

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2000 Session

FISCAL NOTE

Senate Bill 542 (Senator McCabe. *et al.*)

Economic and Environmental Affairs

Task Force to Study the Development of a Statewide Drought Relief Plan

This bill establishes a ten-member Task Force to Study the Development of a Statewide Drought Relief Plan. It describes the composition of the task force, requires the task force to meet at least once per month, and requires the task force to: (1) develop a long range drought emergency plan for the State; (2) conduct public hearings regarding the current and proposed procedures followed and restrictions imposed by the State in a drought emergency; (3) develop a procedure to be followed by the State in the event of a drought emergency; (4) develop a procedure for use when drought emergency restrictions are in place that would allow for waivers under specific circumstances; and (5) generally study the issues regarding drought emergencies within the State. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) must coordinate with other State agencies to provide staffing for the task force, and the task force must submit a final report to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before March 1, 2001.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2000, and sunsets on June 30, 2001.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any expense reimbursements for task force members and staffing costs for DNR are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: No such task force exists.

Background: In August 1999, the Governor imposed mandatory water-use restrictions during the region's worst drought in decades. Because many residents, businesses, and local governments believed that the restrictions were too severe, the Governor recently created two advisory committees by executive order to develop a long-range approach to water conservation. Among other things, the committees would set standards for evaluating drought conditions, recommend ways to plan for droughts in order to avoid emergency declarations, and study what steps may be necessary to promote water conservation.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources, Associated Press, Department of Legislative Services

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