

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2011 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 292

(Delegate Minnick, *et al.*)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Hart-Miller-Pleasure Island Citizens Oversight Committee - Duties

This bill alters the duties of the Hart-Miller-Pleasure Island Citizens Oversight Committee to include monitoring, providing oversight, and hearing and disposing of complaints regarding the future development, use, and maintenance of the Hart-Miller-Pleasure Island chain and the water quality surrounding the island chain.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not directly affect State operations or finances.

Local Effect: The bill does not directly affect local operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: The oversight committee is currently charged with monitoring the redeposit of spoil and Baltimore County tributary spoil within five miles of the Hart-Miller-Pleasure Island chain and hearing and disposing of complaints from those affected by the redeposit of this spoil. "Redeposit" is defined as dumping, scattering, pouring, or otherwise depositing dredged material.

The oversight committee consists of members appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. These members include individuals from a number of local community groups, local environmental and business interests, and two trustees of the Maryland Environmental Trust.

The General Assembly has declared the Hart-Miller-Pleasure Island chain an “open area,” meaning an area characterized by great natural scenic beauty, or whose existing openness, natural condition, and present state of use, if retained, would enhance the present or potential value of abutting or surrounding urban development, or maintain or enhance the conservation of natural or scenic resources.

Background: According to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Hart-Miller Island State Park (HMI) was acquired by the State in 1977 with a plan to restore the island chain. At that time it consisted of the three separate islands that comprised about 250 acres of land. Pleasure Island, the closest to the mainland, was privately developed in the late 1940s as New Bay Shore, an amusement park accessible from the mainland via a wooden bridge. However over the years, New Bay Shore was badly damaged by several storms and finally closed when the bridge washed out in the mid-1960s.

The restoration plan called for dredged material to be pumped into an impounded area on HMI, which would eventually be made part of the park. The plan was implemented under a partnership between DNR, the Maryland Department of the Environment, the Maryland Port Administration, the Maryland Environmental Service, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. As the land reclamation project began, the existing land area of the island chain also underwent development for use by park attendees and for scientific survey of the vast array of bird species there. Due in part to the results of these ornithological surveys, restoration planners decided in the late 1990s that the restored islands, now 244 acres in area, would be best used as a natural habitat in addition to the State park.

Placement of dredged material was completed on HMI in 2010 and final restoration plans have been expedited to finish redevelopment of HMI as early as 2016. Currently, the park consists of hiking trails, campsites, picnic facilities, fishing opportunities, and a sandy beach.

According to DNR, the oversight committee has been an integral part of the restoration of HMI and will continue in this role as efforts are redirected under the bill from placement of dredged materials to final restoration of HMI to a public recreational resource.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 368 (Senator Stone) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Department of the Environment, Department of Legislative Services

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mlm/lgc

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