

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2002 Session

FISCAL NOTE
Revised

House Bill 617

(Delegates Edwards and Morhaim)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Natural Resources - Wildlands - Savage Ravines and South Savage

This bill proposes the addition of two new wildland areas in Garrett County totaling approximately 4,361 acres: the "Savage Ravines Wildland" (approximately 1,934 acres); and the "South Savage Wildland" (approximately 2,427 acres). The bill also authorizes the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to allow research study in the South Savage Wildland area that involves some activities that are generally restricted or prohibited in State wildland areas under specified conditions. The bill also requires DNR and the University System of Maryland, through Frostburg State University (FSU) and the University of Maryland Biotechnology Institute (UMBI), to develop a plan relating to such research.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill would not materially affect State operations or finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Several areas of the State are designated as wildlands in statute. Money may not be appropriated for the payment of expenses or salaries for the administration of the State wildlands preservation system as a separate unit, nor shall appropriations be available for additional personnel required solely for the purpose of managing or administering areas solely because they are included within the State wildlands

preservation system. Each unit administering any area designated as wildlands is responsible for preserving the wildland character of the area and administering the other purposes for which it was established in order to preserve its wildland character.

Background: The Maryland wildlands preservation system was established with the passage of the Maryland Wildlands Act in 1971. The first wildland, Big Savage Mountain, was officially designated by the General Assembly in 1973. To date, 27 separate wildlands have been designated on over 39,400 acres of land in 15 counties throughout Maryland.

Wildland designations limit the types of activities that may occur on State lands to those activities that do not leave a lasting imprint of human activity. Prohibited activities generally include the use of motorized vehicles and equipment, the harvesting of timber, the use of land for commercial gain, mineral extraction, and the construction of new roads, buildings, and structures. Several types of recreational activities, such as hiking, canoeing, kayaking, and rafting, are permitted in wildland areas.

DNR and FSU have agreed to develop a comprehensive plan guiding the scope of research activities that will be conducted within the South Savage Wildland in Savage River State Forest by the partnering organization that will be subject to public review and comment and approval by the Secretary of Natural Resources. Additionally, DNR and FSU agreed that the comprehensive plan will not include maintenance of any roads or the utilization of motorized vehicles for access within the wildland, except on an existing road which runs north from the Savage River up to, and not beyond, the 1,600 foot contour line as shown on the U.S. Geological Survey topographic map for the site.

FSU, UMBI, and West Virginia University have agreed to create a collaborative ethnobotany research center. The center will be devoted to the study and conservation of native plants.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 552 (Senator Van Hollen, *et al.*) – Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 1, 2002
lc/cer Revised - House Third Reader - March 21, 2002

Analysis by: Lesley Frymier

Direct Inquiries to:
John Rixey, Coordinating Analyst
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510