

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2010 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1059

(Delegates Eckardt and Haddaway)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Dorchester County - Choptank River - Soft-Shell Clam Harvesting

This bill increases the time period during which soft-shell clam harvesting is authorized in part of Dorchester County's portion of the Choptank River.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2010.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill's changes can be handled with existing budgeted 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, generally, Dorchester County waters of the Choptank River and its tributaries; Brannock Bay; Little Choptank River; Tar Bay; Honga River; all waters east of a line running Brannock Bay; Little Choptank River; Tar Bay; Honga River; all waters east of a line running from the most southerly point of Holland Island to Holland Island Bar Light; all waters east of a line running from Richland Point to Okahanikan Point; and any areas reserved by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for production of seed oysters.

A person may not catch soft-shell clams by hydraulic clam dredge in the Dorchester County waters of the Choptank River and its tributaries, west of a line running from Horn Point to Martin Point and east of a line running from Sharp's Island Light to Hill's Point from 30 days before opening date of wild waterfowl hunting season until the closing date. This requirement assumes the seaduck season is not part of the wild waterfowl season.

Background: The waters in Dorchester County include the southern portion of the Choptank River and the Chesapeake Bay. DNR advises that the bill allows soft-shell clams to be harvested with a hydraulic clam dredge in the Dorchester County portion of the Choptank River during the waterfowl season and would close clam dredging to the east of this area. Currently, this area is closed to hydraulic clam dredging prior to and during the waterfowl season and is open after waterfowl season.

Small Business Effect: Since clamming harvests are not reported by county, it is not possible to determine the total clam harvest in Dorchester County that might be affected by the additional time to harvest clams. In addition, it is difficult to determine what impact the bill may have on watermen because the clam population in the affected waters can vary significantly from year to year. To the extent there is a sufficient population of clams available for harvest, commercial watermen may benefit from the increased opportunity to harvest clams.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 422 (Senator Colburn) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 4, 2010
ncs/lgc

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