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Letters to the Editor

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Free state's turtles from commercial sale

The Department of Natural Resources' failure to protect the diamondback terrapin against commercial over-exploitation is consistent with its historic bias in favor of the interests of a small number of commercial fishermen over conservation and the interests of other stakeholders ("Free the turtle," editorial, Jan. 29),

The commercial taking of terrapins is essentially unregulated.

They are not listed under Maryland law as a species for which DNR is required to have a fisheries management plan that incorporates a scientific assessment of its population size and health.

When harvest data are self-reported by the fishing industry, as they are in the case of the terrapin, the data are generally acknowledged to be underreported. And there is no independent source of data on the terrapin harvest on which to rely.

The state's recently reorganized Natural Resources Police have fewer officers on the water and expanded responsibilities, so adequate enforcement of regulations is difficult.

The diamondback terrapin should be declared a no-sale species in Maryland, as it is in Virginia.

Surely there are loyal Maryland Terrapin fans in the General Assembly who would sponsor legislation to protect their mascot in its native habitat.

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