



Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay
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*Deeply rooted in native plants,
promoting native landscapes
through education, advocacy and
collaborative action.*

Testimony: HB072; Natural Resources – Edible Forests and Foraging Program - Establishment

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Hearing Date: February 4, 2026

Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Chair, Marc Korman; Vice Chair, Michele Guyton, and honorable members of the Committee:

Located in Southern Maryland, Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay, a 71-member chapter of the national organization Wild Ones Natural Landscapers, LTD¹, requests your support for this bill, subject to three amendments. The concept of providing the public with the means to harvest food from forests may seem worthy of consideration at first, but not as the bill is currently written.

Establishing and maintaining healthy forests is important for humans and ecosystems worldwide. *“Beyond their critical role in carbon storage, forests serve as vital shields against extreme weather conditions, such as storms and floods. They are essential in supplying drinking water to nearly half of the world’s largest cities, highlighting their significance in our daily lives. Forests also offer invaluable resources and protection for communities that rely on them for their livelihoods and security.”*²

Forests contain rare, threatened, and endangered species that need protection, and it is my concern that allowing foraging in the limited forests remaining in our state would compromise forest health and lead to loss of these vital natural resources. By preserving our forest and other natural ecosystems, we can preserve our treasured Chesapeake Bay for future generations.

For those reasons, I urge that the bill only be passed with these amendments:

- 1. Eliminate foraging in forests.** Foraging harms ecosystems as foragers step on and crush native plants and compact the soil, negatively impacting the ecosystem.
- 2. Create permaculture orchards on non-natural areas** that are not regaining their natural states, such as lawns, playing fields, and agricultural lands.
- 3. Limit species in these permaculture orchards to those on the Commercial Maryland Native Plant List.**

Wildly appreciative,

Marlene Smith

President, Wild Ones Chesapeake Bay

¹ Wild Ones Natural Landscapers, LTD, a nationwide nonprofit organization with local chapters throughout the country, <https://wildones.org/>

² <https://www.unep.org/topics/forests/why-do-forests-matter>