

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2002 Session

FISCAL NOTE
Revised

House Bill 662

(Delegate Klausmeier, *et al.*)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Task Force to Study the Economic Development of the Maryland Seafood and
Aquaculture Industries

This bill creates a Task Force to Study the Economic Development of the Maryland Seafood and Aquaculture Industries. The bill describes the composition and duties of the task force and requires the task force to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor, the General Assembly, the House Environmental Matters and Economic Matters committees, and the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee by September 30, 2004. The Department of Agriculture must provide the staff for the task force.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2002 and terminates September 30, 2004.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any expense reimbursements for task force members and staffing costs for the Department of Agriculture could be handled with existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The task force will consist of two workgroups, one focusing on the seafood industry and one focusing on the aquaculture industry. By September 30, 2004, each workgroup is to study specific aspects of the development of its respective industry and report on these aspects and related recommendations. An executive committee is established to oversee and coordinate the workgroups.

Current Law: There is no task force that studies the economic development of the Maryland seafood and aquaculture industries. The Seafood Marketing Authority and Division of Market Development, the Seafood Marketing Advisory Commission, and the Aquaculture Advisory Committee exist within the Department of Agriculture.

Background: Each year the Maryland seafood industry contributes an estimated \$400 million to the State's economy. Annual commercial landings have averaged 44.4 million pounds since 1990. Important commercial species in Maryland, besides blue crabs, include striped bass, oysters, soft clams, flounder, perch, spot, croaker, catfish, sea trout, and bluefish. Aquaculture Development and Seafood Marketing, a division within the Department of Agriculture, promotes increased distribution and consumption of Maryland seafood and also seeks to reduce its cost and improve its quality and marketability. The agency's Maryland Seafood Directory lists processors, wholesalers, distributors, and seafood market suppliers of seafood and aquaculture products.

Aquaculture is the farming of aquatic organisms in a controlled environment to produce items of economic significance. In Maryland aquaculture is an agricultural responsibility. Aquaculture crops in the State include hybrid striped bass, tilapia, catfish, trout, crawfish, oysters, and soft-shell crabs. The 1998 Census of Agriculture, prepared by the U.S. Department of Agriculture-National Agricultural Statistics Service, reported that there were 52 aquafarms in Maryland. In addition, the 1998 Census reported that in 1998, sales of aquaculture products in Maryland totaled almost \$15 million.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources, Department of Business and Economic Development, Department of Agriculture, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 18, 2002
ncs/jr Revised - House Third Reader - March 28, 2002
Revised - Correction - May 2, 2002

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