

Department of Fiscal Services  
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE

Senate Bill 451 (Senator Colburn)  
Economic and Environmental Affairs

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**Forest Conservation Law - Exemption for Certain Local Jurisdictions**

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This bill exempts 17 counties from the requirements of the Forest Conservation Act. Of these counties, Garrett and Allegany counties are already exempt due to having over 200,000 acres of land area in forest cover. The six counties not exempted under the bill are: Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Indeterminate decrease in special fund revenues, with a commensurate decrease in special fund expenditures.

**Local Effect:** Indeterminate decrease in revenues and expenditures.

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**Fiscal Analysis**

**Background:** The Forest Conservation Act provides that before an application for sediment and erosion control or subdivision is approved, a forest conservation plan must be approved for the site. This plan identifies and protects any forests located in sensitive areas on the site, including stream buffers, steep slopes, and floodplains. The forest conservation plan also provides for forest retention on the site consistent with the established land use; or through payment made into a local fund for reforesting sensitive areas.

**State Effect:** In localities that do not have a forest conservation plan, the State oversees these activities. Special fund revenues due to reforestation payments made by developers would decrease by an indeterminate amount; expenditures made on reforestation activities would decrease by the same amount. There would be a decrease in workload at the Department of Natural Resources due to a decrease in reviewing such activities; however, it is expected that any freed resources would be dedicated to other forestry activities.

**Local Effect:** In jurisdictions with a local forest conservation program, revenues due to reforestation payments made by developers would decrease by an indeterminate amount; expenditures made on reforestation activities would decrease by the same amount. There would be a decrease in workload due to a decrease in reviewing such activities, however, it is expected that in some counties any freed resources would be dedicated to other forestry or permitting activities. In other counties with dedicated personnel, local expenditures could potentially decrease by \$20,000 to \$65,000. For instance, Carroll County reports that eliminating the program would save \$60,000 annually. Revenues could decrease by an indeterminate but minimal amount due to the elimination of review fees for certain permits.

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**Information Source(s):** Department of Natural Resources, Carroll County, Department of Fiscal Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 16, 1996

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