

Department of Fiscal Services
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 725 (Senators Dyson and Stoltzfus)

Economic and Environmental Affairs

Referred to Environmental Matters

Natural Resources - Commercial Fishing - Apprenticeship

This amended bill requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to establish a commercial fishing apprenticeship. An applicant must obtain an apprentice license from DNR before beginning an apprenticeship; DNR can set application fees for the program. DNR may not issue an apprentice license to any individual under 15 years of age.

An apprentice must complete the following practical experience requirements:

- 75 days of labor as a commercial fisherman for three consecutive seasons per catch harvest species; or
- 3 years of documented time as a commercial fishing guide in addition to obtaining a Coast Guard license.

Each apprentice must keep validated logs of practical experience. Upon completion of the apprenticeship DNR must immediately issue to the apprentice a commercial tidal fishing license; DNR may not place the individual on the waiting lists. Up to two years of the practical experience requirement may be waived by DNR; the applicant must have three years of related experience since December 31, 1980 for each year waived. DNR must establish an advisory board to review evidence and make recommendations to DNR on the sufficiency of evidence of an apprentice's prior experience.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Indeterminate increase in special fund revenues; minimal increase in special fund expenditures.

Local Effect: None.

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

Fiscal Analysis

State Effect: Under the bill, DNR would be able to set an application fee for prospective apprentices. It is assumed that this fee would be set at an amount sufficient to offset all administrative expenditures associated with the program, such as form printing and processing. The amount of such expenditures and fee revenues depends upon the number of applicants for the program, which cannot be reliably estimated at this time, although these expenditures are assumed to be minimal.

Special fund revenues would also increase due to the bill's requirement that qualified individuals be issued a commercial tidal fishing license without being put on the waiting list. Fees associated with these licenses can range from \$50 to \$300 per person, depending upon the type of gear and harvest. However, it is not known at this time how many people would qualify immediately to receive such a license, and how many would choose to apply as an apprentice and would qualify to receive such a license in two to three years.

Small Business Effect: This bill would directly impact those individuals who would qualify immediately for commercial tidal fishing licenses, as well as those who will go through an apprenticeship program. These individuals could engage in commercial fishing activity, presumably as small businesses. Businesses such as bait and tackle providers, fuel sellers, and seafood wholesalers could also benefit from this increase in activity.

Existing license holders would be negatively impacted by increased competition for the same resource. Some license holders may benefit, however, to the extent that they realize an increased labor pool of individuals willing to crew commercial fishing vessels while undergoing an apprenticeship.

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

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Analysis by: Kim E. Wells-McDonnell

Reviewed by: John Rixey

Direct Inquiries to:

John Rixey, Coordinating Analyst
(410) 841-3710
(301) 858-3710