

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2001 Session

**FISCAL NOTE**  
**Revised**

Senate Bill 174 (Senators Frosh and Stoltzfus)

Economic and Environmental Affairs

Environmental Matters

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**Task Force on Upgrading Sewerage Systems**

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This emergency bill establishes a 17-member task force to study the costs of upgrading sewerage systems in the State. The bill describes the composition and duties of the task force and authorizes the task force to establish criteria for a pilot program that would identify certain sewerage systems as priorities for upgrades and seek financial assistance for those upgrades. Members serve without compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State Travel Regulations. The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) must provide staff support for the task force. The task force must submit a final report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor, the Maryland Congressional Delegation, and the General Assembly by December 1, 2001.

The bill sunsets June 30, 2002.

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**Fiscal Summary**

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

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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## Analysis

**Current Law:** None applicable.

**Background:** When an underground sewer pipe gets blocked, or when a valve breaks, local governments must often divert raw sewage into a stream to prevent it from backing up into homes or overflowing into the streets. According to the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, sewage discharges are one of the leading causes of stream pollution in the country.

Aging sewerage systems and combined sewerage overflows in Maryland have discharged millions of gallons of raw sewage into the Chesapeake Bay's tributaries in recent months, resulting in the release of an unknown quantity of nutrients into the Chesapeake Bay. In September 2000, approximately 10.3 million gallons of raw sewage was spilled into Colgate Creek from a Dundalk pumping station due to a break in a 45-year old valve. Over 1.6 million gallons was poured into Jones Falls in September 2000 as runoff from heavy rains overwhelmed a sewer line under repair. In July 2000, over 4 million gallons of sewage was dumped into Jones Falls because of a blockage in the sewer line. These incidents followed another major spill in September 1999, in which approximately 24 million gallons of raw sewage spilled from a pumping station into Baltimore's Inner Harbor when heavy rainfall from a tropical storm flooded the facility.

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### Additional Information

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** HB 12 (Delegate Guns, *et al.*) - Environmental Matters.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Department of the Environment, U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader – January 23, 2001  
ef/cr Revised – Senate Third Reader – March 19, 2001

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