

**Department of Fiscal Services**  
Maryland General Assembly

**FISCAL NOTE**

Senate Bill 443 (Senator Hafer)  
Economic and Environmental Affairs

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**Wildlife Advisory Commission - Membership and Authority**

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This bill increases the number of members on the Wildlife Advisory Commission from 9 to 13 and specifies membership requirements and terms. The commission is required to approve regulations governing angling or hunting in the State before the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) may submit any such regulations for adoption. The commission must also approve any activities other than hunting in a wildlife management area or State forest. DNR must conduct public informational meetings during the process of adopting regulations concerning wildlife and nontidal fish.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Potential increase in special fund expenditures; revenues would not be affected.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** Potential meaningful impact on small businesses as discussed below.

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**Fiscal Analysis**

**State Effect:** Requiring that the Wildlife Advisory Commission approve all regulations concerning hunting and fishing could add an indeterminate amount of time to the regulatory process. DNR reports that it currently takes at least 144 days to promulgate a regulation through the permanent regulatory process. In addition, the commission would have veto power over regulations. This could affect the department's ability to pass regulations in accordance with interstate compacts. The fiscal impact of such effects cannot be determined at this time.

Increasing the Wildlife Advisory Commission from 9 to 13 members would result in a minimal expenditure increase. Commission members are reimbursed for expenses under the

standard State travel regulations. Any such expenditures depend upon the time, location, and frequency of the commission's meetings. Expenses are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing agency resources. However, changing the commission from an advisory to a regulatory body could significantly impact the number of meetings that would be held, and the staffing requirements for the commission by the department. This could increase expenditures by an indeterminate amount.

The bill also requires public informational meetings during the process of adopting regulations regarding to fish and wildlife. DNR advises that it already conducts some public hearings during the regulatory process. Because the bill could require more frequent hearings as the regulations are being developed, there could be a minimal increase in expenditures associated with the public hearing process.

**Small Business Effect:** Under this bill, the Wildlife Advisory Commission would have to approve all regulations concerning hunting and fishing. Small businesses directly and indirectly connected with these activities could be impacted through this requirement. This would include businesses such as those that lead hunting and fishing expeditions, bait and tackle or sports shops, and commercial seafood harvesters and processors.

How these businesses would be impacted would depend upon the type and extent of alterations to regulations that might occur due to the commission's regulatory oversight. Should seasons or bag limits be increased through this process, small businesses could benefit, at least in the short term. However, should these limits be further restricted for any reason, this could negatively impact these businesses. In addition, the need for commission approval could extend the time period for approving regulations in certain instances; this could have a definite impact on small businesses.

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

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 19, 1997

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