

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1493

(Delegate Kullen)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental
Affairs

Calvert County - Authorization to Harvest Seafood and Engage in the Seafood Industry

This bill authorizes the Calvert County Commissioners to adopt an ordinance, resolution, or regulation or take any other action it considers necessary to authorize a person to engage in specified activities related to the seafood industry and to harvest seafood. Before taking such action, the county commissioners must hold a public hearing and obtain the written consent of the Secretary of Natural Resources.

Fiscal Summary

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

Local Effect: Calvert County reports that the bill is not anticipated to materially affect local government finances.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful impact in Calvert County.

Analysis

Current Law: The governing bodies of Dorchester, Queen Anne's, and Somerset counties are authorized to adopt an ordinance, resolution, or regulation or take any other action that the governing bodies consider necessary to authorize a person to engage in specified activities related to the seafood industry and to harvest seafood. Specific statutory authority pertaining to Calvert County does not exist.

Background: According to the Maryland Department of Agriculture, the total estimated value of the Maryland seafood industry is approximately \$700 million. Over 6,000 watermen work the Chesapeake Bay, and 73 seafood processing plants in the State employ 1,360 people. In 2005, 67.5 million pounds of seafood were landed at a dockside value of over \$63 million.

Small Business Effect: Calvert County once had a vibrant seafood industry. According to the Calvert Marine Museum, when World War II began to influence Southern Maryland, many seafood packing house workers and watermen left the oyster industry because they were able to get better paying jobs with the military. As a result of pollution, disease, and over-harvesting, the region's oyster population plummeted in the late twentieth century and led to the closure of many of the local seafood processing and packing plants. An improving seafood industry is one of the stated visions in Calvert County's 2004 comprehensive plan. To the extent this bill strengthens the seafood industry in the county, small businesses would be positively impacted.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Calvert County, Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Department of Agriculture, Calvert Marine Museum, Department of Legislative Services

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mll/hlb

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