

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2000 Session

FISCAL NOTE

Senate Bill 538 (Senator Stoltzfus)

Economic and Environmental Affairs

Waters Contiguous to Somerset County - Power Dredging - Oysters

This bill adds specified additional areas in the waters contiguous to Somerset County where a person may catch oysters by power dredge during the power dredging season, November 1 through March 30. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is required to establish zones within the areas specified in the bill where power dredging is authorized. The bill also requires DNR to establish an oyster sanctuary of not less than 100 acres in one of those areas.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditure increase of \$4,000 annually beginning in FY 2001 to establish a new oyster sanctuary and update charts.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: DNR is required to establish zones by regulation within specified areas in the waters of the State that lie contiguous to Somerset County in which a person may catch oysters by power dredge during the power dredging season. The Secretary of Natural Resources through regulations must establish an oyster sanctuary of not less than 100 acres within the specified area in which power dredging is authorized. DNR may purchase oysters, at no less than market price from a person who has a power dredge license, to be transplanted for restoration purposes to the oyster sanctuary. A person may not catch oysters in the sanctuary.

Background: Power dredging in specified areas of Somerset County was permitted from 1983 to 1993. Chapter 576 of 1997 reinstated the former law permitting power dredging and established a sanctuary for oyster restoration projects. Chapter 580 of 1999 expanded the area in the waters of Somerset County where power dredging is permitted and authorized DNR to establish oyster sanctuaries by regulation.

State Fiscal Effect: It is assumed that existing Natural Resources Police (NRP) would be used to carry out the provisions of the bill, and that patrolling the new areas and the oyster sanctuary could be handled with existing resources. However, the NRP Hydrographic Section would need to purchase four new buoys annually to delineate the new sanctuary at a cost of \$1,000, and would spend approximately \$1,000 annually for chart materials to update existing charts. DNR will commit to spend approximately \$2,000 annually to purchase oysters for the development of the oyster population in the sanctuary. Accordingly, total general fund expenditures would increase by an estimated \$4,000 annually.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 23, 2000

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