

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2005 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 382 (Senator Hogan, *et al.*)
Budget and Taxation

**Department of Natural Resources - Classification of State Forest and Park
Ranger Supervisors**

This emergency bill authorizes a sworn law enforcement employee of the State Forest and Park Service (SFPS) under the position classification title of Park Ranger Supervisor, Acting Park Ranger Supervisor, or Park Services Supervisor on March 24, 2004, to choose whether to be transferred to the classification title of Natural Resources Police (NRP) Sergeant or remain a Park Ranger Supervisor or Park Services Supervisor. The bill also requires that the classification title for Park Ranger Supervisor and Park Services Supervisor must be converted to Park Ranger Sergeant or Park Services Sergeant, though the position and salary grade would remain the same.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill would not materially 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: DNR has two police forces, the NRP and the SFPS rangers. 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. On March 25, 2004, the State signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the State Law Enforcement Officers Labor Alliance (SLEOLA) 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.

Under the MOU, all sworn law enforcement employees whose positions are regularly classified as Ranger II, Park Services Specialist, Park Services Supervisor, and Park Ranger Supervisor, a total of 108 positions that are in Bargaining Unit I, would be transferred and assigned to NRP. Furthermore, Park Services Supervisor and Park Ranger Supervisor would be reclassified to NRP Corporal.

This bill differs from the MOU in that the bill reclassifies Park Ranger Supervisors and Park Service Supervisors as NRP sergeants rather than as corporals. Additionally, it allows the Park Ranger Supervisors and Park Service Supervisors to remain in SFPS if they so choose, but reclassified as Park Ranger Sergeants and Park Service Sergeants respectively, which is also contrary to the MOU.

State Fiscal Effect: The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) advises that in the short term this bill may save a minimal amount of money. In the MOU, the parties agreed to transfer these positions to the NRP Corporal classification at the appropriate grade and step that provides for no loss of pay, resulting in a slight salary increase. If these individuals choose to remain in SFPS, they would not receive this slight pay increase, thereby not increasing State expenditures. These costs are assumed in the fiscal 2005 budget and proposed fiscal 2006 budget. DNR advises that at the beginning of the consolidation process, there were 25 employees that would be affected by this legislation, and one vacancy. DBM advises that as of February 11, 2005, there were 15 individuals classified as Park Ranger Supervisor and one individual classified as a Park Services Supervisor. It is unknown at this time, however, how many of these individuals would choose to remain in SFPS rather than transfer to NRP.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

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