh@gmail.com](mailto:dolesh@gmail.com)  
301-848-8154