

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2005 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 381 (Senator Hogan, *et al.*)
Budget and Taxation

Consolidation of State Forest and Park Rangers and Natural Resources Police -
Additional Training Prohibited

This emergency bill prohibits the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), in the consolidation of the Natural Resources Police (NRP) and the State Forest and Park Service (SFPS) rangers, from requiring a sworn law enforcement employee classified in the State personnel system on March 24, 2004 as a Ranger II, Park Services Specialist, Park Services Supervisor, or Park Ranger Supervisor within SFPS to complete additional training before being transferred to NRP.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill would not significantly affect State finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: 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.

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 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 MOU provides for completion of required training by sworn law enforcement employees with personnel classifications of Ranger II, Park Services Specialist, Park Services Supervisor, and Park Ranger Supervisor prior to becoming permanent NRP officers. DNR advises that cross-training is essential for the rangers and NRP officers to learn the different aspects of law enforcement for which the other is currently responsible. Further, DNR advises that several employees have already been trained.

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.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

Analysis by: Lesley G. Cook

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