

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2022 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**Third Reader - Revised**

House Bill 749

(Delegate Guyton)

Environment and Transportation

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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**Natural Resources - Maryland Park Explorers Grant Pilot Program - Establishment**

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This bill establishes the Maryland Park Explorers Grant Pilot Program in the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to provide Anne Arundel and Baltimore counties with equal funds to establish local Park Explorers Pilot Programs. For fiscal 2024 through 2026, the Governor must include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$100,000 for the pilot program in DNR. The bill establishes related reporting requirements for DNR and participating counties, as specified. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2022, and terminates June 30, 2026.**

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** No effect in FY 2023. General fund expenditures increase by \$100,000 annually from FY 2024 through 2026 due to the mandated appropriation. Revenues are not affected. **This bill establishes a mandated appropriation from FY 2024 through 2026.**

(in dollars)	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	0	100,000	100,000	100,000	0
Net Effect	\$0	(\$100,000)	(\$100,000)	(\$100,000)	\$0

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

**Local Effect:** Anne Arundel and Baltimore counties' revenues and expenditures increase *in total* by an average of \$76,300 annually (or about \$38,200 per county) from FY 2024 through 2026 (reflecting available funds after DNR administrative costs).

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

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## Analysis

**Bill Summary:** A local Park Explorers Pilot Program must (1) target youth populations with minimal access to green space in an effort to bridge socioeconomic and resource gaps through free, accessible, and conveniently located programming; (2) promote the positive impacts that spending time outdoors has on long-term developmental and social well-being; (3) provide conservation-related messaging, as specified; and (4) incorporate local history and cultural impacts to highlight the diverse cultural contributions to current social events and developed histories.

By October 1, 2023, and by each October 1 thereafter, each participating county must submit a report on the implementation of the local pilot program to DNR. The report must include (1) the number of participants; (2) the number of participants from populations with minimal access to green space; and (3) the results of participant surveys, including feedback on whether the participant had a positive or negative experience in the pilot program. Each participating county must report the required information in the aggregate and disaggregated as specified.

By December 1, 2024, and by each December 1 thereafter, DNR, in collaboration with the Maryland Recreation and Parks Association, must submit a report to the Governor and the General Assembly on the effectiveness of the State pilot program. The report must include (1) a recommendation on whether the pilot program should continue and be expanded statewide and (2) information regarding whether any other county has expressed interest in participating in the pilot program.

**Current Law:** The [Maryland Conservation Corps](#) within DNR aims to provide meaningful and productive employment for youth (ages 16 to 24) to conserve or develop natural resources and enhance and maintain environmentally important lands and waters. The program furthers the understanding and appreciation of natural resources, while teaching basic and fundamental work ethics.

The National Park Service offers several [Junior Explorers](#) programs to encourage youth to explore nature, including programs relating to cave science, fishing, paleontology, night exploration, sound exploration, and underwater exploration.

**State Expenditures:** For fiscal 2024 through 2026, the Governor must include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$100,000 for the Maryland Park Explorers Grant Pilot Program in DNR. Thus, general fund expenditures increase by \$100,000 annually in fiscal 2024 through 2026 due to the mandated appropriation.

This analysis assumes that DNR's administrative costs (discussed below) are paid using the mandated appropriation, with the remainder of funds (an average of approximately

\$76,300 annually over the three-year period) distributed to Anne Arundel and Baltimore counties to establish local Park Explorers Pilot Programs.

DNR's administrative expenditures increase by \$27,341 in fiscal 2024, which assumes a July 1, 2023 implementation date (consistent with the timing of the mandated funding). This estimate reflects the cost of hiring one part-time contractual grant program administrator to develop and administer the pilot program and to complete the required reports. It includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

Contractual Position	0.5
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$20,260
Operating Expenses	<u>7,081</u>
<b>Total FY 2024 Admin. Expenditures</b>	<b>\$27,341</b>

Future year administrative expenditures (which total \$21,500 in fiscal 2025 and \$22,200 in fiscal 2026) reflect a salary with annual increases and employee turnover as well as annual increases in ongoing operating expenses. The estimate reflects termination of the contractual employee at the end of fiscal 2026 due to the bill's termination date.

This estimate does not include any health insurance costs that could be incurred for specified contractual employees under the State's implementation of the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

**Local Fiscal Effect:** As noted above, funds must be distributed equally to Anne Arundel and Baltimore counties to establish local Park Explorers Pilot Programs. Based on the mandated funding and DNR's anticipated administrative costs, an average of approximately \$38,163 annually is available for each county from fiscal 2024 through 2026.

It is assumed that participating counties can administer the funds and submit the required reports using existing staff.

**Additional Comments:** The [Maryland Recreation and Parks Association](#) aims to improve recreation and park services throughout the State.

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## Additional Information

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Calvert County; Department of Budget and Management; Department of Natural Resources; Maryland Recreation and Parks Association; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 21, 2022

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