

Department of Legislative Services  
 Maryland General Assembly  
 2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
 Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 1358

(Delegate Ruff, *et al.*)

Environment and Transportation and  
 Appropriations

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Natural Resources - Gwynns Falls State Park - Focus Group, Advisory  
 Committee, and Report

This bill requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Baltimore City to (1) convene focus group meetings on the establishment of the Gwynn Falls State Park with community members and stakeholders that reside or operate in the vicinity of the proposed State park; (2) develop a list of priority needs and associated cost assessments for park operations and improvements, as specified; and (3) establish a specified stakeholder advisory committee to advise DNR and Baltimore City on the scope and management of the park. A related reporting requirement is established. **The bill takes effect June 1, 2024.**

Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** No effect in FY 2024. General/special fund expenditures increase by as much as \$70,000 in FY 2025 and by as much as \$30,000 in FY 2026, as discussed below. Revenues are not directly affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF/SF Exp.	0	70,000	30,000	0	0
Net Effect	\$0	(\$70,000)	(\$30,000)	\$0	\$0

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

**Local Effect:** Baltimore City did not respond to repeated requests for information regarding this fiscal and policy note. However, it is assumed that Baltimore City can work with DNR to implement the bill using existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not directly affected.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal or none.

## Analysis

**Bill Summary:** The list of priority needs and associated cost assessments for park operations and improvements must include (1) capital improvements; (2) critical maintenance; (3) enhanced natural resource management and restoration, including the implementation of a biohabitats study; (4) historic site restoration; (5) enhanced outdoor recreation amenities, including trail improvements; (6) adding park staff and procuring equipment and supplies; and (7) law enforcement and public safety.

By December 1, 2025, DNR must submit a report to the General Assembly on (1) property owned by the State in Baltimore City that is suitable for inclusion in the park; (2) property owned by Baltimore City or a nonprofit organization in Baltimore City that is suitable for inclusion in the park and for which the landowners are willing to enter into a partnership agreement; and (3) the funding needed to establish and promote Gwynns Falls State Park.

**Current Law:** Pursuant to DNR regulations, the State park system is administered under the jurisdiction of the Maryland Park Service to preserve and protect the best of Maryland's natural and historic places for the enjoyment and appreciation of its citizens. The parks are managed to provide public benefits, including (1) natural resource conservation; (2) cultural and historic preservation; (3) watershed protection; (4) education and interpretation; and (5) nature-based outdoor recreation, including trails, picnicking, boating, camping, cabins, hunting, fishing, and swimming.

DNR is authorized to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with a local government, bicounty agency, or nonprofit organization to establish a "partnership park" in the State and to enter into a partnership agreement with a local government, bicounty agency, or nonprofit organization to manage a partnership park in the State. "Partnership park" means a unit of the State park system managed by DNR in partnership with a local government, a bicounty agency, or a nonprofit organization.

**State Expenditures:** DNR advises that it can work with Baltimore City to implement most of the bill's requirements using existing budgeted resources; however, if a significant level of detail is required for the list of priority needs and associated cost assessments that DNR and Baltimore City are required to develop, DNR may need to hire a consultant to assist with that effort. If a consultant is needed, DNR advises that related costs are estimated to total no more than \$100,000.

This analysis assumes that there is no effect in fiscal 2024 (despite the bill's June 1, 2024 effective date). Based on the information provided by DNR regarding the potential need to hire a consultant, it is assumed that, due to the December 1, 2025 reporting deadline, general/special fund expenditures increase by as much as \$70,000 in fiscal 2025 and by as much as \$30,000 in fiscal 2026.

Even though the bill does not terminate, there are no ongoing requirements once the report has been submitted. Therefore, it is assumed that the bill does not directly affect State expenditures beyond fiscal 2026.

**Additional Comments:** To the extent DNR enters into an MOU to establish the park as a partnership park (and any partnership agreement to manage the partnership park) – as it is authorized to do under current law – State and local finances are further affected. Any such effects are not addressed in this analysis.

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### **Additional Information**

**Recent Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

**Designated Cross File:** SB 1183 (Senator Carter)(By Request - Baltimore City Administration) - Education, Energy, and the Environment.

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

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 4, 2024  
km/lgc Third Reader - April 1, 2024  
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