

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2005 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 380

(Senator Hogan, *et al.*)

Budget and Taxation

Appropriations

Consolidation of State Forest and Park Services Rangers and Natural Resources
Police - Exemption from Probationary Status

This emergency bill exempts a sworn law enforcement employee of the State Forest and Park Service (SFPS) as of March 24, 2004 who was appointed as a Natural Resources Police (NRP) officer between July 1, 2004 and December 31, 2005, inclusive, from the statutory probationary status required for NRP officers.

Fiscal Summary

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

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: All NRP officers, including persons appointed for training prior to regular assignment as a NRP officer, must remain in a probationary status for a period of two years from the date of initial appointment to NRP. The Secretary of Natural Resources may discharge an employee in probationary status for any cause which is deemed sufficient in the sole discretion of the Secretary.

Background: In December 2003, the Governor's Commission on Structure and Efficiency of State Government (the Mandel Commission), in its final report, recommended that the law enforcement functions of SFPS and NRP be consolidated. Discussions between the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Department of

Budget and Management (DBM) resulted in a decision by the Secretary of Natural Resources in January 2004 to move forward with the collective bargaining process. On March 25, 2004, the State signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the State Law Enforcement Officers' Labor Alliance to merge the SFPS rangers into NRP and reclassify the rangers in corresponding NRP classifications. Pursuant to the MOU, the consolidation became effective January 1, 2005 and will be fully implemented by January 1, 2006.

The *2004 Joint Chairmen's Report* requested a report from DNR and DBM describing the process, timeline, and potential cost savings from the merger of the SFPS rangers and NRP. On October 1, 2004, DNR submitted the requested report.

As of December 2004, there were 177 NRP officers and 108 SFPS rangers. NRP is responsible for enforcing a variety of State natural resources laws related to boating, hunting, fishing, pollution, and wildlife. Its duties range from boat inspections and issuance of boating certificates to hydrographic surveys, patrols of submerged aquatic vegetation, and hunter safety education. SFPS rangers are responsible for law enforcement activities in the State's parks, forests, and other public lands.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 1354 (Delegate James, *et al.*) – Appropriations.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 11, 2005
mp/ljm Revised - Senate Third Reader - March 25, 2005
Revised - Enrolled Bill - May 3, 2005

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