

PROTECT OUR FORESTS:

Why Maryland must reverse its loss of forest— and how

HB 766/SB 610

Sponsored by
Delegate Anne Healey (D-Prince George's)
and Senator Ron Young (D-Frederick)



CHESAPEAKE BAY
FOUNDATION

Saving a National Treasure

Maryland is losing billions of dollars of benefits from its rapidly declining forests. In the past eight years the state lost a net 17,168 acres of forest to development.

Individual counties have widely different success and failure rates for preserving and replanting forests. Some of that stems from local government decisions. Much of it is because of flaws in the state's Forest Conservation Act. HB 766/SB 610 would fix those flaws.

Acres of Forest Cleared, Replanted, Net Loss by County (FY2008–FY2016)

COUNTY	CLEARED	REPLANTED	NET LOSS
Anne Arundel	2645	269	2376
Baltimore	761	125	636
Calvert*	907	13	894
Caroline*	60	25	35
Carroll	324	356	(32)
Cecil*	232	47	185
Charles*	1787	46	1741
Dorchester	24	16	8
Frederick	838	727	111
Harford	1261	550	711
Howard	1006	468	538
Kent	36	25	11
Montgomery	1383	768	615
Prince George's	9817	2304	7513
Queen Anne's	20	15	5
St. Mary's	1708	119	1589
Somerset*	41	15	26
Talbot*	36	55	(19)
Washington*	100	79	21
Wicomico*	147	150	(3)
Worcester	270	117	153
TOTAL	23403	6289	17168

*Data is only partial because counties did not submit at least two annual reports to the state, in violation of the FCA law.

Source: MD Department of Natural Resources, from individual county FCA annual reports

TOP 10 FACTS About Forests in Maryland



- 1** One hundred mature trees in a forest help filter excess nutrients and other pollution from about **371,000 gallons** of rainwater.
- 2** **A mature forest provides a bonanza of benefits to Marylanders.** It supplies oxygen, purifies our air and water, reduces flooding, recharges groundwater, cools the air, provides recreation, and increases property values of nearby homes.
- 3** In Prince George's County alone, forests reduce the amount of polluted runoff by **4.3 billion gallons** per year. Removing pollutants from the same amount of runoff would cost taxpayers approximately **\$12.8 billion annually**.
- 4** **We literally can't live without forests.** A single acre of forest absorbs six tons of carbon dioxide a year and puts out four tons of oxygen. This is enough oxygen for 18 people to breathe a year.
- 5** We pay when we allow the destruction of these natural filters. In the past 45 years, the loss of forests in the Baltimore-Washington region has resulted in a **19 percent increase in polluted runoff at a cost of over one billion dollars**.
- 6** The state **lost at least 17,000 acres of forests in the past nine years** to subdivisions, shopping centers, and other development.
- 7** Prince George's County alone has allowed developers to clear over **9,800 acres** of forest in the past eight years, or over 1,100 acres a year. That's the equivalent of about 830 football fields per year.
- 8** In 2006, forests in the Bay's watershed were sopping up an estimated 184 million pounds of nitrogen from polluted air each year that would have washed into the watershed if it fell on paved streets. The forests accomplished about three times the annual reduction of nitrogen achieved by all the technological pollution control efforts of the last two decades combined. And **the forests do it for free, while other solutions cost billions**.
- 9** Maryland has a "no net loss" forest policy, which means the state should either not lose ANY forest, or it should replant the same amount it is losing. That isn't happening.
- 10** **The current FCA enables forest destruction**, perhaps inadvertently, because it poorly defines priority forests, doesn't effectively require builders to justify clearing priority forests, and uses a formula that sanctions large-scale clearance of properties that are heavily forested.



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Sources: Baltimore Tree Trust, University of Vermont, U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service Northern Research Station, Maryland Department of Natural Resources.