

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2007 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 1223

(Chair, Environmental Matters Committee) (By Request –
Departmental – Natural Resources)

Environmental Matters

Snapping Turtles - Regulations

This departmental bill authorizes the Secretary of Natural Resources to adopt rules and regulations to restrict, permit, or prohibit catching, possessing, purchasing, transporting, or exporting snapping turtles in tidal and nontidal waters.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2007.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill would not directly affect State operations or finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has determined that this bill has minimal or no impact on small business (attached). Legislative Services concurs with this assessment as discussed below.

Analysis

Current Law: DNR must prescribe by rules and regulations the methods to catch snapping turtles. A person may not catch or attempt to catch snapping turtles in the tributaries of Charles County between April 15 and May 31. In addition, a person may not use hook and line or trot line to catch snapping turtles in those waters. DNR may not prohibit the use of turtle pots in areas where nets are prohibited.

Under DNR regulations, catching snapping turtles in State waters using a hook and line, trot line, bow and arrow, spear, gig or gig iron, or any other device capable of piercing any part of a turtle is prohibited.

Background: According to DNR, roughly 90,900 pounds of snapping turtles were harvested in 2003 from tidal waters, based on watermen reports. The number of pounds harvested has been lower in more recent years, with roughly 47,700 pounds harvested in 2005 and roughly 43,500 pounds harvested in 2006, yet these harvest numbers remain higher than the 18,262 pounds reported harvested in 2001 by watermen. DNR advises that, while the reported harvest numbers only include turtles harvested from tidal waters, there is anecdotal evidence suggesting harvesting of the turtles in nontidal waters has increased. The bill broadens DNR's regulatory authority with respect to snapping turtles, allowing it to establish seasons, area restrictions, and size or creel limits for snapping turtles in both tidal and nontidal waters.

Small Business Effect: While the bill's changes would not directly affect small businesses, the bill expands the authority of DNR to establish seasons, area restrictions, and size and creel limits for snapping turtles by regulation. The reported harvest of snapping turtles in 2005 had a total value of \$43,566 and was reported by nine watermen. The harvest in 2006 had a value of \$39,725 and was reported by five watermen. Regulations adopted by DNR under the bill could potentially affect watermen that harvest snapping turtles and any dealers that purchase them to the extent they limit the harvest and/or sale of the turtles.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

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