

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2025 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader**

Senate Bill 477 (Cecil County Senators)  
Education, Energy, and the Environment

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**Port of Deposit State Historical Park - Size and Scope**

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This emergency bill modifies existing provisions – which require the Port of Deposit State Historical Park to consist of a specified portion of the Bainbridge Naval Training Center site, which Bainbridge Development Corporation (BDC) must transfer to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) – by (1) reducing the required size of the portion to be 12-19 acres instead of 120-150 acres and (2) repealing a requirement that it include the historic Tome School. The bill also delays – from June 1, 2025, to June 1, 2026 – the date by which BDC must transfer the specified portion of the Bainbridge Naval Training Center site to DNR. The bill also removes a reference to the Tome School site in an authorization for a specified fiscal 2025 appropriation for an archaeological survey and soil study.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** No effect assumed in FY 2025. Special fund revenues may increase relatively minimally, and State expenditures (potentially multiple fund types) may decrease, as early as FY 2026, as discussed below. Reductions in State expenditures in future years may be significant.

**Local Effect:** Local government revenues may increase, as early as FY 2026, as discussed below. Local expenditures are not directly affected.

**Small Business Effect:** Potential meaningful.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** Chapter 39 of 2022 requires DNR to establish the Port of Deposit State Historical Park as a specified partnership park that seeks to educate the public about and

preserve and interpret the lives and experiences of African Americans both before and after the abolition of slavery. The park must be held by the State as a State park under the protection and administration of DNR. The park must consist of a portion of the Bainbridge Naval Training Center site – measuring not less than 120 acres and not more than 150 acres – that BDC transfers to DNR, including (1) the historic Tome School; (2) the Snow Hill archaeological site; and (3) the adjacent wooded conservation area.

Chapter 39, as amended by Chapter 602 of 2023, requires BDC to transfer that specified portion of the site to DNR by June 1, 2025, and requires that any property transferred to DNR that is not included in the park be preserved in perpetuity for its archaeological, historical, and cultural significance.

Chapter 39, as amended by Chapter 602, required DNR to submit to the General Assembly, by September 1, 2024, a [report](#) on (1) property that is suitable for inclusion in Port of Deposit State Historical Park; (2) the funding needed to establish and promote the park; and (3) the appropriate manner of preserving property that is not identified for inclusion in the park in perpetuity for its archaeological, historical, and cultural significance.

**State Revenues:** Special fund (Annuity Bond Fund) State property tax revenues may increase, relatively minimally, as early as fiscal 2026, to the extent that:

- ownership of the historic Tome School portion of the Bainbridge Naval Training Center site is able to be transferred to a private entity (causing the land to be subject to State and local property tax) due to the bill’s elimination of the requirements that BDC transfer the historic Tome School portion of the Bainbridge Naval Training Center site to DNR and that that portion of the site be included in the Port of Deposit State Historical Park; and
- the bill’s reduction in the size of the portion of the Bainbridge Naval Training Center site that must be transferred to DNR and included in the park allows for BDC to transfer ownership of the majority of the adjacent wooded conservation area to a private entity instead of DNR, generating property tax revenues.

DNR’s [2024 report](#) to the General Assembly identifies the historic Tome School as being approximately 50 acres, the adjacent wooded conservation area as being approximately 64.5 acres, and the Snow Hill archaeological site as being approximately 8.3 acres (see Figure 2 in the report).

This analysis assumes that any transfer to a private entity does not occur before fiscal 2026.

The extent of any increase in State property tax revenues cannot be quantified at this time but is expected to be relatively minimal.

**State Expenditures:** State expenditures may decrease, as early as fiscal 2026, and potentially significantly in future years, as a result of the bill (1) reducing the required size of the portion of the Bainbridge Naval Training Center site that must be transferred to DNR and included in the park and (2) removing the requirement that the historic Tome School be included in the transfer and the park. DNR indicates that the delay of the transfer of property from BDC to DNR – from June 1, 2025, to June 1, 2026 – is not expected to significantly affect the timing of expenditures that otherwise occur in the absence of the bill.

State expenditures decrease under the bill to the extent overall State expenditures increase in the absence of the bill to make the Tome School site and a significant portion of the adjacent wooded conservation area accessible to the public as a State park and to operate and maintain that portion of the park.

DNR's 2024 report indicates that preparation of a complete and detailed budget for establishing and promoting the park, under current law, is not possible until a park master plan is developed, but the report provides a preliminary estimated budget (Appendix 2 of the report), summarized in **Exhibit 1**. The estimate predominantly consists of one-time costs that DNR expects to be spread out and incurred over the course of multiple years. DNR indicates that none of the costs are included in the fiscal 2026 operating or capital budgets as introduced. The report states that there are limited State resources available to cover the capital and operational costs of establishing the park and funding its establishment requires the State to divert funds from other priorities and needs. State expenditures to cover these costs in future years may consist of general fund, special fund, and/or general obligation bond expenditures.

The bill removes or reduces many of those preliminary estimated costs, including (1) removing State costs of demolition, deconstruction, and stabilization of the Tome School property; (2) likely significantly reducing State costs for remediation of the wooded conservation area, due to a reduction in the size of that area transferred to DNR and included in the park; and (3) likely reducing other costs such as facility development/infrastructure, utilities, and staffing/vehicles due to a reduction in the size and scope of the park.

**Local Revenues:** For the same reason discussed above under State Revenues, Cecil County and Town of Port Deposit property tax revenues may increase, as early as fiscal 2026. The extent of any increase in property tax revenues for Cecil County and the Town of Port of Deposit cannot be quantified at this time.

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**Exhibit 1**  
**Port of Deposit State Historical Park**  
**Preliminary Estimated Budget (Under Current Law)**

<u>Category</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Planning	\$250,000
Staffing (Almost All of This Cost Recurs Annually)	570,000
Vehicles	500,000
Demolition, Deconstruction, and Stabilization of Tome School Property	27,367,200
Remediation of Wooded Conservation Area	6,890,000
Survey and Research for Snow Hill Archaeological Site	550,000
Fencing to Secure Area	30,000
Access Road	2,768,000
Utilities	8,200,000
Facility Development and Infrastructure	8,240,000
Equipment and Tools	515,000
Radios, Communications, and Office Supplies	70,000
Programming (Signs, Publications, and Other Content)	103,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$56,053,200</b>

Source: Department of Natural Resources

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**Small Business Effect:** Small businesses may be meaningfully affected to the extent the bill changes the future use and improvements of the historical Tome School site and adjacent wooded conservation area in a way that affects the level of demand for goods or services provided by small businesses for future restoration and development of the sites.

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**Additional Information**

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

**Designated Cross File:** HB 1184 (Delegate Reilly, *et al.*) - Environment and Transportation.

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

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