

MARYLAND WILDLANDS



What is a Wildland?

Maryland Wildlands are areas of state-owned land or water that have retained their wilderness character or contain rare or vanishing species of plant or animal life or similar features worthy of preservation. Designated by the Maryland General Assembly, they may include unique ecological, geological, scenic and contemplative recreational areas. These sites are Maryland's equivalent to the federal Wilderness Preservation System.

What activities are allowed in a Wildland?

State-designated Wildlands are managed for passive recreation only, including hiking, hunting, fishing, bird watching, horseback riding and nature interpretation.

Is the public allowed to hunt, fish and/or trap within a Wildland?

Hunting, fishing and trapping are permitted on Maryland Wildlands, subject to existing laws, regulations and administrative policies. If an area was open to hunting, fishing or trapping prior to Wildland designation, it will continue to be.

What benefits do Maryland's Wildlands provide?

Wildlands provide opportunities for eco-tourism and recreation such as hiking, bird watching, hunting, fishing, horseback riding, nature interpretation and more. They provide for protection of threatened and endangered species, as well as watershed and water quality; allow for wilderness research and primitive recreation; and preserve unique ecological communities and rare habitats.

What Wildlands already exist in Maryland?

Since 1973 when the Big Savage Wildland became the State's first Wildland, 29 separate Wildlands have been designated by the General Assembly. They span 43,779 acres on State Parks, State Forests and Wildlife

Management Areas in 15 counties. The most recent areas were added in 2002. Current wildlands can be viewed at dnr.maryland.gov/land/stewardship/wildlands_complete_List.asp

How does an area become a Wildland?

A Wildland can only be designated by an act of the General Assembly. The Secretary of Natural Resources decides which state-owned properties to review, gives public notice, holds hearings to receive input from the public and local officials, and then makes a recommendation to the Governor. If the Governor agrees, he can send a request to the General Assembly, which can pass a law designating new Wildlands.

What new Wildlands are being proposed?

Since the last Wildlands were designated by the General Assembly in 2002, DNR has acquired additional lands, completed an Inventory of Old Growth Forests, and mapped both high conservation forests and environmentally sensitive areas on DNR managed lands. With these new acquisitions and additional information, DNR's technical staff has identified 27 areas in nine counties that are worthy of consideration for Wildland designation: 17 expansions of existing Wildlands and ten new areas. A map of those areas, a spreadsheet with descriptions of the areas, and the schedule of public hearings are available online at dnr.maryland.gov/land/stewardship/wildland.asp.

How do Wildlands affect private property?

Wildlands do not affect private property. Wildlands can only be designated on state-owned property.

Need more information?

For more information about Maryland Wildlands, please email jfwilson@dnr.state.md.us or call 410-260-8412.

September 26, 2013