

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2006 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 10 (Delegate Montgomery)
Environmental Matters

Natural Resources - State Wildlands - Crabtree Creek Wildland

This bill proposes the addition of a new wildland area (the Crabtree Creek Wildland) in Garrett County totaling approximately 700 acres. The bill requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to conduct a survey and establish a specified description of the affected lands. By December 1, 2006, DNR must submit a report to specified committees of the General Assembly; the report must contain the information necessary for the General Assembly to enact legislation in the 2007 session that establishes the statutory description of the wildland.

The survey and reporting provisions take effect June 1, 2006. The other provisions take effect June 1, 2007.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Potential decrease in special fund revenues to the extent that the designation limits timber harvesting activities that otherwise would occur. The bill's requirements could be handled with existing budgeted resources.

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

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

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.

State Revenues: Because wildland designations limit the types of activities that may occur, the bill could result in a decrease in special fund revenues to the State Forest or Park Reserve Fund from any decrease in the harvesting of timber that otherwise would have occurred. DNR advises that timber harvesting has occurred in the past on some portion of the affected lands; however, DNR also advises that currently there are no plans to harvest timber on the affected lands in the near future.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: Similar legislation was introduced as HB 1244 of 2005. The bill passed the House with amendments and passed the Senate on second reading, but the bill was special ordered and no further action was taken.

Cross File: None.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 16, 2006
nas/ljm

Analysis by: Lesley G. Cook

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