

Article - Natural Resources

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§1–201.

The General Assembly finds that:

(1) The consumptive nature of an expanding population poses a clear and present threat to the long-term viability of the fisheries and wildlife of the State;

(2) An increased understanding by citizens of the intrinsic value of the fisheries and wildlife of the State will help to ensure the perpetuation of these coveted natural resources for the benefit of future generations;

(3) The responsibility for protecting the natural resources of the State is vested in the Natural Resources Police Force within the Department;

(4) Budgetary reductions attributable to a lingering economic recession have reduced the number of conservation law enforcement personnel to the measurable detriment of the natural resources of the State;

(5) Entrusting the enforcement of State conservation laws to the Natural Resources Police Force, coupled with increasing the homeland security responsibilities of the Natural Resources Police Force, requires an investment that is commensurate with the level of protection the public considers appropriate;

(6) A diminishing enforcement presence on land and on the waterways correlates to an increasing number of violations of State conservation laws and an erosion of the protections afforded to citizens by the public trust doctrine, which sets forth the responsibility of the government to administer, protect, manage, and conserve fish and wildlife; and

(7) The prevalence of violations of State conservation laws presents a significant problem that warrants an enhanced investment in conservation law enforcement by:

(i) Increasing the presence of Natural Resources Police Force personnel on land and on the waterways through the use of present and future revenue sources; and

(ii) Ensuring that the Natural Resources Police Force is properly equipped with the equipment, vehicles, and boats necessary to comply with its statutory mandate.

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