

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

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

Senate Bill 58 (Chairman, Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee)  
(By Request – Departmental – Natural Resources)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Environmental Matters

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**Natural Resources - Forest or Park Wardens - Term**

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This departmental bill repeals the specification of a two-year term for service as a forest or park warden commissioned by the Secretary of Natural Resources.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** By eliminating the need for commissioner renewals, the bill would result in a minimal decrease in general/special fund administrative expenditures for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Staff resources involved with the current renewal process would be redirected to other activities.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** DNR has determined that this bill will have minimal or no impact on small business (attached). Legislative Services concurs with this assessment.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** The Secretary may commission any person to act as a forest or park warden for a term of two years. While in office, a warden has the authority of a Natural Resources police officer or a law enforcement officer in terms of arresting and prosecuting individuals who violate any forest or park laws. A warden serves at the pleasure of the Secretary.

**Background:** According to DNR, the basis for the specification of a two-year term is that, at one time, DNR commissioned citizens to act on its behalf in the enforcement of the various laws and regulations relating to forest reserves, parks, and recreation areas, among other duties. Because the relationship between DNR and the wardens was often temporary, a set term allowed for a periodic review of those commissioned. DNR renewed commissions as necessary. Now that DNR restricts the awarding of commissions to permanent employees, the review is no longer necessary, and the renewal is automatic. By repealing the specification of a set term, the bill is intended to eliminate the unnecessary administrative work involved with the renewal process. Forest or park wardens would continue to serve at the pleasure of the Secretary.

According to DNR, there are currently 220 wardens (146 employed by the State Forest and Park Service and 74 employed by the Forest Service).

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

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

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - January 13, 2004  
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