

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2005 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1240 (Delegate Montgomery, *et al.*)
Environmental Matters

Natural Resources - State Wildlands - Green Ridge State Forest

This bill requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to recommend to the General Assembly areas constituting 10% of the total acreage of specified special areas in Green Ridge State Forest for possible inclusion in the State wildlands system. DNR must conduct a survey and develop a description of each special area recommended to be included as part of an expanded State wildland. By December 1, 2005, DNR must submit information to the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee and the House Environmental Matters Committee; the information must be sufficient to enable the General Assembly to enact legislation during the 2006 session that expands the existing wildlands in the forest and that includes the revised statutory descriptions.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2005.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill's requirements could be handled with existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Several areas of the State are designated as wildlands in statute. The Secretary of Natural Resources is authorized to review any area under its jurisdiction as to its suitability for preservation as a State wildland. The Secretary must report any such

findings to the Governor, who is directed to advise the General Assembly regarding the recommendation for inclusion into the State wildlands system.

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, 29 separate wildlands have been designated on 43,773 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.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 8, 2005
mp/ljm

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