

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 300

(Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee)(By Request - Departmental - Natural
Resources)

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Environment and Transportation

Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Belt Woods Wildland

This departmental bill authorizes the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to authorize within the Belt Woods Wildland (1) archeological inventories, studies, and research that involve surface examination or limited subsurface sampling; (2) salvage and excavation of archeological sites; and (3) stabilization and restoration of historic structures existing as of December 1, 1985. Any such authorization may only take place with prior approval of the Maryland Historical Trust and after an internal departmental review. In addition, prior to undertaking any activities on the Seton Belt Barn, DNR must consult with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC).

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is anticipated to be handled with existing budgeted resources, as discussed below.

Local Effect: M-NCPPC can consult with DNR using existing resources. The bill does not otherwise directly affect local government operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: DNR has determined that this bill has minimal or no impact on small business (attached). The Department of Legislative Services concurs with this assessment. (The attached assessment does not reflect amendments to the bill.)

Analysis

Current Law/Background: There is a State wildlands preservation system established in statute for the purpose of securing for the people of present and future generations the

benefits of an enduring resource of State wildlands. “Wildlands” are defined as limited areas of land or water that have retained their wilderness character, although not necessarily completely natural and undisturbed, or have rare or vanishing species of plant or animal life or similar features of interest worthy of preservation for use of present and future residents of the State.

One such wildland specified for preservation is the [Belt Woods Wildland](#) located in Prince George’s County. Within the wildland, DNR has been planning a project to preserve two historical structures. The first, the Calvert Barn, is estimated to have been built in 1825 as a tidewater tobacco barn; DNR advises that it is among the largest early 19th century tobacco barns in the county, if not the State. The second, the Seton Belt Barn, is estimated to have been built between 1890 and 1900; DNR advises that, due to its location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, it may be eligible for listing under the National Register of Historic Places. Both barns, however, are in need of significant repair.

DNR advises that, on the advice of the Office of the Attorney General, it is *not* authorized to use motorized or mechanized equipment within the wildland to preserve historical structures. Under current law, DNR is limited to using mechanical or motorized equipment only for reforestation and the removal of existing structures and debris. As a result, DNR has been unable to move forward with the preservation project. The bill is intended to provide DNR with the authority it needs to move forward with the project.

State Expenditures: As noted above, the bill allows DNR to move forward with a previously planned project to restore the two barns within the Belt Woods Wildland. DNR estimates the total project cost at approximately \$1.2 million. DNR advises that funding for the project was appropriated in a prior fiscal year and is still available for DNR to use under the bill. Accordingly, DNR can implement the bill using existing budgeted resources.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources; Maryland Department of Planning; Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 29, 2024
km/lgc Third Reader - March 20, 2024
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ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC IMPACT ON SMALL BUSINESSES

TITLE OF BILL: Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Belt Woods Wildland

BILL NUMBER: SB 300

PREPARED BY: LeeAnne Chandler

PART A. ECONOMIC IMPACT RATING

This agency estimates that the proposed bill:

WILL HAVE MINIMAL OR NO ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MARYLAND SMALL BUSINESS

OR

WILL HAVE MEANINGFUL ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MARYLAND SMALL BUSINESSES

PART B. ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

The change will enable the Department to move forward with a stabilization project on two barns at Belt Woods. The project will be bid out via DGS on eMaryland Marketplace and may provide an opportunity for a small business to bid on all or a portion of the work. However, it does not change the law in a way that would impact small businesses in an ongoing manner, either positively or negatively.