

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2003 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 659

(Delegate V. Clagett, *et al.*)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Environment - Task Force on Water Resource Management - Establishment

This bill establishes a 23-member Task Force on Water Resource Management. The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), in consultation with other appropriate State agencies, must provide staff support. The task force must submit interim reports of its activities and recommendations by May 31, 2004 and May 31, 2005. A final report is due by May 31, 2006.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2003 and sunsets May 31, 2006.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill essentially codifies and extends an existing committee.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The task force is required to: (1) review specified information related to water resource management; (2) review the results of ongoing research regarding climate change and its regional impacts on aquifer depletion and recharging models; (3) review laws, regulations, and policies related to water resource management, development, conservation, and protection; (4) assess the adequacy of existing governmental resources, regulatory enforcement, and monitoring programs; (5) develop models to assess aquifer trends; (6) recommend additional actions, studies, policies, regulations, or laws that are needed; and (7) provide a cost estimate and funding alternatives for implementation of each recommendation. The bill also states that it is the intent of the General Assembly

that the task force consider the findings and recommendations of the Governor’s Water Resource Management Advisory Committee and that the task force continue the work of that committee.

Current Law: MDE’s Water Supply Program is responsible for implementing the federal Safe Drinking Water Act to ensure that communities are provided with safe water supplies that meet all drinking water standards and for managing the State’s water supply resources to ensure that water supplies are not depleted through overuse.

Background: Governor Glendening established the Advisory Committee on the Management and Protection of the State’s Water Resources in December 2002. Also known as the Water Resource Management Advisory Committee, it was established to advise and assist the Governor to ensure that water resources will be adequate, protected, and available. According to MDE, the committee has never met.

On March 7, 2003, Governor Ehrlich reissued the executive order that established the committee. The primary duties of the committee, as outlined in the executive order, are identical to the duties of the task force under the bill. The major differences between the proposed task force and the existing committee are shown in **Exhibit 1**.

Exhibit 1
Primary Differences Between HB 659 and
Executive Order 01.01.2003.08

	<u>HB 659 – Task Force</u>	<u>Committee Established by Executive Order</u>
Number of Members	23	21
Staff Support	MDE, in consultation with other State agencies	MDE
Reporting Requirements	Interim reports due May 31, 2004 and 2005; final report due May 31, 2006	Report due May 31, 2004

State Expenditures: MDE advises that costs would increase by \$65,300 annually from fiscal 2004 through fiscal 2006 to contract with the University of Maryland or other institution to staff the task force and to cover reimbursements, meeting expenses, and report publication costs. Legislative Services disagrees. Even in the absence of the bill,

MDE would be required to fulfill the duties outlined in the bill pursuant to the executive order recently reissued by Governor Ehrlich.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 630 (Senator Astle) – Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of the Environment, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 26, 2003
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