

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE
Revised

House Bill 524 (St. Mary's County Delegation)
Environmental Matters

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

This bill prohibits a person from harvesting crabs with a bank trap or channel pound in St. Mary's County after October 1, 2000.

The bill also requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to conduct a one-year study on the impacts of bank traps and the effectiveness and enforcement of current bank trap regulations. DNR is required to report its findings to the House Environmental Matters Committee and the Senate Economic and Environmental Affairs Committee by December 1, 1999 and make recommendations as to whether the prohibition on the use of bank traps and channel pounds in St. Mary's county should be repealed.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. This bill's reporting requirements could be handled with DNR's existing resources.

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

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful impact on small businesses.

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 in 1996 to limit the locations in St. Mary's County where these traps might be placed and to allow landowners to place a stake in their riparian area to prevent others from using bank traps or channel pounds in the riparian area.

Small Business Effect: DNR estimates that approximately 25 crab harvesters used bank traps in the waters of St. Mary's County, and reported landing approximately 57,000 pounds. The total value of the harvest of hard shell and soft shell crabs was approximately \$90,000.

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).

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources, St. Mary's County, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 5, 1998
tncs Revised - House Third Reader - April 6, 1998

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