

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2013 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 215 (Delegate Cane)
 Environmental Matters and Appropriations Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs and Budget and Taxation

Natural Resources Police Force - Number of Officers

This bill expresses the General Assembly’s intent that the Governor include an appropriate level of funding in the State budget, on a phased-in basis, to employ additional Natural Resources Police (NRP) officers to achieve the following staffing levels: (1) at least 291 full-time officers to meet the Department of Natural Resources’ (DNR) annual workload; and (2) at least 33 contractual officers to meet the seasonal workload demand in State parks.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2013.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Assuming implementation of the bill’s intent and the availability of funds, DNR general fund expenditures increase by \$2.7 million in FY 2015, \$4.5 million in FY 2016, \$6.4 million in FY 2017, and \$8.5 million in FY 2018 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 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
GF/FF Rev.	\$0	-	-	-	-
GF Expenditure	\$0	\$2.7	\$4.5	\$6.4	\$8.5
Net Effect	\$0	(\$2.7)	(\$4.5)	(\$6.4)	(\$8.5)

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 2013 State budget and the Governor's proposed fiscal 2014 budget authorize 238 NRP officers; however, only 216 of these positions are filled. Thus, to implement the intent expressed in the bill, DNR must hire an additional 75 full-time and 33 part-time law enforcement officers to reach the goal of having 291 full-time and 33 new part-time NRP officers.

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, 238 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.

In January 2013, DNR submitted a report on NRP level of service standards to the budget committees, in accordance with the 2012 *Joint Chairmen's Report*. Among other things, the report had several findings about NRP staffing levels, which are summarized below.

- To offset anticipated retirements, NRP must hire and train enough recruits to replace a minimum of 14 officers annually over the next five years.
- A total of 233 NRP patrol officers – 70 more than current staffing levels – are required to handle the current patrolling workload. In addition, 10 positions are required to support the additional NRP officers on patrol duty.
- NRP officers should be hired on a contractual, rather than permanent, basis to respond to summer peak workload demands in State forests and parks.

State Fiscal Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$2.7 million in fiscal 2015 to hire 15 additional full-time NRP officers and 8 additional part-time (50%) NRP officers. This assumes that DNR uses existing resources in fiscal 2014 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, DNR hires (1) 8 part-time

(50%) and 15 full-time NRP officers annually during the fiscal 2015 through 2018 period, and (2) 1 part-time (50%) and 15 full-time NRP officers in fiscal 2019. It includes salaries, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, vehicles, vessels, equipment, recruitment costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

Positions (full-time)	15
Positions (50% part-time)	8
Salaries and Fringe Benefits	\$1,499,697
Vehicles/Vessels	748,126
Mobile Data Terminals/Weapons/Uniforms	252,777
Recruitment and Training	178,250
Other Operating Expenses	<u>14,847</u>
Total FY 2015 State Expenditures	\$2,693,697

Future year expenditures reflect the compounding effect of adding 15 new full-time NRP officers annually through fiscal 2019, new part-time positions, salaries with annual increases, employee turnover, and annual increases in ongoing operating expenses.

This estimate is consistent with the bill's intent to phase in hiring additional NRP officers and assumes full employment of at least 291 full-time NRP officers and 33 new part-time NRP officers. However, depending on the availability of funds and the actual phase-in approach implemented, 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 318 of 2012 and 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 on either bill.

Cross File: SB 208 (Senators Dyson and Colburn) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs and Budget and Taxation.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 29, 2013
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