

Department of Legislative Services  
 Maryland General Assembly  
 2000 Session

FISCAL NOTE  
 Revised

House Bill 1254 (Delegate Weir. *et al.*)

Environmental Matters

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**Natural Resources - Submerged Aquatic Vegetation - Recreational Watercraft**

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This bill requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to establish a program to study the impact of recreational watercraft activities on submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) beds in the Chesapeake Bay and coastal bays. The study must evaluate the direct impact of recreational watercraft activities on the ecological value of SAV beds and evaluate the effectiveness of DNR’s activities designed to minimize the impact on SAV habitats. DNR must designate a minimum of three separate SAV habitats with a specified maximum depth to be included in the study and must mark each designated area with buoys. DNR may adopt regulations to implement the bill. DNR must report the results of the study to the Governor and the General Assembly by January 1, 2003.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2000 and sunsets September 30, 2003.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** General fund expenditure increase of \$47,700 in FY 2001 to implement the study. Future year expenditures are adjusted for inflation and reflect ongoing operating expenses. Because DNR must submit the results of the study by January 1, 2003, no expenditures are anticipated after that date. No effect on revenues.

(in dollars)	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005
GF Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditures	47,700	35,500	21,600	0	0
Net Effect	(\$47,700)	(\$35,500)	(\$21,600)	\$0	\$0

Note: ( ) = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - =indeterminate effect

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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## Analysis

**Current Law:** DNR may authorize or prohibit the removal or eradication of any species of SAV for any purpose, including facilitation of boating access. Before a person may harvest, cut, or otherwise remove or eradicate SAV from any land under the tidal waters of the State below the mean high tide, the person must obtain approval from DNR. DNR must delineate existing SAV beds not currently protected by using aerial surveys. Chapter 385 of 1998 prohibited the use of hydraulic clam dredges in SAV beds because it was evident that those dredges, used for the commercial harvest of several clam species, were causing significant damage to the SAV beds.

**Background:** SAV beds are ecologically significant habitats that are essential for maintaining healthy fish and shellfish populations in the State. According to DNR, one of its primary goals is the restoration and protection of SAV beds. DNR currently reviews aerial surveys of the SAV beds annually to determine if revisions to existing delineations need to be made.

**State Expenditures:** General fund expenditures could increase by an estimated \$47,700 in fiscal 2001, which accounts for the bill's June 1, 2000 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring a part-time contractual natural resources statistician to perform the study. It includes salaries, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses including contractual services for aerial overflights. The information and assumptions used in calculating the estimate are stated below:

- DNR will designate three SAV habitats to study;
- DNR will purchase 20 buoys per site at \$105 each;
- DNR will purchase water quality measurement equipment at approximately \$6,000;
- the contractual employee will need a laptop computer; and
- DNR will contract out for two aerial overflights per site per year.

Salaries and Fringe Benefits	\$21,400
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Contractual Services	6,000
Equipment	18,300
Other Operating Expenses	<u>2,000</u>
<b>Total FY 2001 State Expenditures</b>	<b>\$47,700</b>

Future year expenditures reflect (1) a 2.4% annual salary increase; and (2) 1% annual increases in ongoing operating expenses, including buoy maintenance. Because DNR must submit the results of the study by January 1, 2003, no expenditures are anticipated after that date.

It is assumed that DNR could handle any expenditures in fiscal 2000 with existing budgeted resources.

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### Additional Information

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

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

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 14, 2000  
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