

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2004 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

**Revised**

Senate Bill 671

(Senator Colburn)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Environmental Matters

---

**Dorchester County - Authorization to Harvest Seafood and Engage in the Seafood Industry**

---

This bill authorizes the County Council of Dorchester County to adopt an ordinance, resolution, or regulation or take any other action that the council considers necessary to authorize a person to engage in specified activities related to the seafood industry and to harvest seafood. Before adopting such an ordinance, resolution, or regulation, the county council must first hold a public hearing and obtain the written consent of the Secretary of Natural Resources. Any action taken without such consent is void and without legal effect. In the event of conflict, federal or State law or written program guidance issued by a federal or State agency shall preempt any ordinance, resolution, or regulation adopted by the county council.

---

**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** The bill is not anticipated to have a significant impact on State operations or finances.

**Local Effect:** Dorchester County reports that the bill will not materially affect local finances.

**Small Business Effect:** Potential meaningful.

---

**Analysis**

**Current Law:** Statute does not explicitly state that the county may adopt an ordinance, resolution, or regulation to authorize a person to engage in the seafood industry or harvest seafood.

**Background:** According to the Maryland Rural Progress Index, statewide, the total dockside value of seafood in 2002 was approximately \$40 million. The seafood industry plays an important role in Dorchester County. Oystering became a major industry after the Civil War, and by 1900, Cambridge was second only to Baltimore as an oystering center. Dorchester County is also home to commercial crab harvesters and seafood processors.

**Small Business Effect:** Based on information from the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2001, there were 10 seafood processing establishments in Dorchester County; nine of those establishments employed fewer than 20 people. In total, those establishments employed 478 individuals, with an annual payroll of \$13.4 million. Census data from 1997 showed 15 such businesses, with a value of shipments totaling \$163.3 million. The recent decline in the population of blue crabs, combined with additional regulations on the commercial crabbing industry, has had a negative impact on the seafood industry in the county. To the extent this bill strengthens the seafood industry in Dorchester County, small businesses would be positively impacted.

---

### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Department of the Environment, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Maryland Department of Agriculture, Dorchester County, U.S. Census Bureau, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 9, 2004  
ncs/ljm Revised - Senate Third Reader - March 25, 2004  
Revised - Enrolled Bill - May 5, 2004

---

Analysis by: Lesley Cook

Direct Inquiries to:  
(410) 946-5510  
(301) 970-5510