



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

---

February 4, 2026

**BILL NUMBER: HOUSE BILL 72**

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

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

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

---

HB 72 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 permitting program, and 2.) revenue captured from these permits 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 the permitting process for foraging, the potential impacts on natural resources and revenue capture, and the implications for taking it statewide.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

---

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.

Contact: Lydia McPherson, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services  
[lydia.mcpherson1@maryland.gov](mailto:lydia.mcpherson1@maryland.gov) ♦ 410-260-8113 (office) ♦ 443-875-7785 (cell)

## **BILL EXPLANATION**

---

HB 72 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.