

Department of Fiscal Services
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE
Revised

House Bill 416 (Delegate McClenahan, *et al.*)

Environmental Matters

Referred to Economic & Environmental Affairs

Natural Resources - Crabbing

This amended bill prohibits the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) from adopting regulations to restrict the number of crab pots a person may set or to restrict the crab season once it has begun. DNR can propose emergency regulations to make these changes in the event of a natural disaster.

The bill is effective June 1, 1997.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill would not directly affect State finances.

Local Effect: None.

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

Fiscal Analysis

Small Business Effect: During fiscal 1995, 6,646 individuals held commercial crabbing licenses; of these, only 60% reported harvesting crabs during the season. Almost all of the license holders represent small businesses rather than larger commercial ventures.

Under the terms of this bill, further restrictions on pots or harvest dates could not be imposed by DNR once the season has begun (except in the case of a natural disaster). For instance, during 1995 emergency regulations were put in place that restricted the season by approximately six weeks. Since this action took place after the season had started, it would not be allowed under the bill. This bill could have an immediate positive impact on crabbing

industry members. The exact benefit to crab harvesters from this bill cannot be estimated at this time however, as the probability of future DNR restrictions cannot be determined, and the harvest amounts and price tend to vary over time. On the other hand, restricting the department's ability to regulate harvests could potentially result in overharvesting of the resource that could detrimentally impact industry members in the long term.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 31, 1997
brd Revised - House Third Reader - March 17, 1997

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