

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 467 (Senator Benson)
 Budget and Taxation

Maryland Forestry Education Fund – Mandatory Funding – Extension

This bill extends, through fiscal 2031, the requirement for the Governor to include a \$250,000 appropriation for the Maryland Forestry Education Fund in the annual budget bill. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$250,000 annually from FY 2027 through 2031. Special fund revenues and expenditures increase correspondingly. **This bill extends a mandated appropriation beginning in FY 2027.**

(in dollars)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030
SF Revenue	\$0	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000
GF Expenditure	\$0	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000
SF Expenditure	\$0	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000
Net Effect	\$0	(\$250,000)	(\$250,000)	(\$250,000)	(\$250,000)

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

Local Effect: Local grant revenues and expenditures likely increase in FY 2027 through 2031. Local governments likely also benefit from the additional training and education supported by the additional funding.

Small Business Effect: Minimal overall, but potential meaningful impact on some small businesses in the forestry industry, as discussed below.

Analysis

Current Law: Chapters 479 and 480 of 2023 established the Maryland Forestry Education Fund, administered by the Maryland Forestry Foundation. The fund consists of money

appropriated in the State budget to the fund, interest earnings, and any other money from any other source accepted for the benefit of the fund. For fiscal 2025 and 2026, the Governor must include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$250,000 to the fund.

The stated purpose of the fund is to expand and enhance (1) the Maryland Forestry Foundation's capacity to provide education and resources that support forest landowners in the State; (2) the ability of district forestry boards and the knowledge of local governments to achieve environmental, economic, and social sustainability of forest health and the sustainable management of forest resources; and (3) the ability of businesses to test innovative best management practices in forestry. The fund may be used only for:

- providing training and education to forest landowners, district forestry boards, and local governments to ensure they are well-informed on advances and developments in (1) healthy forest management; (2) ecological service markets; (3) emerging forestry threats; (4) climate science; (5) forest conservation; (6) urban forestry; (7) sustainability science; (8) forestry policy; (9) forestry practices; and (10) resource options that promote the multiple benefits of forest management;
- providing outreach and engagement that builds local capacity and institutionalizes sustainability efforts within communities and the district forestry boards, including holding a forest sustainability conference once every two years, implementing a peer-to-peer learning exchange, and providing healthy forest presentations;
- developing and expanding a healthy forest education and conservation program;
- improving the outreach of district forestry boards by providing education, recognition, strategies, and actions the boards can implement;
- providing small grants to district forestry boards, forest landowners, local governments, and businesses to test innovative best management practices in forestry;
- recognizing the efforts forest landowners and local governments make toward achieving healthy, sustainable forest management; and
- expenses related to the administration of the fund.

Money expended from the fund for specified outreach, training, education, and grants is supplemental to and is not intended to take the place of funding that otherwise would be appropriated for forestry education and outreach.

State Fiscal Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$250,000 annually from fiscal 2027 through 2031, due to the bill's extension of the mandated appropriation to the Maryland Forestry Education Fund. This assumes discretionary is funding is not otherwise provided to the fund in those years. Special fund revenues and expenditures increase correspondingly, as the mandated appropriations are received by the fund and spent in accordance with statute. Statute requires that expenditures from the fund may be made only in accordance with the State budget. Accordingly, even though the fund is administered by

the Maryland Forestry Foundation, which is a nonprofit organization, this analysis assumes that the special funds flow through the State budget.

Local Fiscal Effect: To the extent local governments receive grants under the program due to the additional funding under the bill, local revenues and expenditures increase correspondingly. In addition, local governments likely benefit from training and outreach supported by the additional funding.

Small Business Effect: Businesses are eligible to receive small grants from the fund to test innovative best management practices in forestry. Accordingly, small business foresters benefit to the extent they receive a grant under the program due to the additional funding under the bill. They may also benefit indirectly from additional training and outreach provided to forest landowners, district forestry boards, and local governments to the extent it results in an increase in the demand for forestry-related services.

Additional Comments: The [Maryland Forestry Foundation](#) is a nonprofit organization that (1) promotes sustainable forestry through legislative advocacy; (2) administers a tree-planting operation on private property in the State; (3) supports several urban forestry programs; (4) manages college fellowships in the field of natural resources; and (5) acts as the fiduciary agent for Maryland Forestry Board programs.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: HB 530 (Delegate Stein, *et al.*) - Environment and Transportation.

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

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