

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment**Testimony on: SB517 – “Port of Deposit State Historical Park - Included Areas”****Position: Oppose****Hearing Date: February 15, 2023**

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club opposes SB517 “Port of Deposit State Historical Park - Included Areas”. This bill would take the historic waterfront Tome School land out of the Port of Deposit Historical Park. The Park was established last year with the enactment of the Maryland parks bill – the Great Maryland Outdoors Act (Senate Bill 541). The Sierra Club Maryland was a strong proponent of that bill through testimony and advocacy.

The Park has energized the town and is considered beneficial to the local community through ecotourism.¹ Community meetings and plans such as an environmental mural are underway.



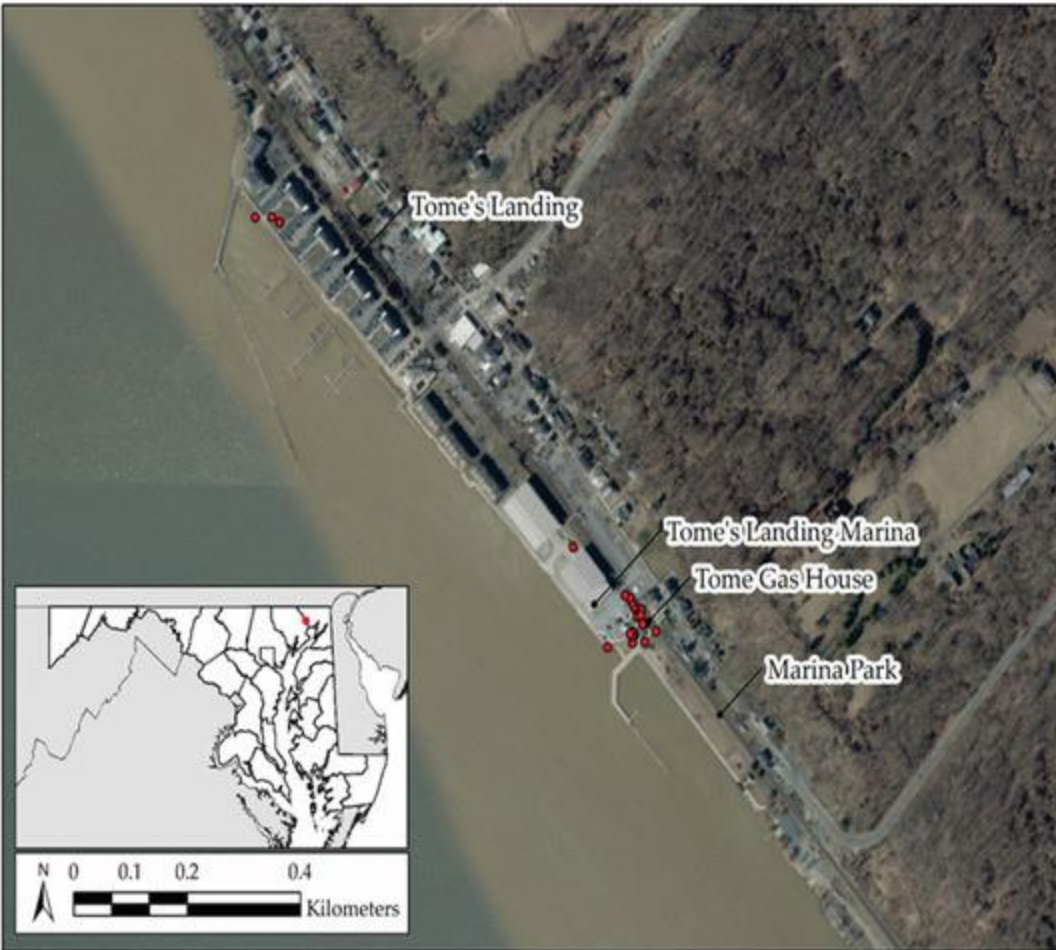
[Historic Tome Gas House on Susquehanna River](#)

In addition, Northern Map Turtles are listed as endangered in Maryland², and population estimates in a biology journal suggest a maximum of about 250–300 adults between the Pennsylvania state line and the mouth of the Susquehanna River.³ With such a small total

¹ https://www.cecildaily.com/news/del-hornberger-explains-port-of-deposit-state-park/article_1f13a0be-7174-5d1f-864c-8c08ed6147db.html

² Maryland State Highway Administration (2016). [Research Report: Effectiveness of Nest Site Restoration for the Northern Map Turtle.](#)

³ Durkin, B.P.; Richards-Dimitrie, T.M.; Anderson, K.P.; Howell, H.J.; Seigel, R.A. [High Conservation Value of an Urban Population of a State-Endangered Turtle.](#) *Diversity* 2022, 14, 354. <https://doi.org/10.3390/d14050354>



[Aerial view of Port Deposit, MD. Red dots show active nesting areas.](#)

population, successful reproduction of the turtles is critical, and Port of Deposit is a nesting site. It would be a huge loss to the state if this endangered species were harmed.

Due to the economic, historical, and environmental importance of the site, we urge maintaining the intent of the Parks bill in preserving the waterfront site. Given the human and wildlife benefits, Tome School is more valuable to the state as part of the Port of Deposit Park as originally visualized. We urge an unfavorable report on SB517.

Lily Fountain
Chair, Natural Places Committee
Lily.Fountain@MDSierra.org

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org