

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 1498

(Delegate Kullen)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Calvert County - Soft-Shell Clam Harvesting

This bill increases the distance from 50 to 150 feet from the mean high watermark of any shoreline in Calvert County within which a person may not catch or attempt to catch soft-shell clams with a hydraulic clam dredge or any other gear except hand-held tools.

The bill takes effect October 1, 2008, the effective date of Chapter 260 of 2007; however, if the effective date of Chapter 260 is amended, the bill takes effect upon the taking effect of Chapter 260.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill's changes could be handled with existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Analysis

Current Law: State law specifies certain areas in which a person may not catch or attempt to catch soft-shell clams with a hydraulic clam dredge or any other gear except hand-held tools, including within 50 feet of the high watermark of any shoreline in Calvert, Queen Anne's, Talbot, or Somerset counties.

Chapter 260 of 2007 generally prohibits a person from catching or attempting to catch clams or oysters by power dredge, hydraulic clam dredge, or other mechanical means in the Atlantic coastal bays.

Background: The waters in Calvert County include a portion of the Patuxent River and the Chesapeake Bay. DNR indicates that the bill's expansion of the "buffer" area along the shoreline in Calvert County will reduce the amount of acreage available for commercial clamming by 1,603 acres.

Small Business Effect: Because the clamming harvest is not reported by county, it is not possible to determine the total clam harvest in Calvert County that might be affected by the loss in available acreage to harvest clams with a hydraulic dredge or other mechanical gear. The Maryland Watermen's Association also indicates it is difficult to determine what impact the bill would have on watermen because the clam population in the affected waters can vary significantly from year to year.

To the extent there would be a sufficient population of clams available for harvest in the absence of the bill's restrictions, commercial clammers would be affected by the lost opportunity to harvest clams within the extended buffer area. According to MWA, the value of soft-shell clams can fluctuate between \$80/bushel and \$110/bushel, and the value of razor clams can fluctuate between \$30/bushel and \$50/bushel.

MWA also indicates that depending on razor clam populations in other areas, razor clams harvested in Calvert County waters can be an important source of bait for crabbers in the Chesapeake Bay. As a result, limiting the available area for the harvest of razor clams in Calvert County could also indirectly affect crabbers.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Calvert County, Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Watermen's Association, Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Scott D. Kennedy

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