

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2006 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

House Bill 1749 (Delegates Walkup and Mayer)  
Environmental Matters

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**Task Force on Noise and Safety Issues from Powerboats and Personal Watercraft**

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This bill establishes a task force to study noise levels and safety considerations from the use of powerboats and personal watercraft in State waters. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) must provide staff for the task force. A preliminary report of the task force's findings and recommendations is due to the Governor and specified legislative committees by December 31, 2006. A final report is due by June 1, 2007.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2006 and terminates June 30, 2007.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Any expense reimbursements for task force members and staffing costs for DNR are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Bill Summary:** The study must: (1) identify areas that could require stricter noise limits and evaluate the effectiveness of current noise restrictions in State waters; (2) evaluate usage and efficacy of safety practices such as minimum wake zones and designated swim areas and identify other potential safety practices; and (3) evaluate environmental and

human health conditions that occur from the use of powerboats and personal watercraft and recommend best practices to prevent or minimize harmful conditions.

**Current Law/Background:** Provisions governing noise limits and safety considerations with respect to the operation of vessels in the State exist both in statute and in regulation. With respect to noise limits, current law prohibits a person from operating a vessel on the waters of the State so as to exceed a noise level of 90 dB(a) (generally, decibels). DNR is authorized to adopt regulations to provide for exceptions under specified conditions.

With respect to safety, DNR is required to adopt regulations governing safety equipment on vessels and operations of vessels. Citizens may submit petitions calling for restrictions on specified waterways; these petitions are investigated by the Natural Resources Police and the Boat Act Advisory Committee. Where it has been determined that an area is too populated with boats and/or persons to allow unlimited speed, speed limits of six knots have been established. Minimum wake zones have been established in certain waterways, such as the Upper Potomac River. Current regulations also establish specific restrictions governing the operation of personal watercraft.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

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

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - April 3, 2006  
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