

THERE IS A HERITAGE CONSERVATION FUND IN THE DEPARTMENT.

5-1502.

{A} THE PURPOSES OF THE HERITAGE CONSERVATION FUND ARE FOR THE STATE TO ACQUIRE CONSERVATION EASEMENTS OR A FEE SIMPLE OR OTHER INTERESTS IN:

- (1) FORESTLANDS;
- (2) UNIQUE ECOLOGICAL AREAS OF THE STATE;
- (3) ANY AREA CHARACTERIZED BY SIGNIFICANT NATURAL SCENIC BEAUTY;
- (4) TIDAL OR NONTIDAL WETLANDS;
- (5) LANDS IN THE CHESAPEAKE BAY CRITICAL AREAS, AS DEFINED UNDER § 8-1807 OF THIS ARTICLE;
- (6) ANY LAND DESIGNATED AS A UNIQUE ECOLOGICAL AREA UNDER THE NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM IN THE DEPARTMENT;
- (7) ANY WILDERNESS AREA THAT REMAINS RELATIVELY UNDISTURBED BY HUMAN ENCROACHMENT;
- (8) LANDS SUPPORTING RARE, THREATENED, OR ENDANGERED PLANTS OR ANIMALS;
- (9) LANDS THAT SUPPORT DIVERSE ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES OF PLANTS OR ANIMALS;
- (10) ANY LAND WHOSE CONVERSION TO DEVELOPMENT WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT WATER QUALITY OR UNIQUE NATURAL HABITAT; AND
- (11) NATURAL AREAS THAT HAVE BEEN DESIGNATED BY THE STATE OR SUBMITTED BY A COUNTY FOR DESIGNATION AS AREAS OF CRITICAL STATE CONCERN UNDER § 5-611 OF THE STATE FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT ARTICLE.

~~{B}--THE-DEPARTMENT-MAY-USE-THE-HERITAGE--CONSERVATION--FUND TO-MAKE-GRANTS-TO-THE-MARYLAND-AGRICULTURAL-PRESERVATION-FUND-~~

5-1503.

(A) THE DEPARTMENT MAY ACQUIRE A CONSERVATION EASEMENT OR A FEE SIMPLE OR OTHER INTEREST IN ANY LAND DESCRIBED UNDER § 5-1502 OF THIS SUBTITLE.

(B) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ESTABLISH CRITERIA FOR ACQUISITION OF CONSERVATION EASEMENTS AND OF FEE SIMPLE AND OTHER INTERESTS IN LANDS, INCLUDING A PRIORITY SYSTEM THAT CONSIDERS:

- (1) THE ECOLOGICAL UNIQUENESS OF THE LAND;