



February 9 2023

Committee: Economic Matters

Testimony on: Land Use—Public Service Companies—Pollinator-Friendly Vegetation Management

Position: Support: SB0062

The Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) supports HB062 and asks that the House Economic Matters Committee give a favorable report of HB0062.

MOS is a Maryland-based volunteer organization of some 1800 members, with 15 chapters in Maryland. We are devoted to the study, preservation and enjoyment of birds and their habitat.

MOS supports HB0062 because it would instill pollinator-friendly management of power right-of-ways (ROW). One feature thereof would permit mowing only every two years, and limit the mowing period to November 1 through March 31. This would help protect both pollinator insect species and nesting birds, as both occur only in the warmer months.

Grassland/meadow species, which use the power ROW for nesting, have declined by 53% in the last half-century.¹ Among the declining species are American Kestrel, Brown Thrasher, Field Sparrow, and Prairie Warbler. These very species use a ROW in Patuxent Research Refuge in Anne Arundel County.² This area is a pilot project of Baltimore Gas and Electric (BGE), which is managing to benefit wildlife and water quality.³

ROWS so-managed become early successional habitat, which is also in decline. The same grassland/meadow species utilize early successional habitat. But these habitats are also used by forest-interior dwelling species (FIDS), which venture out the forest to forage. Indeed, such power line cuts can have a greater species diversity than the adjacent forest interior.⁴

¹ Rosenberg, Kenneth, et al, Decline of North American Avifauna, Science, Vol 366, issue 6461, 19 September 2019, <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aaw1313>

² <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L3575309>

³ <https://www.tdworld.com/vegetation-management/article/20972794/manage-row-habitat-and-reliability>


⁴ Wagner, David, et al. Vegetation composition along a New England transmission line corridor and its implications for other trophic levels, Forest Ecology and

Insect species, many of which use grassland/meadow habitats, are also in steep declines, with profound negative effects on agricultural production as our pollinators decline.⁵ Among those declining pollinator species is the iconic Monarch butterfly, which has been declared endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.⁶

The bill would also result in savings in man-hours and fewer gallons of fuel to power the mowers. This should reduce the utility companies' maintenance expenses, as well as air pollution emissions.

Meadow/grassland and early successional habitats are vital to many declining pollinator and bird species. HB0062 will increase that habitat, to the benefit of those species. MOS supports this bill and request the Economic Matters Committee issue a favorable report.

Sincerely,



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⁵ Forister, ML, Pelton, EM, Black, SH. Declines in insect abundance and diversity: We know enough to act now. *Conservation Science and Practice*. 2019; 1:e80. <https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.80>

⁶ <https://www.iucn.org/press-release/202207/migratory-monarch-butterfly-now-endangered-iucn-red-list>