



# CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

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## House Bill 72

### Natural Resources – Edible Forests and Foraging Program – Establishment

**Date:** February 4, 2026

**To:** House Environment & Transportation Committee

**Position:** Favorable

**From:** Gussie Maguire  
MD Staff Scientist

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS House Bill 72**, which creates an Edible Forests and Food Foraging Program within the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Edible forests and foraging practices exist at a crucial junction of conservation and environmental and food justice. Planting trees on state land to produce edible fruit for visitors to enjoy combines the benefits of planting trees—soil stabilization, carbon sequestration, habitat establishment, and temperature mitigation, among others—with access to fresh food and meaningful interactions with the natural world.

Additionally, as foraging has become a more popular hobby, establishing a formal permit program protects species from overharvest. The fee waiver for individuals in need offsets concerns about equity: laws restricting and banning foraging have historically excluded marginalized communities<sup>1</sup>. We appreciate the provision allowing the Department to require an orientation or course on foraging practices, as inexperienced individuals may unintentionally infringe upon others' ability to enjoy the resources by taking excessively or damaging plants and fungi.

### **CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 72.**

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at [mstegman@cbf.org](mailto:mstegman@cbf.org).

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<sup>1</sup> The Sierra Club: [Wild Food For All](#)

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