



Maryland Native Plant Society

APPRECIATION □ CONSERVATION □ EDUCATION

Testimony: SB 523, Department of the Environment – Water Resources -
Protection of Vernal Pools (Vernal Pool Wetlands Protection Act of 2026)
Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Hearing Date: February 24, 2026
Position: FAVORABLE

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and honorable members of the Committee:

The Maryland Native Plant Society supports Senate Bill 523. The preservation of native plants and their habitats is a critical component of the MNPS mission. The various species of native plants found in and around vernal pools form the backbone of these unique wetland ecosystems, providing food, cover, and a place to raise young for a variety of species. Vernal pools are critical to the reproduction and survival of animals such as fairy shrimp, spotted salamander, and wood frog. They also provide important food for birds and mammals not typically associated with these seasonal wetland ecosystems.^{1,2}

The various native plants in and around a vernal pool help shape these unique ecosystems. A number of these species are listed as Rare, Threatened, or Endangered in Maryland.³ These include:

- Buxbaum's sedge, *Carex buxbaumii* - Threatened MD / State Rare
- Blister sedge, *Carex vesicaria* - Threatened MD / Highly State Rare
- Barbed-bristle bulrush, *Scirpus ancistrochaetus* - Globally Rare/Local / Endangered Federally / Endangered MD / Highly State Rare
- Creeping Mannagrass, *Glyceria acutiflora* - Endangered MD / Highly State Rare
- Fernald's mannagrass, *Torreyochloa pallida* var. *fernaldii* - Highly State Rare
- American featherfoil, *Hottonia inflata* - Threatened MD / State Rare
- Lowland yellow loosestrife, *Lysimachia hybridum* - Threatened MD / State Rare
- Yellow water buttercup, *Ranunculus flabellaris* - Endangered MD / Highly State Rare

If we fail to protect vernal pools, the plant and animal species intimately connected to them will not survive, and Maryland's biodiversity will be significantly diminished. **As such, the Maryland Native Plant Society urges a favorable report on SB 523.**

Liz McDowell
Board, Maryland Native Plant Society
lmcd.mnps@gmail.com

Judy Fulton
President, Maryland Native Plant Society
jfulton5@gmail.com

¹ Eakin, C.J., M L. Hunter, A.J.K. Calhoun. Bird and mammal use of vernal pools along an urban development gradient. Urban Ecosystems, 2018. <https://www.vernalpools.me/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Eakin-2019-bird-.pdf>

² Marteau, B., P. Nummi, T. Lilley, and J. Sunnell. Role of vernal pools in activity and diversity of bats and birds linked with the emergence of flying insects. Global Ecology and Conservation: Volume 48, December 2023. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2351989423003578>

³ Maryland Biodiversity Project <https://www.marylandbiodiversity.com> Accessed 8 Feb 2026.