

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2013 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 936

(Delegate S. Robinson, *et al.*)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Natural Resources - Maryland Botanical Heritage Workgroup

This bill establishes the Maryland Botanical Heritage Workgroup. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) must provide staff for the workgroup. The workgroup must submit a report with its findings and recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly by December 31, 2013.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2013, and terminates May 31, 2014.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: DNR special fund expenditures increase by \$16,100 in FY 2013 and \$42,500 in FY 2014 for two contractual positions. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
SF Expenditure	16,100	42,500	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$16,100)	(\$42,500)	\$0	\$0	\$0

Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate effect

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill requires the workgroup to:

- define challenges to the preservation of plant species native to the State and region, including insufficient prevention or control of biological invasions, habitat fragmentation, and lack of data on species loss;
- explore opportunities for improving the preservation of native plant species, including (1) incorporating advances in biology, information systems, social networks, resilient systems theory, marketing, education, and technological innovation; (2) providing extension-style support for citizens seeking to be good stewards of botanical heritage; and (3) developing best examples of botanical conservation programs in other jurisdictions; and
- make recommendations regarding the preservation of native plant species, including establishing botanical conservation goals, collecting conservation data, addressing regulatory opportunities and obstacles, promoting a profitable native plant and seed trade in the State, and identifying revenue sources to fund implementation of the workgroup's recommendations.

Members of the workgroup may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the standard State travel regulations.

Current Law/Background: The primary State law that authorizes and governs the listing of endangered species is the Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act. Currently, there are 345 plants listed as threatened or endangered. In addition, DNR's Wildlife and Heritage Service tracks the status of 787 plants of conservation concern, including the listed species. There are approximately 2,300 species of native vascular plant flora in the State.

The Wildlife and Heritage Service, with assistance from other staff and partners, conducts numerous projects to assess populations of native plant species that may warrant listing protection and conducts various conservation, restoration, and preservation projects to maintain or improve the status of the State's listed threatened or endangered plant species.

DNR employs one full-time botanist, called the State Botanist, to coordinate conservation efforts for rare, threatened, and endangered plant species in the State. Four other classified biologists spend a portion of their time working on the conservation of rare, threatened, and endangered plant species in the State.

State Expenditures: DNR special fund expenditures increase by \$16,069 in fiscal 2013 and \$42,491 in fiscal 2014 to hire two full-time specialized contractual staff to conduct DNR's ongoing botanical operations and conservation work in order to free up existing staff to handle the bill's requirements. A portion of the workload of existing DNR staff is redirected to coordinate workgroup meetings, conduct research, and develop the required report within the seven-month period.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 27, 2013
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