

# SUPPORT HB309

Topic: Establishing the Forest Conservation Act

Bill Patron: Delegate Patrick Hope

## OVERVIEW:

The Forest Conservation Act requests the Department of Forestry to assess the health of Virginia's forests, to determine how many acres are healthy and how many acres are at risk and why. Are we losing forests to increased development, invasive species, browsing, road constructions, energy infrastructure, etc. A baseline assessment would the state to identify trends and consider programs and funding to ensure Virginia protects its natural resources. The assessment would also identify where the Commonwealth can reconnect forest fragments and identify opportunities for further conservation efforts.

Of primary interest are areas adjacent to streams or wetlands, those on steep or erodible soils or those within or adjacent to large contiguous blocks of forest or wildlife corridors.

## Reasons to support HB309

Virginia continues to lose tree canopy, including intact forests, at an astounding rate. Forest loss hinders the state's ability to improve water quality, reduce flooding and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Intact forests not only provide habitat for wildlife, but also act as sponges, filtering water and slowing runoff into our streams, which reduces erosion and sediment in our waterways.



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CONSERVATION  
NETWORK**

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This position was taken by Virginia Conservation Network (VCN)'s Legislative Committee and Board of Directors and is supported by Virginia's conservation community. For a complete list of VCN positions, visit [www.vcnva.org/bill-tracker](http://www.vcnva.org/bill-tracker). VCN is committed to building a powerful, diverse, and highly-coordinated conservation movement focused on protecting our Commonwealth's natural resources today and for tomorrow.