

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2012 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 318 (Senators Dyson and Colburn)
 Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs and Budget and Taxation Environmental Matters and Appropriations

Natural Resources Police Force - Number of Officers

This bill expresses the General Assembly’s intent that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) employ at least 435 Natural Resources Police (NRP) officers by fiscal 2022. Beginning in fiscal 2014, to the extent funds are available, NRP may increase the number of cadets and recruits enrolling in the NRP academy until the size of the NRP force is sufficient to meet DNR’s mission. By June 30, 2013, and annually thereafter until June 30, 2022, NRP must submit a report to the General Assembly on the progress made toward achieving the NRP employment goal.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2012.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Assuming implementation of the bill’s intent and the availability of funds, DNR general fund expenditures increase by \$3.4 million in FY 2014, \$5.6 million in FY 2015, \$8.0 million in FY 2016, and \$10.6 million in FY 2017 to hire and equip additional NRP officers. Potential increase in general and federal fund revenues due to additional citations and DNR’s expanded eligibility for federal grant funds.

(\$ in millions)	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
GF/FF Rev.	\$0	-	-	-	-
GF Expenditure	\$0	\$3.4	\$5.6	\$8.0	\$10.6
Net Effect	\$0	(\$3.4)	(\$5.6)	(\$8.0)	(\$10.6)

Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate effect

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: NRP serves as a public safety agency with statewide authority to enforce all natural resources and conservation laws and regulations relating to seafood harvesting and sport fishing, boating, waterways pollution, wildlife conservation, and enforcement activities in State parks, forests, and other public lands. In addition, NRP is responsible for maritime and rural search and rescue and is the lead agency for maritime homeland security on State waterways. NRP also provides public education in the areas of hunting, boating, and water safety. Each NRP officer has full law enforcement powers statewide. The fiscal 2012 State budget and the Governor's proposed fiscal 2013 budget authorize 247 NRP officers; however, 20 of these positions are being held vacant in order to achieve required personnel turnover rates. Thus, to implement the intent expressed in the bill, DNR must hire an additional 208 law enforcement officers to reach the goal of having 435 NRP officers employed by fiscal 2022.

DNR advises that there were a total of 451 law enforcement positions within both NRP and the State Forest and Park Service in 1990. In 2005/2006, when NRP assumed responsibility for law enforcement in State forests and parks, law enforcement positions associated with State forests and parks were consolidated into NRP. Currently, 247 NRP officer positions are authorized to provide law enforcement throughout the State. This information suggests that while NRP's responsibilities have increased substantially over the past 20 years, the number of NRP officers available to fulfill these responsibilities has decreased.

State Fiscal Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$3.4 million in fiscal 2014 to hire 23 additional NRP officers. This assumes that DNR uses existing resources in fiscal 2013 to expand currently scheduled NRP officer recruitment efforts and develop a plan for future recruitment and training efforts. This estimate is based on the assumption that, beginning in fiscal 2014 and ending in fiscal 2021, 23 NRP officers are hired annually and that 24 NRP officers are hired in fiscal 2022. It includes salaries, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, vehicles, vessels, equipment, recruitment costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

Positions	23
Salaries and Fringe Benefits	\$1,789,988
Vehicles/Vessels	930,160
Mobile Data Terminals	161,000
Recruitment and Training	233,850
Other Operating Expenses	<u>277,162</u>
Total FY 2014 State Expenditures	\$3,392,160

Future year expenditures reflect the compounding effect of adding 23 new NRP officers annually through fiscal 2021 and 24 new NRP officers in fiscal 2022, full salaries with annual increases, employee turnover, and annual increases in ongoing operating expenses.

This estimate is consistent with the bill's intent to begin hiring additional NRP officers in fiscal 2014 and assumes full employment of at least 435 NRP officers by fiscal 2022. However, depending on the availability of funds, expenditures could be lower or greater each year.

With additional officers, DNR may be able to leverage increased federal funding. To the extent increased NRP staffing results in additional fees and fines from citations, general fund revenues increase.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: SB 937 of 2011, as amended, passed the Senate and received a hearing in the House Environmental Matters Committee, but no further action was taken.

Cross File: None.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 15, 2012
mlm/lgc

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