

Department of Fiscal Services  
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 745 (St. Mary's County Delegation)  
Environmental Matters

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**St. Mary's County - Crab Harvesting - Prohibition on  
Use of Bank Traps and Channel Pounds**

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This bill prohibits an individual from harvesting crabs with a bank trap or channel pound in St. Mary's County.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** None. This bill would not directly affect State finances.

**Local Effect:** None. St. Mary's County government finances would not be affected.

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

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**Fiscal Analysis**

**Background:** Waterfront development in St. Mary's County has increased conflicts between property owners and crabbers using bank traps. A bank trap is a large trap that has a fence attached running up to the shoreline; it is also set up out of the water so as to minimize incidence of turtle or other air-breathing animals drowning in the traps.

Property owners object to these traps located in the water off their properties; however, the water is State property and the use of crabbing devices in State waters is regulated by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). DNR promulgated regulations last year to limit the locations in St. Mary's County where these traps might be placed.

Channel pounds are larger versions of bank traps with two fences attached; however, they are predominately used in Virginia and not in Maryland.

**Small Business Effect:** Under this bill, crab harvesters would not be able to use bank traps or channel pounds in St. Mary's County. Data collected in 1995 by DNR indicates that 24 crab

harvesters used bank traps in the waters of St. Mary's County, and reported landing approximately 38,000 pounds. The dockside value of hard-shell crabs averaged \$.85 per pound and the dockside value of soft-shell crabs averaged \$3.30 per pound. The data did not break down the portions of hard-shell and soft-shell crabs harvested; the total value of the harvest was between \$32,300 and \$125,400.

Crabbers under this bill could use alternative means such as crab pots or trot lines. However, these devices are not as effective in catching the more valuable soft-shell crabs (peelers).

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

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 17, 1997

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